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Naomi P. Newton   April 12, 2016

Storytelling In Opera, Operetta, and American Musical Theater

A Research-Performance Honors Thesis

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An abstract of
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Abstract

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By Naomi P. Newton

This thesis represents one aspect of my dual research-performance honors project. The overall goal of this project is to analyze musical storytelling from two perspectives—that of a music analyst and that of a singer—in order to bridge the gap between three major genres of vocal music. In this written portion of the project, I analyze musical storytelling strategies that create common ground between opera, operetta, and American musical theater through an in-depth study of six major works. In the performance portion of this project, I sing the repertoire discussed in this thesis in a solo honors recital. I also perform additional repertoire from all three genres, to demonstrate the vocal and dramatic strategies that singers employ to tell the story as the composers and lyricists intend it to be told. I use my knowledge of music theory and training in music history, as well as my nineteen years of vocal experience, to find commonalities between opera, operetta, and musical theater. I examine how composers create powerful text-music relationships and convey the central message of the story through melodic, harmonic, textural, motivic, structural, stylistic and rhythmic techniques. Through this thesis and accompanying honors recital, I hope to use my knowledge and skills as a scholar and singer to demonstrate the incredible storytelling power of opera, operetta, and musical theater, and to encourage other scholars and singers to do the same.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis represents one aspect of my dual research-performance honors project. The overall goal of this project is to analyze musical storytelling from two perspectives—that of a music analyst and that of a singer—in order to help bridge the gap between three major genres of vocal music. In this written portion of the project, I analyze musical storytelling strategies that create common ground between opera, operetta, and American musical theater through an in-depth study of six major works: *Cendrillon* by Jules Massenet*, Cinderella* by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II*, Die Zauberflöte* by W.A. Mozart*, Once Upon A Mattress* by Mary Rodgers and Marshall Barer*, The Telephone* by Gian Carlo Menotti*,* and *My Fair Lady* by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe.[1] In the performance portion of this project, I sing the repertoire discussed in this thesis, as well as additional repertoire from all three genres, to demonstrate the vocal and dramatic strategies that singers employ to tell the story as the composers and lyricists intend it to be told (see Appendix).

I have always loved a good story, and as a voracious reader, avid writer, and lifelong performer, I am fascinated by the ways in which humans have been reinventing the same types of stories for centuries. Vocal music, regardless of the style or genre, provides a powerful means for composers, lyricists, and performers to express such archetypal themes. Musical storytelling can link even seemingly distinct genres of vocal music.

The stylistic overlap and shared musical history between opera, operetta, and musical theater is often underestimated, and stereotypes in popular culture can create inaccurate or overly simplistic distinctions between these genres. However, there is an increasing desire within the musical community to promote a deeper, more holistic understanding of opera, operetta, and

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[1] The sources of all musical examples, figures, and texts quoted in subsequent chapters can be found in the piano-vocal scores, YouTube videos, and DVDs cited in the Bibliography section.

musical theater. This is primarily seen in the outpouring of musical scholarship centered on musical theater over the last few decades.

There is a plethora of existing literature on opera and operetta. For example, standard reference works include *A Short History of Opera* by Donald J. Grout and Hermine Weigel Williams (4th edition 2002) and *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (revised 2004), while more recent scholarship includes *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years* by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker (paperback edition 2015). However, musical theater has not always received as much scholarly attention or respect as classical vocal music. In recent years, musicologists, composers, and performers have made concerted efforts to more deeply study musical theater productions, especially given their historical, dramatic, cultural, socio-political, and stylistic connections to operetta and opera. Examples of such scholarship include *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* by Raymond Knapp, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber* by Geoffrey Block, and *Music Theory Through Musical Theater: Putting It Together* by John Franceschina. Established scholars, including Tim Carter (University of North Carolina), Jessica Schwartz (University of California, Los Angeles), Elizabeth Craft (Harvard University), and Carol Oja (Harvard University), are currently pursuing ongoing work in this field.

I hope to contribute to this growing body of scholarship through my honors project. Just as the project itself integrates research and performance, so does my methodology draw upon my work as both a scholar and a singer. I use my knowledge of music theory and training in music history to find commonalities between opera, operetta, and musical theater. Using this repository of musical knowledge, I examine how the composers of the six aforementioned works create

powerful text-music relationships and convey the central message of the story through melodic, harmonic, textural, motivic, structural, stylistic and rhythmic techniques.

I will also draw on my nineteen years of solo and choral vocal experience in my accompanying honors recital. Singers devote significant portions of their training to the analysis of text-music relationships, which ultimately inform their storytelling strategies. Once the singer has fully grasped the levels of complexity within the musical story, he or she conveys it through performance elements, such as gestures, movements, facial expressions, vowel shapes, dynamics, diction, vocal timbre and color, style, and phrasing. In my training as a singer, I have learned to extract the story from the notes and words on the page, and physically and emotionally manifest it through my vocal and dramatic skills.

This project was a hybrid of music research and vocal performance from its inception. It is the performance of music that gives life to the compositional techniques that constitute its framework. Furthermore, for a singer, the sung text is just as important as the vocal line and underlying accompaniment. Singing is the only form of music that actually utilizes words, articulated by the human voice. Thus, vocal music gives the singer the unique ability to tell a story through both words and music. The marriage of music and words portrays the story of the human condition in a more compelling manner than words or music alone. Thus, opera, operetta, and musical theater works cannot be analyzed from solely text-centered or solely music-centered perspectives; the music and text work synergistically to create a powerful means of storytelling. I was therefore impelled to combine my music analysis with a live performance of the repertoire to be studied.

I also made a conscious decision to engage in a detailed study of musical storytelling by focusing on particular arias and songs in each work, and devoting equal portions of my analysis

to both the text and the music in each selection. Because my central goal was to compare major opera, operetta, and musical theater productions, I first selected the works to be analyzed, choosing productions that told similar stories and contained repertoire that suited my voice type and level of vocal development. I then chose a central theme to link my analysis of the paired works.

I paired *Cendrillon* with *Cinderella* for obvious reasons, as both works draw upon the same version of the same beloved fairytale. In my comparative analysis of these two works, I focus on the ways in which composers create a convincingly fantastical world, while still making characters in the story relatable to the audience. The fairy godmother epitomizes magic in Cinderella's story. Therefore, my analysis in Chapter II illustrates the distinct compositional techniques that Massenet and Rodgers employ to transform this otherworldly and enchanting character into someone with whom the audience can easily identify.

I paired the seemingly disparate *Die Zauberföte* with *Once Upon A Mattress* after realizing that both works actually share numerous plot and character similarities. I ultimately focused my analysis on *Die Zauberflöte's* Pamina and *Mattress'* Fred. Although Pamina and Fred share the same hopes, desires, and difficulties throughout their respective productions, Mozart makes Pamina a stereotypically serious opera heroine, while Rodgers transforms the star of a classic fairytale into a comical modern-day princess. In Chapter III, I analyze the compositional techniques that create these respective personas. I also draw upon particular historical eras and musical genres, to demonstrate how Pamina and Fred's musical characterizations reflect two distinct reasons behind storytelling—to convey a moral message or to entertain and enthrall an audience.

I paired *The Telephone* with *My Fair Lady* because stories, particularly musical stories, are often centered on romance and romantic turmoil. In Chapter IV, I focus on miscommunication between the two central couples, Ben and Lucy (*The Telephone)* and Higgins and Eliza (*My Fair Lady*), and analyze the musical techniques employed to highlight the unfolding romantic conflict.

Once I had chosen the six works and divided them into three analytical pairs, I began the comparative analysis, using specific numbers and arias to support the central theme that links each pair. I used the repertoire in my accompanying honors recital as a starting point, and fleshed out the analysis with other arias and songs when appropriate. I analyzed the music for this written thesis while simultaneously learning the repertoire for the accompanying recital. I also watched recorded performances, studied the libretti and books of each work, and drew upon my knowledge from music history and theory classes as necessary.

Through this written thesis and accompanying honors recital, I integrate my knowledge and skills as a scholar and singer to demonstrate the incredible storytelling power of opera, operetta, and musical theater. I hope that my work will encourage other scholars and singers to do the same.

CHAPTER I: *CENDRILLON & CINDERELLA*

Magic Amidst the Mundane: The Paradoxical Nature of the Fairy Godmother

The story of Cinderella has captivated people for centuries. The tale of a girl who rises above her abusive stepfamily, marries a handsome prince, and acquires a wonderful new life with the help of her fairy godmother, is a timeless classic. In 1697, French author and lawyer Charles Perrault (1628-1703) penned the most beloved version of this fairytale, introducing audiences to the now iconic fairy godmother, pumpkin carriage, and glass slippers.[2] Two notable musical settings of Perrault's classic fairytale include *Cendrillon*, a nineteenth century French opera by Jules Massenet (1842-1912), and *Cinderella*, an American musical by Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960). Debuted in late 1899, *Cendrillon* is a powerful, yet humorous work that entertains audiences with its whimsical plot, witty characters, and delightfully happy ending. *Cinderella* retells Perrault's cherished story through a lovely combination of entertaining dialogue and catchy songs that allow for both comedy and moments of reflection.[3]

In order to effectively create the spellbinding world of Perrault's fairytale, the composers of both works focus their attention on the fairy godmother, the ultimate source of the story's magic and the orchestrator of Cinderella's fate. In the following analysis, I discuss how both Massenet and Rodgers bring the fairy godmother to life through specific musical techniques. Each creates a character that is convincingly magical, yet genuine and relatable.

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[2] Charles Perrault, *The Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault, by Charles Perault, et al.* translated by Robert Samber and K.E. Manison, Illustrated by Harry Clarke. The Project Gutenberg, 209, ebook, 29021, accessed October 13, 2015.

[3] *Cinderella* debuted in 1957 as a CBS television film, starring Julie Andrews (1935—). The production has since undergone numerous revisions and re-castings for both stage and television performances. I used the 1957 production in my analysis.

<u>Comparative analysis of "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére…Je veux que cette enfant charmante"
& "Fol-de-Rol"/Impossible/It's Possible!"</u>

Cendrillon and *Cinderella* share more than a common storyline. Both Massenet and

Rodgers' music portrays the fairy godmother as a character that straddles both the human and

supernatural realms. Although they use different compositional techniques, both composers

ultimately create a fairy godmother who draws in the audience with the novelty of her magic and

captivates them with her ability to relate to the human condition.

Cendrillon

La Fée, Massenet's fairy godmother, plays a prominent role in *Cendrillon*, and is

extensively featured in Act I, Scene IV, as well as in the second tableau of Act III. In these

scenes, La Fée's soaring coloratura arias demonstrate her power and highlight her multifarious

nature. "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére" and "Je veux que cette enfant charmante,"[4] the fairy

godmother's first two arias, highlight Massenet's ability to musically juxtapose two conflicting

aspects of La Fée's character—that of a magical, other-worldly being, and that of a loving

mother who wishes to relieve Cendrillon's[5] suffering.

La Fée first appears after a heartbreaking scene, during which Cendrillon dreams of

attending the ball, but ultimately becomes resigned to her bleak fate ("Reste au foyer, petit

grillon"—Stay by the hearth, poor cricket!"). In response to Cendrillon's laments, La Fée sings a

series of intricate, through-composed arias that flow seamlessly into each other. I will focus on

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[4] Both arias feature a chorus of sprites, as well as a brief interjection from Cendrillon herself. However, I focused on La Fée's character in my analysis.

[5] In keeping with Perrault's version of the tale, Massenet's Cinderella has a different given name—Lucette. However, she is often referred to as Cendrillon, given that she spends much of her time working as a servant, save the few moments when she can rests by the hearth, amidst the cinders. *Cendrillon* does not explicitly refer to the origins of Cinderella's nickname, but Lucette and Cendrillon are used interchangeably throughout the opera. For clarity, I will use the name, Cendrillon, in my analysis.

her first two arias in the following analysis. For clarity, I have combined these arias and grouped

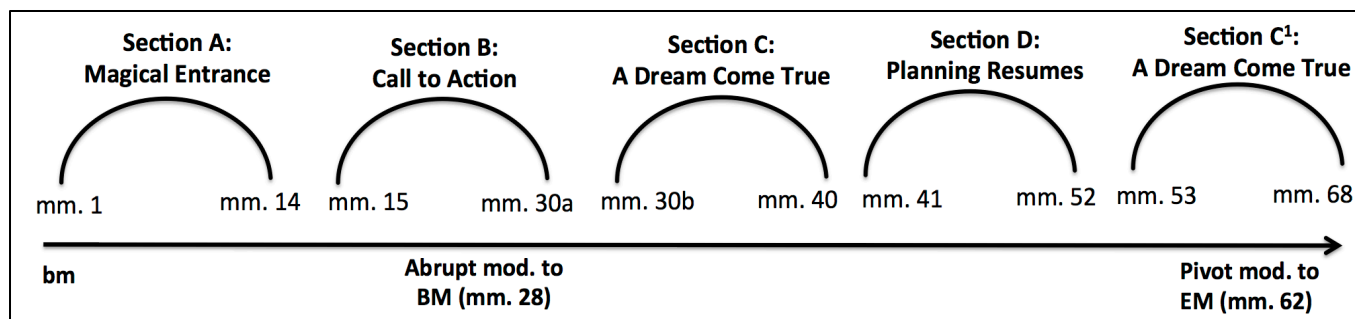them into five sections, as shown in the following schematic and accompanying text:

Figure 1.1: Form of "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére…Je veux que cette enfant charmante." in *Cendrillon* by Massenet.[6]

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[6] Jules Massenet, *Cendrillon* (Paris: Heugel & Cie, 1899 edition, 1983 reprinting), 87-95. My measure numbers begin with the first measure on page 87 and continue to the end of page 95.

French	English-Literal Translation
Section A:	**Section A:**
Ah! Douce enfant, ta plainte legere	Ah! Sweet child,
Comme l'haileine d'une fleur,	Your plaint subdued, like the breath of a flower.
Vient de monter jusqu'a mon Coeur.	Has just risen up to my heart.
Ta marrane te voit et te protégé.	Your godmother sees you and protects you.
Ah! espére!	Ah! Have hope!
(Chorus: espére!)	Chorus (Have hope!)
Section B:	**Section B:**
Sylphes, lutins, follets, accourez a ma voix.	Sylphs, sprites, elves, come running at my voice
De tous les horizons, a travers les espaces.	From all horizons, across all space.
Suivez exactement mes lois,	Follow exactly my laws,
Apportez-moi tous vos talents, tous vos graces!	Bring to me all your tricks and your graces.
(Chorus: Que nous ordonnes tu? Nous ecoutons tes lois.)	(Chorus: What do you wish us to do? We are listening to your wishes.)
Section C:	**Section C:**
Je veux que cette enfant charmante, que voici,	I wish that this charming child that is here
Soit aujourd'hui hors de souci je le veux!	Be today without cares, I wish it!
Et que par vous, splendidement parée,	And that by you splendidly adorned,
Elle connaisse enfin le Bonheur a son tour…	She [may] know at last happiness.
Section D:	**Section D:**
Je veux qu'aux fetes de la cour	I wish that at the festivities at the court
Elle soit la plus belle et la plus admirée.	She be the loveliest and the most admired one.
Section C':	**Section C[1]:**
O, ma petite Cendrillon, fleur d'innocence et d'amour,	Oh my little Cendrillon, flower of innocence and love,
Sur toi je veille, o Cendrillon!	Over you I watch, Oh Cendrillon!

Figure 1.2: "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére…Je veux que cette enfant charmante," from *Cendrillon* by Massenet, French text and English translation. [7]

Massenet realistically portrays La Fée's power and magic in Sections A, B, and D, and

reserves sections C and C[1] for moments when La Fée shows her warmer, tenderer side. In

Section A, Massenet pairs La Fée's sudden appearance with an enchanting series of rapidly

repeated scalar figures on the dominant pedal in B minor, followed by a series of non-functional

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[7] Nico Castel, *French Opera Libretti Vol. III* (New York: Leyerle Publishing, 2005), 133-134.

chromatic wedge chords (see Example 1.1). This "magic motive"[8] features an ascending

chromatic motion in the bass and alto parts and a descending chromatic motion in the soprano

and tenor parts, and it sounds twice before La Fée begins to sing. Interspersed between the first

few vocal lines, the motive recurs in various forms throughout the aria. Massenet aurally depicts

La Fée's magic through the tonal instability, chromaticism, and swirling rhythmic patterns of this

motive. This "magic motive" not only sets the scene and creates an aura of suspense and

mystery, but it also suggests that the character entering the stage is a figure of the supernatural

world.

Example 1.1: "Magic motive," from "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére," in *Cendrillon* by Massenet, mm. 1-2.

At the end of Section A, after La Fée summons spirits from all corners of her magical

realm, Massenet recomposes and augments the "magic motive" for a grand orchestral interlude

that transitions into Section B (see Example 1.2). The swirls in the strings evoke the sense of the

fairy's loyal minions descending upon Cendrillon's hearth. Massenet aurally depicts the

scampering of these dainty creatures through a melodic sequence and staccato parallel octaves.[9]

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[8] Throughout this thesis, I have named particular motives for ease of reference. All of my original names for these motives are in quotes.

[9] The spirits actually appear during this moment in the opera. In Bertrand de Billy's production of *Cendrillon* at the Royal Opera Theater, the spirits were already onstage at the beginning of Section A. However, during the orchestral interlude, the spirits ran to La Fée to receive further instructions.

Example 1.2: Orchestral Interlude, from "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére," in *Cendrillon* by Jules Massenet, mm. 20-24.

Massenet also weaves other magical moments within sections A, B, and D. The "La Fée's motive," a recurring chromatic pattern of 16th and 32nd notes decorated with appoggiaturas, trills, and other ornamentations, accompanies La Fée's marvelous appearance before Cendrillon (see Example 1.3).

Example 1.3: "La Fée's motive," from "Douce enfant, ta plainte lègére," in *Cendrillon* by Massenet, mm. 5-6.

Massenet further creates an air of otherworldly enchantment by maintaining tonal instability and chromaticism in the underlying accompaniment. He weaves magic into its harmonic fabric, through parallel minor thirds, additional chromatic wedge chords, and numerous chromatic and mixture chords, including a FrA^6 chord (mm. 9), a Neapolitan sixth chord (mm. 27), and ♭VII and ♭III chords (mm. 45, 50, 52, and 63).

Additionally, La Fée's ethereal tone and unusual speech patterns mark her as an otherworldly figure in *Cendrillon*, in the same way that Yoda's warbling voice and backwards manner of speaking give him a magical aura in the Star Wars franchise. The fragmented nature of her vocal lines suggests that La Fée does not truly speak the language of mortals. Massenet often cuts off La Fée's lines mid-phrase, separating them with staccato patterns, triplets, syncopated rhythms, melismas, and trills. He also adds numerous accidentals and abrupt intervallic leaps to further disrupt the melodic contour. Furthermore, Massenet writes La Fée's arias for a coloratura soprano, who sits in the highest range of all the soprano fachs.[10] Thus, the

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[10] The Fach system is a German system of voice categorization, based on range, timbre, size, and flexibility. This system designates major vocal categories (e.g. soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, and bass), as well as subcategories within each voice type (e.g. lyric soprano, dramatic soprano, coloratura soprano, etc.).

registration, timbre, and agility of La Feé's voice also highlight her supernatural power and magical abilities.

While Massenet's compositional choices in Sections A, B, and D portray La Fée's power and magic, the music of his contrasting sections help express how La Fée empathizes with Cendrillon without relinquishing her power. For example, in Sections C and C[1], La Fée transforms into a loving, gentle, and more human character as she comforts the sleeping Cendrillon. Massenet sets these two sections in surprisingly diatonic harmonies and a lilting triple meter. In these sections, Massenet uses chromaticism sparingly, and the underlying harmonic progression primarily consists of I, IV, and V chords, often featuring plagal extensions. The simple music, reminiscent of a lullaby, shifts dramatically in harmony and rhythm to highlight the nurturing, motherly aspect of La Fée's character.

Additionally, Massenet alters the melodic framework to create a soothing, gentle vocal line with a smooth and consistent shape. He sets the melody in the lower-middle area of the coloratura voice, creating a richer and warmer sound. He peppers the vocal score with specific musical instructions for the singer to articulate the lines in a tender, caressing, manner—*bien chanté, carresant, avec charme, en cédant,* etc. Massenet thus replaces the lofty and terrifying fairy queen with a sweeter and more soothing persona. Although Cendrillon is still asleep, Massenet's gentle music makes it seem as though La Fée is truly talking to her and comforting her with the promise of future happiness. Through the music of these two C sections, La Fée effectively comes down to earth to play the role of a mother, watching over her little girl and planning to ensure her happiness. Because La Fée is just as loving as she is powerful, Cendrillon will no longer remain a cricket by the hearth—her transformation is about to begin.

Cinderella

Like Massenet's La Fée, the fairy godmother of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* possesses a depth of character and an uncanny ability to relate to the human condition, despite her supernatural abilities. Rodgers reveals the dichotomous nature of *Cinderella's* fairy godmother through a series of musical codes in her three songs, "Fol-de-rol," "Impossible," and "It's Possible." Like La Fée's series of arias, the fairy godmother's songs flow seamlessly into each other, ultimately ending with Cinderella's transformation into a beautiful princess. The fairy godmother's songs differ from La Fée's arias in their heavy reliance on jazz, rather than late-Romantic compositional techniques. In keeping with the standards of the Golden Age of Broadway and classic American popular songs,[11] extended chords (especially added sixths), chord clusters, and syncopated rhythms permeate the fairy godmother's music. While the structure of the songs may suggest music written purely for entertainment purposes, Rodgers' subtle compositional nuances reflect a deeper message embedded within the fairy godmother's character. In these songs, Rodgers portrays both the godmother's magical power and her human practicality, as she convinces Cinderella that the only way to achieve happiness is to actively seek it.

In "Fol-de-rol," Rodgers establishes the fairy godmother's playful and close, yet blunt and unpretentious relationship with Cinderella. Like Massenet's La Fée, Rodgers' fairy godmother arrives onstage shortly after Cinderella's stepfamily goes to the ball, leaving the young girl to daydream in order to escape the misfortunes of her life ("In My Own Little Corner, Reprise*"*). Just as Massenet pairs La Fée's entrance with an abrupt musical transition, so does Rodgers mark the fairy godmother's sudden arrival by dramatically shifting the musical mood

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[11] Allen Forte, *Listening to Classic American Popular Songs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xi-xiii.

from one that is slow and dreamy to one that is lively and upbeat. Without waiting for

Cinderella's startled reaction, the godmother launches into "Fol-de-rol," greeting the young girl

with a teasing and bouncy admonishment:

> Fol-der-ol and fiddledydee,
> Fiddledy, faddledy, foddle,
> All the wishes in the world are poppycock and twaddle!

The godmother's nonsensical words, coupled with the jaunty syncopations and triplets in

her vocal line, reflect the playful nature of her character and suggest her familiarity with

Cinderella. In contrast to Cendrillon, who was completely oblivious to La Fée's existence until

Scene IV of the opera, Cinderella is actually quite close to her godmother in this version of the

beloved tale. Both the initial music of "Fol-der-ol," and the ensuing dialogue suggest a close

relationship between the two women:

> **Cinderella:** "Oh godmother! Oh I am glad to see you!"
> **Fairy Godmother:** "I thought you might be lonely and I knew what you'd be doing."

With this brief greeting, the godmother continues to sing, implying that she understands

Cinderella's current predicament far better than one might initially suspect: "I just knew I would

find you in that same little chair, in the pale pink mist of a foolish dream." This statement is a

direct reference to "In My Own Little Corner," which Cinderella has just finished singing. The

melodic line replicates Cinderella's, only modulated from F major to D major. Clearly, the

godmother has been listening to Cinderella's sighs and fanciful wishes. However, the godmother

does not reproach Cinderella in a condescending manner. Rather, the harmonic shift in the music

suggests a hidden meaning behind the fairy godmother's words. Just as composers often use the

submediant to thwart harmonic expectations with a deceptive cadence, so does Rodgers use a

deceptive modulation to the submediant of F major to suggest that the fairy godmother is trying to trick Cinderella. However, Rodgers' chromatically altered key change to a major mode (VI, rather than vi) suggests that the godmother's motives for deception are genuine and pure. These early hints of deception transform into a more obvious psychological ploy as "Fol-de-rol" transitions into "Impossible." As I show in further analysis of both "Fol-de-rol" and "Impossible," the godmother employs a subtle, yet noble form of deception in order to shake Cinderella out of her complacent misery.
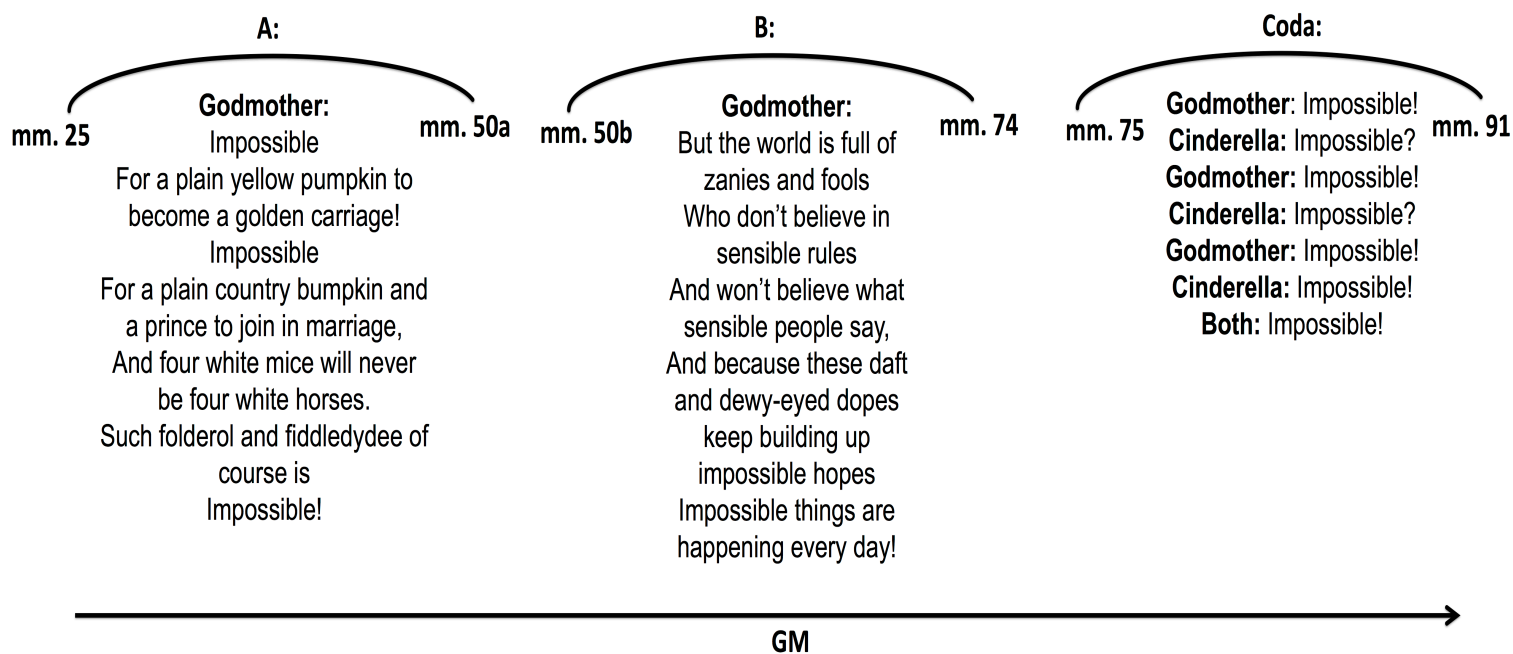
As "Fol-de-rol" continues, Cinderella and the fairy godmother debate about the benefits and dangers of wishing. At the end of the song, the godmother urges Cinderella to shake off her complacency and do something to change her fate, saying,

It's dangerous to believe too much in good fairies and guardian angels…
You get to lean on them too much.
You get in the habit of sitting back and expecting them to do all the work for you.
You've got to help yourself, you know.

After establishing the rapport between Cinderella and the fairy godmother in "Fol-de-rol," Rodgers transitions into "Impossible." In "Impossible," Rodgers expands upon the musical deception in "Fol-de-rol" to suggest that the godmother, much like a parent or mentor, employs reverse psychology on Cinderella in order to trick the young girl out of her complacency. By the end of "Fol-de-rol," Cinderella seems slightly less content to dream about a better life, but she is not yet willing to take matters into her own hands. As Cinderella tells the godmother of her wish that someone would transform her pumpkin and white mice into a beautiful carriage so that she may drive to the ball, she receives a cutting response in the form of "Impossible." Written in binary form and featuring the sprightly syncopations and jazz chords that are now the hallmarks of classic American musical theater, the song, as seen in the schematic below, not only states the

godmother's opinion on the matter, but also reflects Cinderella's unwavering resignation to her

fate (see Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5: Lyrics and overall structure of "Impossible!" from *Cinderella* by Rodgers and Hammerstein.

A:	B:	Coda:
Godmother: Impossible For a plain yellow pumpkin to become a golden carriage! Impossible For a plain country bumpkin and a prince to join in marriage, And four white mice will never be four white horses. Such folderol and fiddledydee of course is Impossible!	**Godmother:** But the world is full of zanies and fools Who don't believe in sensible rules And won't believe what sensible people say, And because these daft and dewy-eyed dopes keep building up impossible hopes Impossible things are happening every day!	**Godmother:** Impossible! **Cinderella:** Impossible? **Godmother:** Impossible! **Cinderella:** Impossible? **Godmother:** Impossible! **Cinderella:** Impossible! **Both:** Impossible!

mm. 25   mm. 50a   mm. 50b   mm. 74   mm. 75   mm. 91

GM

"Impossible" is harmonically straightforward. Although Rodgers occasionally features

recurring chromatic patterns in the accompaniment, he generally composes the song over a tonic

pedal. However, Rodgers adds harmonic complexity to the song in the coda. The coda represents

a back-and-forth musical debate between Cinderella and the godmother about whether or not

Cinderella's dreams are, in fact, impossible (see Figure 1.5). Rodgers builds this debate on a

series of deceptive cadences (alternating V^7 and vi^7 chords in various inversions) and ends the

discussion on a perfect authentic cadence, as both Cinderella and her godmother conclude that

some dreams really are impossible.

The repeated musical rhetoric, underlying deceptive harmonies, and jaunty, upbeat

rhythms of "Impossible," clarify the godmother's musical hints of deception in "Fol-de-rol." The

all-knowing godmother understands that Cinderella is a chronic dreamer, who prefers her imaginative fantasies to real happiness. Thus, the godmother does not immediately dispense her magical powers, but instead motivates Cinderella to define her own destiny. She tells Cinderella that it is impossible to live a happy life, so that the girl will become determined enough to prove that her godmother is wrong. In this context, the tonic pedal that underlies most of "Impossible" represents Cinderella's complacency. As the godmother sings, her music conveys a message that says, "Yes, it is impossible for your life to improve, but that is okay! You do not need to be happy, because you can simply live inside your head!" The deceptive cadences that anchor the coda represent the earliest awakening of Cinderella's inner self. She starts to question whether or not it is impossible to be happy, and the gumption buried within her begins to manifest itself in her persistent question, "Impossible?"

While Cinderella is already bolder by the end of "Impossible," she still needs more convincing before she truly decides to change her fate. As she ponders over the impossibility of it all, she suddenly recalls section B of "Impossible" and gains hope, saying,

Impossible things are happening every day. Is that true, godmother?
Then I continue to build up my impossible hopes for tonight.
And I officially wish…and wish…and wish all those things I said about the mice and the rats."

The godmother, pleased that her trick is beginning to work, places the final touches on her plan by singing the entire song again—this time, interrupted by interjections and counterarguments from an increasingly tenacious Cinderella. By the repeat of the B section, Cinderella, who has had enough of impossibilities, takes over the vocal line. The godmother, pleased that Cinderella has finally learned her lesson, joins the girl in singing the last lines of Section B. In this final repeat, Rodgers eliminates the questioning coda, because Cinderella has

discovered the answer for herself. As the music segues into "The Transformation," the godmother reveals her magical abilities. She transforms Cinderella's pumpkin, mice, and work rags, into a stunning carriage, a dashing set of coachmen, and a beautiful gown during the instrumental interlude and subsequent dialogue. The godmother congratulates Cinderella on her decision to take charge of her own fate, saying, "You wished for it so hard I just had to do it."

Rodgers ends the scene with Cinderella and the fairy godmother driving to the ball, while singing "It's Possible." Here, Rodgers re-composes "Impossible," with altered lyrics that reflect that dreams can come true if people are willing to fight for them. At the end of "It's Possible," Rodgers reestablishes the coda, using the same melodic and harmonic structure as the questioning coda in "Impossible." However, Rodgers changes the sentiment behind the music, as both women now take turns singing "It's possible!" In this final, joyous coda, the deceptive cadences represent Cinderella's amazement at the rapid transformation of her life, and the godmother's playful teasing in response to the girl's uncontainable enthusiasm. Finally, Massenet concludes the song with a perfect authentic cadence concludes the song, as both women emphatically sing, "It's possible!" This diatonic ending thus reflects Cinderella's present happiness and foreshadows her blissful future.

Although both *Cendrillon* and *Cinderella* represent very different eras, cultures, and musical genres, they are united in their ability to convey the same underlying message about a central character. While Massenet and Rodgers use distinct musical storytelling techniques in keeping with their respective musical styles, both composers wed text and music to make a whimsical and frivolous fairytale believable. Massenet's La Fée is beguiling and powerful, yet gentle and compassionate. She is genuinely pained by Cendrillon's suffering, and she uses her powers to the fullest extent in order to make the girl happy. Similarly, Rodgers and

Hammerstein's fairy godmother is both ethereal and matter-of-fact. She is at once a whimsical character and a down-to-earth motherly figure, who tactfully challenges Cinderella's complacency and shapes her into a stronger woman. Ultimately, the music of both *Cendrillon* and *Cinderella* creates a fairy godmother with whom the audience can truly relate—a fairy godmother who is certainly supernatural, but who also understands what it means to be human.

CHAPTER II: *DIE ZAUBERFLÖte & ONCE UPON A MATTRESS*

<u>Contrasting Purposes of Musical Fairytales: Allegories vs. Evolving Entertainment</u>

Fairytales are told for a variety of reasons, and these seemingly whimsical stories often contain an underlying theme or message that is reflective of a shared human experience. If the motives behind such stories were placed on a spectrum, the two opposing ends would contain stories told to convey a moral teaching, and those told to entertain an audience. W. A. Mozart's (1756-1791) lofty *singspiel* opera, *Die Zauberflöte*,[12] and Mary Rodgers (1931-2014) and Marshall Barer's (1923-1998)[13] lively Broadway sensation, *Once Upon A Mattress*, represent these two extreme types of fairytales. Both works share similar plot and character elements. The productions are centered on royal quests and tests, and feature characters with similar personalities and desires, such as the Queen of the Night (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Queen Aggravain (*Mattress*). They also make use of comic relief, and frequently juxtapose comic and serious characters. Aside from differences in musical style and time period, the uniqueness of each work lies in its ability to accomplish a specific storytelling goal. While *Die Zauberflöte* primarily conveys a moral message, *Mattress* primarily provides dazzling entertainment to spark the imagination.

Given Mozart's extensive ties to Freemasonry,[14] the premise of *Die Zauberflöte* centers on the Masonic tenets of friendship, brotherhood, bravery, and virtue, and the opera thus serves more as an allegory than as a fanciful story. *Die Zauberflöte's* characters espouse these Masonic

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[12] *Die Zauberflöte's* libretto, written by impresario Emanuel Schikaneder (1751-1812), is based on a fairytale, entitled "Lulu, or The Magic Flute." This fairytale was originally published in a collection by poet Christophe Martin Wieland (1733-1813).
[13] Marshall Barer also wrote the book for the production, along with Jay Thompson and Dean Fuller.
[14] Schikaneder was also a Freemason.

ideals throughout the opera, and even imply certain principles, such as the Masonic tenets of

marriage, in their arias.[15] In contrast, *Once Upon A Mattress* is a delightfully modern retelling of

Hans Christian Anderson's (1805-1875) beloved fairytale, "The Princess and the Pea." *Mattress*

is "close kin to [the] British pantomime,"[16] a type of nineteenth-century English stage

performance, "loosely based on a fairy-story."[17] Pantomimes were comic variety shows that

featured music, drama, and dance, and mixed the stock characters and familiar plots of

commedia dell'arte with beloved classics, like *Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding Hood,* and

Aladdin.[18]

The objectives that govern both fairytales manifest themselves in the musical portrayal of

Die Zauberflöte's Princess Pamina and *Mattress'* Princess Winifred (Fred). Although both

characters have similar desires and difficulties, the music they sing sets them apart and highlights

the intention behind each story. Mozart portrays Pamina as a serious character to convey the

Masonic principles of dutiful matrimony. In contrast, Rodgers transforms a familiar fairytale

princess into a spunky, comical, and modern heroine.

Comparative analysis of "Ach, ich fühls" ("Ah, I feel it") and "Happily Ever After"

Die Zauberflöte's Pamina is a serious operatic heroine, who laments her inability to

control her own fate. *Mattress'* Fred is a clumsy swamp princess, who has the gall to "swim the

moat," march up to a foreign kingdom, and win herself a man.[19] However, when stripped down

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[15] The lofty text and lyrical music of "Bei Männern," Papageno and Pamina's duet in Act I, Scene II of the opera, implies the Masonic belief that a dutiful marriage is the key to nobility and godliness.

[16] Ben Brantley, "Review: In 'Once Upon a Mattress,' Jackie Hoffman as Paradoxical Charmer," *The New York Times,* December 13, 2015, accessed January 5, 2016.

[17] "Pantomime," *The Oxford Dictionary of Music,* 2nd ed. rev.*, Oxford Music Online,* Oxford University Press, accessed January 5, 2016.

[18] Jennifer Schacker, "Fairy Gold: The Economics and Erotics of Fairy-Tale Pantomine," *Marvels & Tales* 26 (2012):154-162.

[19] Mary Rodgers and Marshall Barer, *Once Upon A Mattress (*New York, NY R&H Theatricals, 1959): 13.

to the bare bones of their characters, both Pamina and Fred are quite similar. They yearn for true love, but encounter obstacles in their romantic endeavors. Mozart and Rodgers underscore Pamina and Fred's feelings of frustration in drastically different ways in order to reflect the underlying purpose of each production. Pamina's traditional role of a serious heroine fits the Masonic ideals of womanhood and marriage that permeate *Die Zauberflöte*. In contrast, Fred's comical, over-the-top nature in *Mattress* aligns with the pantomime tradition of reinterpreting fairytales to enchant a modern audience. Below, I discuss how Mozart reflects Pamina's troubles in the musical sadness of "Ach, ich fühl's," and how Rodgers caricaturizes Fred's predicament in "Happily Ever After."

Die Zauberflöte

A heartbroken Pamina sings "Ach, ich fühl's" in Act II of *Die Zauberflöte*, after Tamino brushes her off in an attempt to uphold a temporary vow of silence and overcome his purification trials.[20] An unknowing Pamina believes that her love is unrequited, and she vows to kill herself by the end of the aria. Figure 2.1 provides the text of the aria:

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[20]Tamino's purification trials, which are ordered by King Sarastro in order to prepare the young prince for initiation into the holy brotherhood of the Sun Kingdom, directly allude to the Masonic brotherhood that was so important to Mozart and Schikaneder.

German	English-Literal Translation[21]
Ach, ich fühl's, es ist verschwunden,	Ah, I feel it, it has disappeared,
ewig hin mein ganzes Glück,	Forever gone [is] all [the] happiness!
ewig hin der Liebe Glück!	Forever gone [is the] love's happiness!
nimmer kommt ihr, Wonnestunde,	Never come back, you hours of bliss,
meinem Herzen meher zurück!	To my heart evermore!
sieh', Tamino, diese Tränen	See, Tamino, these tears
flißsen, Trauter, dir allein!	Flowing, beloved, for you alone!
Fühlst du nicht der Liebe Sehnen,	Feel you not the love's longing,
so wird Ruh' im Tode sein!	So will peace in death be!

Figure 2.1: "Ach, ich fühls," from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart, German text and English translation.

The short aria, with a simple chord-based accompaniment, only features one brief modulation to B♭ major before returning to the gloomy tonic of G minor. However, beneath its simple façade lies a complicated, emotionally rich, and deceptively demanding vocal line that expresses real human pain.

The andante aria sounds even slower and more dirge-like, due to the relentless pounding of the low, eighth note chord pattern that infuses most of the accompaniment. Mozart suggests the weight of Pamina's grief through the slow, sustained vocal line, underscored by the thumping of the orchestral accompaniment. Pamina is so devastated by her perceived loss of Tamino, that her own heartache is slowly killing her.

Mozart's vocal line also illustrates Pamina's visceral response to rejection through a kind of musical weeping. Mozart breaks apart Pamina's text with eighth rests that separate short phrases. However, the musical mood of the aria makes it seem as though each eighth rest lasts slightly longer than usual. This augmentative effect is created by a performance practice that requires the singer to breathe and articulate final consonants on the eighth rest at the last possible

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[21] Emanuel Schikaneder and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, "Ach, ich fühl's," trans. Bard Suverkrop, *IPA Source,* accessed January 5, 2016.

second.[22] The fragmentation of the vocal line, taken with the slightly delayed cutoffs, ultimately creates an aural impression of sobs and sighs. The fact that Pamina is actually crying as she sings makes her grief all the more believable.

Although the role of Pamina is usually sung by a lyric soprano, the vocal line tends to dwell in the lower-middle range of the female voice (C♯4 is the lowest note of the aria), creating additional vocal challenges. Although it features a few G5s, A♭5s, and B♭5s, the overall trajectory of the vocal line pulls downward. Every leap in the vocal line is followed by a descent, sometimes by a series of passing or escape tones, and sometimes by a melismatic sixteenth note figure. When Pamina sings the word, "Tode" ("death") in measures 26, 32, and 35-37, this downward melodic contour recurs (see Example 2.1). Pamina always ends "Tode" on a relatively low note, even if a melisma in the middle of the word takes it to a vocally higher place. Thus, the vocal line itself reflects Pamina's downheartedness and misery, signifying her decision to bury her pain along with her life.

Example 2.1: Downward melodic contour centered on "Tode" ("Death"), as seen in mm. 37-38 of "Ach, ich fühl's," from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart.

Mozart's disconnected vocal line, which is aurally jarring for the audience and physically challenging for the singer, also creates a sense of heightened emotion and intense suffering. The sparingly used high notes (see Example 2.2) often accentuate key words and phrases, such as "Liebe" ("love"—G5 to B♭5 in mm. 6), "fühlst du nicht" ("feel you not"—G5 to A♭5 in mm. 27), and "so wird Ruh" ("so will peace"—G4 to G5 octave leap in mm. 33-34). However, in each of these instances, the vocal line immediately jumps downward, usually landing on a note that has been chromatically altered to create an dissonant intervallic leap (e.g. diminished 12th from "Ruh" to "im" in mm. 34, and the diminished 7ths on "Liebe" and from "nicht" to "der" in mm. 6 and 27, respectively), as shown in Example 2.2.

Example 2.2: High-low note chromatic leaps, as seen in mm. 27 of "Ach, ich fühl's," from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart..

Mozart's formal structure also portrays Pamina's troubled mind and irrational state of grief. Rather than following a more standard *da capo* form, the aria flits from phrase to phrase. However, Mozart often repeats whole phrases, or at least, the tail ends of phrases, and he usually notates these repeats much higher on the staff for emphasis. For example, when Pamina first sings "ewig hin mein ganzes Glück," ("forever gone is love's happiness") she moves from a C5 to an F♯4. However, when she immediately repeats this line, she moves from a G5 to a D5. The higher, and therefore naturally louder recurrence of the idea that Pamina's love and happiness are gone reflects the princess' belief that without Tamino, life is not worth living. Perhaps the most stirring example of such powerful repetition occurs at the climax of the aria, when Pamina sings the phrase, "fühlst du nicht der Liebe Sehnen" ("feel you not love's longing") for a third and final time (see Example 2.3). Mozart slows the tempo even further, via quarter and eight notes, as the melodic line escalates to a sustained B♭5 on the first syllable of "Liebe" until the phrase ends with an abrupt leap downward by a diminished 7th. The sheer agony in Pamina's heart could not be more apparent, as she makes one final plea for Tamino's love before sealing her own dismal fate.

Example 2.3: Pamina's final agonizing plea in mm. 28-30 of "Ach, ich fühl's, from *Die Zauberflöte* by Mozart.

Pamina's pain may seem silly and perhaps misogynistic to twenty-first century viewers. However, within the Masonic context of the opera, Pamina's suffering makes perfect sense. She longs to fulfill her duty by serving as a noble wife, thus allowing both her and Tamino to reach the loftiest state of being. As a sheltered maiden held captive in a foreign land, Pamina's only hope for a Masonic marriage is Tamino. Thus, her perceived rejection by Tamino is magnified on a larger, more spiritual and philosophical scale. Why must Pamina unnecessarily suffer before reuniting with Tamino at the end of the opera? Perhaps Pamina, like Tamino, must also undergo purification trials to become virtuous and honorable. Although Pamina does not formally undergo such trials (this is, after all, exclusively a brotherhood), perhaps she must also be tested by bitterness and pain in order to become a dutiful wife who will help Tamino lead the kingdom. Thus, the music of Mozart's serious heroine effectively highlights the Masonic principles of marriage and a noble life.

Once Upon A Mattress

In contrast to Pamina's mournful aria, "Ach, ich fühls," Fred's comic and spirited song, "Happily Ever After," helps transform a fairytale classic into the cutting-edge musical harlequinade *Once Upon A Mattress*. Fred sings the piece while she is alone in her bedchamber, attempting to study for the highly mysterious royalty test concocted by Queen Aggravain. As she peruses volumes of royal history books, all of which feature princesses whose lives end in joyous matrimony, Fred cynically ponders her own lack of a husband. As she sings of the happy endings achieved by Cinderella, Snow White, and Rapunzel, Fred becomes increasingly determined to marry Prince Dauntless and have a happy ending of her own.

Although the general sentiment of the "Happily Ever After" is similar to Pamina's heavy aria, Fred's unhappiness is expressed via music that is spunky and downright funny. The piece, which generally alternates between D♭M and A♭M (with brief modulations to EM and B♭M), is in simple verse-chorus form. Performed at a moderate tempo with a vocal line largely based on triplets and syncopated rhythms, "Happily Ever After" embodies the relaxed, expressive nature of the blues. Both the vocal line and accompaniment are peppered with blue notes throughout the entire song, giving the music a slightly sensual, yet mostly irritated and fiery twang. Additionally, the music moves at a relaxed, yet steady pace to prevent the song from being completely tied to the more traditional form of the slow, mournful blues.

The influence of the blues on "Happily Ever After" is significant, because the song actually uses the musical style to create comedy. At its core, traditional blues is "performance music."[23] "The *delivery* of the song, and the blues persona adopted by the singer, takes the blues to new levels, as the blues singer intensely embodies "'suffering'" and "'cynicism,'" as well as "'celebration'" and "'hope.'"[24] The bluesy music of "Happily Ever After" creates a unique mood for the scene, as it satirizes the blues genre and transforms Fred's seemingly desperate situation into a comical one. Fred has not suffered any tragic loss, nor is she the victim of unrequited love. As seen in the excerpt below, Fred simply sings "Happily Ever After" to vent about the current status of her love life (or lack thereof), and find fault with silly fairytale heroines who easily find true love.

Ella, the girl of the cinders, did the wash and the walls and the winders.
But she landed a prince who was brawny and blue-eyed and blond.
Still I honestly doubt that she could ever have done it without that crazy lady with the wand.
(*Spoken: Cinderella had outside help!*)
I have no one but me. Fairy Godmother, Godmother, Godmother,

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[23] Jaques D. Lacava, "The Theatricality of the Blues," *Black Music Research Journal* 12 (1992):127.
[24] Ibid.

Where can you be?
(*Spoken: I haven't got a Fairy Godmother. I haven't even got a godmother... I have a mother…a plain, ordinary woman…*)

Fred's sarcastic spoken asides also prevent the audience from taking the princess' plight too seriously. By placing such decidedly humorous lyrics within the context of a genre known for the expression of deep, personal emotion, "Happily Ever After" successfully turns the serious concerns of a princess into the comical quandary of a spunky single woman. It is so like Fred to complain about her state of affairs in the blues style. She is an over-the-top, hammy kind of girl, and thus her current frustrations must be musically described in a similar manner.

Musical turnarounds after most phrases offer further evidence of the song's schmaltzy comic blues style. They are often rather brief (see Example 2.4), but they also extend into substantial interludes between each verse of the song. Sometimes, they consist of blues-infused triplet chords played by the brass. At other times, they are bluesy flute and oboe triplet patterns that lead into Fred's next line. These turnarounds affirm Fred's cynical rhetoric and add a musical spiciness to Fred's already saucy vocal line.

Example 2.4: Blues-inflused turnaround (shown in red) in "Happily Ever After," from *Once Upon A Mattress* by Mary Rodgers & Marshall Barer, mm. 19 & 20. Blue notes are highlighted.

The exaggerated drama reaches its pinnacle at the end of the song, as a resolute Fred sings her final, lines:

> For I know that I'll never be happily ever after
> 'Til after I'm a bride.
> Then I'll be happily happy. Yes, happily happy!
> And thoroughly satisfied!

The ever-bluesy accompaniment becomes busier, and the orchestra pulls out all possible stops just after Fred sings, "Yes, happily happy!" Rodgers includes a harp *glissando* and an ascending blues-scale-based triplet pattern in the horns that *crescendos* up to Fred's final line, "And thoroughly satisfied!" (see Example 2.5). Rodgers accentuates the word, "satisfied" by placing the first syllable on the offbeat. By setting the word on a soulful blue note (C♭, or ♭3 in A♭M), Rodgers further underscores Fred's determination to "satisfy" her longing to be married (see Example 2.5). The song culminates in another blues-scale crescendo to a *fortissimo*, before cadencing in A♭M (see Example 2.5). The toe-tapping, jaunty, and overly grand music makes Fred's situation all the more humorous to the audience, as it sets her apart from the serious, Pamina-like heroines of typical fairytales.

Example 2.5: Schmaltzy climax of "Happily Ever After," from *Once Upon A Mattress* by Mary Rodgers and Marshall Barer, mm. 74-80. Dynamic shifts and blue notes are highlighted.

As a result of their distinctive musical styles and specific storytelling objectives, Mozart and Rodgers portray the similar characters of Pamina and Fred, respectively, in unique ways. Pamina fits the traditional mold of a serious heroine because she was created to represent the Masonic ideals of womanhood and marriage. In contrast, Fred breaks this mold and is portrayed as a comic character, in order to continue the pantomime tradition of reinterpreting fairytales to suit a modern audience. Thus, while both heroines grapple with loneliness and the desire to wed, Mozart reflects Pamina's troubles in the musical gravity of "Ach, ich fühl's," and Rodgers caricaturizes Fred's frustrations in order to reflect the ranting of a fiery, modern fairytale heroine.

CHAPTER III: *THE TELEPHONE & MY FAIR LADY*

Musical Subtext: Miscommunication As A Barrier To Romance

Miscommunication is the fundamental element of musical romance in *The Telephone* and *My Fair Lady*. In *The Telephone,* timid Ben struggles to express his love for Lucy, whose unceasing telephone conversations interrupt his feeble attempts to propose. In *My Fair Lady*, Eliza Doolittle challenges Professor Higgins' rigid notions of life, women, and societal rank, forcing him to grapple with his emotions in disastrously comical ways. In both *The Telephone* and *My Fair Lady*, Menotti and Loewe's music creates subtext that reveals the couples' true feelings, sometimes even before the characters themselves realize that they are in love. Their music also underscores romantic tension and creates moments of personal reflection. Most importantly, their music not only highlights the characters' flaws that lead to romantic discord, but also reconciles both couples in the end.

Comparative Analyses of Musical Selections from *The Telephone & My Fair Lady*

The Telephone

Throughout the course of the complex, twenty-minute comedy *The Telephone*, Menotti's musical subtext[25] radically transforms the initially dissonant and disconnected relationship between Ben and his obnoxiously chatty girlfriend, Lucy, into one that is harmonious and unified (see Figure 3.1). Below, I discuss how Menotti's musical accompaniment first highlights the reasons behind Ben and Lucy's miscommunication, and then reconciles the couple at the end of the operetta.

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[25] Throughout this analysis, I use the phrase, "musical subtext," to refer to the ways in which Menotti's accompaniment highlights Ben and Lucy's inner thoughts and emotions.
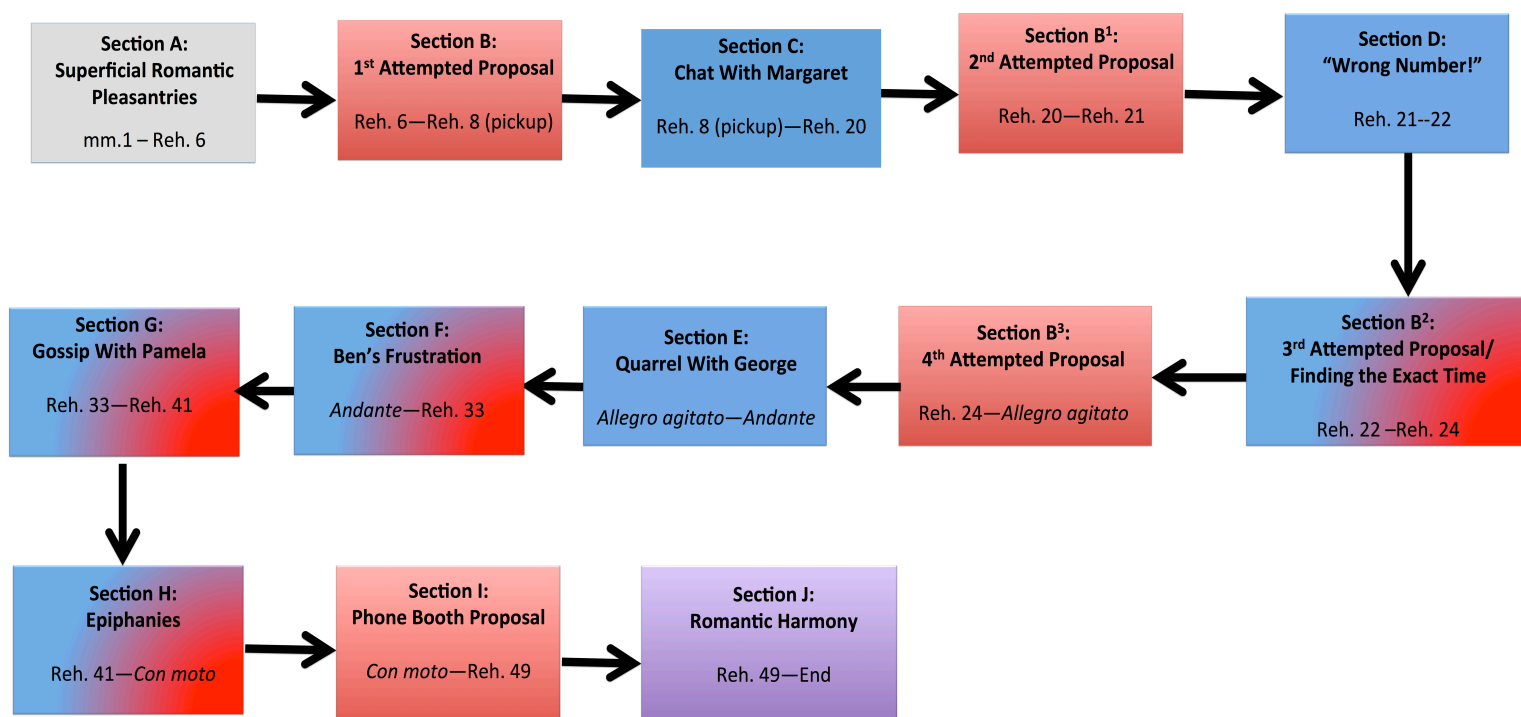
Figure 3.1: Sequence of Ben and Lucy's musical communication in *The Telephone* by Menotti. Red = Ben's proposal attempts. Blue = Lucy's disruptive phone calls. Multicolored = Ben and Lucy's frustration and misunderstandings. Purple = ultimate romantic harmony in Ben and Lucy's relationship.

Menotti portrays Ben's emotional conflict throughout the operetta with a recurring, tonally-conflicted motive (see Figure 3.1, Sections B, B^1, B^2, and B^3). First appearing in Section B, after Ben expresses a desire to ask Lucy an important question before embarking on a long trip, this "proposal motive" consists of several dissonant chords in the key of C major (see Example 3.1). The motive precedes Ben's tentative initial phrase, and thereafter, the motive separates each of Ben's fumbling lines.

Example 3.1: *"Proposal Motive"* (shown in red) in *The Telephone* by Menotti, excerpt between Rh. 7 & 8.

Within the "proposal motive," Menotti harmonically, melodically, and rhythmically underscores Ben's anxiety and inner conflict about proposing. He offsets Ben's lines with dissonant chords that mix the C major and minor modes through the conflicting E♭/E♮ and A♭/A♮. Menotti then builds upon the tonal ambiguity of the proposal motive by obscuring the original diatonic key in Ben's *a capella* vocal line, and adding to the tonal conflict with B♭

natural seventh and Phrygian D♭ scale steps. Menotti further reflects Ben's nervous state of mind by writing the vocal line with choppy rhythms and using rests to disrupt the continuity of Ben's phrases (see Example 3.1).

Each sounding of the "proposal motive" corresponds with a trivial interruption from Lucy. Lucy's diatonic oscillations between the tonic and dominant of C major, which sound squarely on beats one and two, suggest that she is oblivious to Ben's anxiety (see Example 3.1). As Ben repeatedly tries to propose, the "proposal motive" returns in subsequent sections, amidst numerous interruptions via Lucy's lengthy telephone conversations. Often, Lucy sings over the "proposal motive," as she does in Section B. Through these elisions, Menotti implies that Ben is unable to express how he feels, and that Lucy is unable to listen to and communicate with her boyfriend. Thus, Lucy's inconsequential, yet irritating interruptions muffle Ben's feelings. However, as Ben's frustration grows, Menotti elides the "proposal motive" with Ben's attempts to hold Lucy's attention, suggesting Ben's increasing frustration with Lucy's continual use of the telephone. Over time, Ben's frustration escalates to the point that the "proposal motive" disappears. Menotti ultimately replaces the motive with a brief, but heavily chromatic and stirring aria, allowing Ben to express his inner turmoil as he desperately attempts to cut the phone cord with a pair of scissors (see Section F, Figure 3.1).

While Menotti's music suggests that Ben contributes to the dysfunctional relationship through his hesitation to express his true feelings, it also demonstrates that Lucy's fault lies in her ability to incessantly prattle. Although goodhearted and sweet, Lucy continually talks over others in order to assert her point of view or move the conversation along at a faster pace. In fact, the music of Lucy's numerous telephone conversations highlights her poor communication skills. Menotti composes each of Lucy's conversations as an aria, where Lucy's coloratura vocal line

features tidbits of gossip, and the underlying accompaniment represents the replies from the person on the other end of the line.

Menotti also aurally depicts the personality of each person with whom Lucy speaks, via the rhythm, dynamics, and tonal framework of each separate accompaniment, while he uses Lucy's vocal line to suggest how she feels about each person with whom she converses. For example, Menotti implies that Lucy finds her friend, Margaret, pleasant, but tiresomely chatty, in the first aria, "Hello? Oh, Margaret, it's you."[26] Menotti represents Margaret's jabbering through relentless, pulsing, diatonic chord patterns that make up the majority of the accompaniment (see Example 3.2). Menotti further underscores Margaret's tedious personality by occasionally changing the accompaniment to a lengthy series of eight note triplets over a solid, mostly chromatic bass line. He also depicts Margaret's frivolous chatter and flighty, overly emotional personality via rapid ascending staccato ornamentations and sudden changes in dynamics.

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[26] I chose to analyze this aria in particular, because it was part of my honors recital repertoire (see Appendix). However, in order to fully explore the theme of miscommunication in *The Telephone*, I also incorporated Ben's music into my analysis. Lucy and Ben's music work together to create the romantic tension Menotti eventually resolves at the end.

Example 3.2: Pulsing chords of Margaret's relentless chatter (shown in red) in "Hello, Oh Margaret, It's You," from *The Telephone* by Menotti, Reh. 8-9.

Lucy's vocal line not only suggests that she is easily bored by the conversation, but also highlights her uncanny ability to maintain the upper hand in all discourse. Lucy continuously sings over the accompaniment and only half-listens to her friend. Although Lucy asks Margaret questions and attempts to make small-talk, she hardly ever waits for Margaret's response, which is ultimately lost underneath Lucy's soaring coloratura lines. As Lucy grows weary of Margaret's rambling ("Goodbye, my dear, goodbye…Yes, you already told me that."), she shifts from patronizingly talking over her friend to engaging in a coloratura shouting match that ultimately terminates the conversation (see Example 3.3). Menotti aurally depicts Margaret's attempts to push the conversation further, through a higher, faster, and louder re-composition of

the triplet patterns in the accompaniment. However, Margaret cannot combat Lucy's coloratura volume and vocal agility. Lucy not only matches the runs in the piano accompaniment with equal vigor, but also overpowers it through trills, soaring leaps, and a final high C (tied over two bars with a fermata) that successfully silences her bubbly friend (see Example 3.4).

Example 3.3: Lucy (vocal line) and Margaret's (accompaniment) coloratura shouting match in "Hello, Oh Margaret, It's You," from *The Telephone* by Gian Carlo Menotti, excerpt between Reh. 17 & 18.

Example 3.4: Lucy's (vocal line) triumph over Margaret (accompaniment) in "Hello, Oh Margaret, It's You," from *The Telephone* by Gian Carlo Menotti, 4 measures before Reh. 20.

How does the musical nature of arias such as "Hello, Oh Margaret, It's You," pertain to Lucy's strained relationship with Ben? First, these musical conversations provide insights into the central flaw in Lucy's character. Since she is a poor listener and barrels through every interaction with her own thoughts, opinions, and feelings, it is no wonder that Ben can hardly speak, let alone propose, in Lucy's presence. Second, these musical conversations add to Ben's stress, as the poor man must continually listen to Lucy's endless phone conversations and wait silently for another chance to propose. Ben is nervous enough about expressing his feelings, and his already trying situation becomes even more frustrating when Lucy repeatedly interrupts his distraught lines of recitative with her aria-like telephone conversations. Lucy's arias effectively silence Ben, leaving him ignored and frazzled. If Ben is no match for Lucy alone, he is absolutely no match for Lucy and her telephone.

This combined musical effect of Ben's bashfulness and Lucy's dominating coloratura chatter make it nearly impossible for the couple to communicate during the operetta. In fact, throughout most of the production, Ben and Lucy do not actually sing together. Rather, Menotti writes their transient verbal exchanges as brief lines of recitative.

Menotti further underscores Ben and Lucy's lack of communication via a lack of musical subtext in the underlying accompaniment of their recitative. Although loaded with emotional significance during Ben's proposal attempts and Lucy's telephone arias, the accompaniment either disappears or becomes meaningless whenever the two converse with each other. For example, during Ben and Lucy's trivial conversations at the beginning of the operetta (Section A), Menotti separates the *a capella* lines of each character with a measure of playfully dissonant and emotionally inconsequential modal accompaniment to represent the couple's inability to communicate beyond a superficial level. Additionally, during the more serious conversations of

the B sections, Menotti accompanies the separate vocal lines with a rolled chord or brief series of chords in the *recitativo secco* style, to render the accompaniment empty of emotional meaning.[27] Such lack of musical subtext to accompany their conversations suggests that Ben and Lucy do not communicate effectively because they are each caught up in their own thoughts and emotions. Thus, their interactions with each other are often shallow and emotionally vacant. Additionally, Ben's sparse music further underscores how Lucy's overbearing personality dominates the entire work. While Lucy sings several arias and numerous lines of recitative, Ben only has one brief aria (see Section F, Figure 3.1), and is generally confined to a few short lines of recitative in other sections.

Menotti ultimately resolves the musical barriers in the couple's communication via the object that nearly drives them apart. He cleverly ends the operetta with Ben proposing to Lucy from a nearby phone booth (see Section I, Figure 3.1). Menotti reflects this breakthrough in communication by finally allowing Lucy and Ben to sing together, as they promise to call each other every day (see Section J, Figure 3.1). Sung to a buoyant, dancelike *tempo di valzer* in the joyful key of E♭ major, Ben and Lucy's duet is the most diatonic of all the music in the production. Ben's tonal conflict disappears, as Menotti unifies the couple in mind and heart by setting their nearly identical text in parallel thirds. Both vocal lines are fairly high and loud, featuring numerous accents and staccatos that playfully reflect the couple's happiness. Additionally, Lucy's unending jabbering no longer restricts Ben's vocal freedom. The two voices soar together, as the couple finally finds common ground. Through these musical changes in meter, harmony, form, and texture, Menotti effectively reflects the shift in Ben and Lucy's relationship from one of complete miscommunication to one of unity.

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[27] To clarify, during the B sections, the "proposal motive" and Ben's tonally conflicting vocal line reflect his anxiety. However, as the conversation continues with Lucy's interruptions and Ben's pleas to stay on topic, the *recitativo secco* accompaniment suggests that neither person truly hears what the other is saying.

My Fair Lady

Like Ben and Lucy, Professor Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle of Lerner and Loewe's

My Fair Lady also struggle to communicate harmoniously. Crotchety Higgins and fiery Eliza are

constantly at loggerheads throughout the musical, and neither one of them ever fully admits to

being in love. While adapting the musical from George Bernard Shaw's (1856-1950)

Pygmalion,[28] Lerner and Loewe came to agree that Higgins is the main cause of romantic discord

in the story. As Lerner later stated in an article about the creation of *My Fair Lady*, "the

important character [in the production] is Higgins, not Eliza…The character of Higgins is far and

away the most unusual and interesting."[29] It is only after interacting with the blunt and

unpretentious Eliza that Higgins' cold and rigid personality begins to thaw and bend. The

differences in Higgins' and Eliza's music reflect this interpretation. While Loewe highlights

Higgins' deep cynicism and fear of vulnerability through complex numbers, he portrays Eliza's

simple pride and gumption through more straightforward songs.[30]

Throughout Higgins' heated interactions with Eliza, Loewe transforms Higgins from a

cool and bitter misanthrope to a more emotionally vulnerable person. Loewe uses four songs,

"Why Can't The English?" (Act I, No. 2), "I'm An Ordinary Man" (Act I, No. 5), "A Hymn to

Him" (Act II, No. 24) and "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" (Act II, No. 26) to suggest that

Higgins' crustiness is all an act. At the start of the musical, Higgins seems to be nothing more

than a grumpy confirmed bachelor, who is cold and condescending at best and rude and nasty at

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[28] *Pygmalion* is a stage play by George Bernard Shaw, which was inspired by a Greek myth. Lerner and Loewe maintain the general framework of Shaw's story in their musical, but often add their own interpretations, as well. For example, they intentionally write an ambiguous ending for the musical.

[29] Alan Jay Lerner, "'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady,'" *Bulletin (Shaw Society of America)* 1: 1956, 5.

[30] This analysis will focus primarily on Higgins' more complex songs. Eliza's songs will be used in relation to those performed by Higgins, in order to demonstrate how her music reflects the couple's evolving relationship and supports Lerner and Loewe's interpretations of each character. In my recital, I only sing Eliza's music, as I cannot sing Higgins' music for obvious reasons (see Appendix). However, I have found that by studying Eliza's music in relation to that of Higgins, I am able to tell Eliza's story more effectively when I perform her music.

worst. However, Loewe's juxtaposition of Higgins' songs with Eliza's music suggests that Higgins' intense relationship with Eliza gradually softens his character over the course of the production. Eliza's boldness and free-spirited nature both vex and fascinate the gruff and rigid professor, bringing his dormant emotions to the surface.

Loewe composed Higgins' songs in the *Sprechstimme,*[31] or speech-song style, in which the singer approximates the pitches in the vocal line. This style accentuates Higgins' bombastic and surly personality, giving his music an air of conceit and bitterness. However, these songs also suggest that Higgins' cutting rhetoric hides his true emotions. Higgins, who hates the idea of being vulnerable, intentionally distances himself from others until Eliza successfully penetrates his armor of cynicism.

In "Why Can't The English?" and "I'm An Ordinary Man," Loewe portrays Higgins' pre-Eliza nature as cantankerous, conceited, and misogynistic. Higgins sings "Why Can't The English?" shortly after his first encounter with Eliza on the streets of London. He deplores British common folk, declaring that society would be more tolerable if people like Eliza simply spoke properly: "By right she should be taken out and hung for the cold-blooded murder of the English tongue." Although the lyrics alone are a testament to Higgins' acerbic wit and intellectual hubris, Loewe's music effectively places Higgins' character in an even more unpleasant light. For example, the repetitive vocal line frequently oscillates between a set series of three or four notes over the course of several measures, suggesting that Higgins is intractable and stuck in his ways. Loewe also repeats entire sections of the piece several times, which further reflects Higgins' rigid and obstinate nature. "Why Can't The English?" also highlights Higgins immense emotional restraint. Both the vocal line and the accompaniment are facetiously

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[31] Higgins' music was written in the *Sprechstimme* form specifically for Rex Harrison, who debuted the role on the stage and screen. However, the *Sprechstimme* nature of Higgins' music actually suits the professor's personality and adds to his musical characterization.

melodious and buoyant, with a stride-like bass line articulated by wind instruments and cello. Even when Higgins becomes impassioned while explaining the importance of a unified mother tongue (Reh. 80-88 and Reh. 131-139), he does so without cracking his chilly façade. During these sections, the vocal line, which forms a sequence of several repeated notes broken up by minor seconds and minor thirds, is the only indication of Higgins' intensity (see Example 3.5). Under this vocal line, Loewe's typical Golden-Age jazz accompaniment remains neutral, as an indication of Higgins' remarkable ability to suppress his emotions. The passionate restraint of "Why Can't The English?" reflects a crucial truth about Higgins' character; he is a man who "reveal[s] much but say[s] little."[32]

Example 3.5: Higgins' sequences of passionate restraint in "Why Can't The English?" from *My Fair Lady by* Lerner and Loewe, Reh. 80-87.

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[32] Alan Jay Lerner, "'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady,'" *Bulletin (Shaw Society of America)* 1: 1956, 7.

While "Why Can't The English?" suggests that Higgins is proud, stubborn, and averse to emotional displays, "I'm An Ordinary Man" provides musical insights into the reasons behind Higgins' cynicism. Higgins sings the song shortly after agreeing to tutor Eliza, explaining that women mean nothing to him and that he will "never" truly "let a woman in [his] life." Loewe uses the same compositional techniques employed in "Why Can't The English?" to evoke an ironically lilting mood in "I'm An Ordinary Man." However, while Higgins maintains his cool, sarcastic nature in the verses of this song, he becomes more passionate in the chorus sections. Every time Higgins launches into another misogynistic attack with the phrase, "But let a woman in your life…", the music becomes faster, with a lusher and more frantic accompaniment. The brass and wind instruments initiate each return of the chorus with a loud eighth note staccato chord pattern punctuated by a xylophone, to further suggest Higgins' disenchantment with the opposite sex (mm. 16-17, 72-73, 105-106, 141-142, 176-177, and 212-213). Through these uncharacteristically passionate choruses, Loewe suggests that Higgins is terrified of making himself vulnerable and open to love. Whether this fear stems from a past heartbreak or the loneliness of a middle-aged bachelor is unknown, but Loewe's music convincingly illustrates Higgins' fierce and deeply personal disdain for romantic relationships. Thus, the music of "I'm an Ordinary Man" and "Why Can't The English?" together explain Higgins' inability to interact properly with other people, and clarify his poor communication with Eliza in subsequent scenes. At this stage of the production, Loewe thus portrays Higgins as a complex man who hides his emotions behind a rigid exterior to avoid vulnerability and pain.

Loewe shows a gradual transformation in Higgins after meeting Eliza in "A Hymn to Him" and "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face." First, a distraught and confused Higgins sings "A Hymn To Him" after a horrible row with Eliza that causes her to leave in a fit of rage.

Although the lyrics embody Higgins' typical chauvinist, supercilious, and arrogant rhetoric, Loewe suggests that Higgins does not truly mean what he says. The music is as scattered and frayed as Higgins' inner emotions. Keys and tempi change frequently and abruptly, and rhythms fluctuate between gentle lilts and frantic staccato patterns. The piece has no true form, but instead repeats a mixture of disconnected musical ideas. The fragmented and fairly chromatic melodic line frequently features long descending scalar patterns of rage, which accompany Higgins' frenzied ranting (see Example 3.6). At certain points in the song, Higgins even abandons the *Sprechstimme* technique, in favor of pure shouting (see Example 3.7). During these moments, Loewe continually and abruptly shifts the dynamics of the underlying accompaniment, using numerous *ff*s and *sf*s, as well as recurring accented chords in the brass parts, to further showcase Higgins' fury (see Example 3.7).

Example 3.6: Descending scalar "ranting patterns" in Higgins' vocal line in "A Hymn to Him," from *My Fair Lady* by Lerner and Loewe, Reh. 33-49.

Example 3.7: Abandonment of *Sprechstimme* (vocal line), and furious brass chords (red) in "A Hymn to Him" from *My Fair Lady* by Lerner and Loewe, 5 measures before Reh. 189.

By the end of the number, Higgins reaches an emotional pinnacle, finally implying that

Eliza's departure is the cause of his miserable ranting:

"If I were a woman who'd been to a ball, been hailed as a princess by one and by all; would I start weeping like a bathtub overflowing? And carry on as if my home were in a tree? Would I run off and never tell me where I'm going? Why can't a woman be like me?"

The brass and wind instruments return to underscore Higgins' final lines of fury, and the number ends with an ascending scalar pattern that culminates in a *fortissimo* perfect authentic cadence. "A Hymn to Him" thus depicts Higgins in a "high peak of fury,"[33] demonstrating his unwillingness to admit his love for Eliza. Higgins is grief-crazed by Eliza's departure, yet he refuses to address these feelings. Thus, "A Hymn to Him" implies that Higgins' wall of cool and condescending rhetoric is no longer strong enough to contain his feelings for Eliza. These musical cracks in Higgins' harsh exterior suggest that he is becoming more emotionally open and vulnerable.

In "I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face," Higgins finally reflects upon his love for Eliza. Convinced that she is gone forever, he reluctantly admits that he will miss her deeply. At the beginning of the song, when Higgins is still smarting from Eliza's stinging farewell, the music of "I'm An Ordinary Man" returns in the orchestra at a tempo *furioso*. However, the music suddenly changes to a mournful ballad *con tenerezza* ("tenderly"), as Higgins sings, "Damn!!! I've grown accustomed to her face! She almost makes the day begin." Higgins' thoughts and emotions thus change in spite of himself; he can no longer hide how much Eliza means to him. However, Higgins' tender musical moment is fleeting. As in "A Hymn To Him," the music continually changes mood, mode, and rhythmic style, as Higgins imagines the miserable life that he hopes Eliza will have without him. Ultimately, the ballad section returns as Higgins sadly states, "I'm very grateful she's a woman and so easy to forget…and yet, I've grown accustomed…to her face."

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[33] Alan Jay Lerner, "'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady,'" *Bulletin (Shaw Society of America)* 1: 1956, 6.

As the orchestra fleshes out the ballad section of "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," Eliza returns, and the music abruptly stops when Higgins sees her. Higgins never makes a maudlin display of affection, instead ending the show with the ambiguous line, "Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?" However, orchestral music that follows reveals that he is truly overjoyed by Eliza's return. The joyful music from "I Could Have Danced All Night" returns, and the power of the brass and winds, coupled with the soaring high notes in the strings, creates a lush, passionate effect. Although the music is hopeful and heartwarming, whether or not Higgins will ever fully communicate his feelings to Eliza is intentionally left to the audience's imagination. Thus, while Higgins is not yet completely vulnerable, Loewe's music indicates that he is slowly shaking off his emotional façade and may perhaps be able to re-establish his relationship with Eliza in the future.

While Loewe musically portrays the professor's complex character and inability to communicate, he composes Eliza's music in a much simpler fashion. In order to provide a foil for Higgins' complex character,[34] Loewe highlights Eliza's outspoken nature through four songs, "Wouldn't It Be Loverly?" (Act I, No. 3), "I Could Have Danced All Night" (Act I, No. 10), "Just You Wait" (Act I, No. 7), and "Without You" (Act II, No. 25). Eliza's music serves two purposes. First, it provides the basis for the romantic discord between the professor and his student—one a reticent skeptic and the other passionate idealist. Second, it explains exactly why Higgins falls for Eliza; she is bold and spirited enough to shake him out of his obstinate bitterness.

In "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," Loewe's music and Lerner's lyrics reflect Eliza's unsophisticated, unadulterated sweetness and free-spirited nature. The music is lyrical, dancelike,

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[34] Lerner, "Pygmalion," 5.

and fairly diatonic, echoing Eliza's sentiments as she dreams of a better life: "All I want is a room somewhere; far away from the cold night air, with one enormous chair; oh, wouldn't it be loverly? …" Throughout the song, pleasant flute and clarinet countermelodies often play over the vocal line, giving the music a whistling, carefree spirit (see Example 3.8). Furthermore, Eliza's cockney accent adds to the charm of the song's humble fancies.

Example 3.8: Flute and clarinet countermelodies in "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," from *My Fair Lady* by Lerner and Loewe, Reh. 44-52.

Loewe uses similarly straightforward compositional techniques in Eliza's joyous song, "I Could Have Danced All Night," which she sings after realizing that she has fallen in love with Higgins. Although the music is just as light and open as in "Wouldn't It Be Loverly," Eliza's vocal line in "I Could Have Danced All Night" soars into the higher and slightly more characteristic range of a classical soprano. Additionally, since Eliza does not sing the song with a cockney accent, the song follows Eliza's own emotional development. She shifts from a coarse and stubborn flower girl to an eloquent young woman who begins to fall in love with the man she once loathed.

This song allows Higgins and Eliza's relationship to evolve, because it reflects Eliza's newfound romantic feelings. However, the song also provides insights as to why Higgins ultimately falls for Eliza, because it embodies her blithe and down-to-earth nature. The continued use of cheerful flute and clarinet countermelodies further highlight Eliza's unpretentiousness and amiability, qualities that Higgins later admits to finding appealing and attractive: "I've learned something from your idiotic notions. I confess that humbly and gratefully." Ultimately, Eliza's open and carefree demeanor starts to shake Higgins out of his reticent and cantankerous nature, allowing for a more harmonious relationship.

In contrast to the two songs discussed above, "Just You Wait" and "Without You" display Eliza's fiery and outspoken personality, as well as her ability to challenge the formidable Higgins. In "Just You Wait," Eliza expresses her frustrations with Higgins' condescension and horrible temper, and she fantasizes about the miserable things that she wishes would happen to him. Unlike Higgins' emotions, which Loewe subtly reveals in the professor's psychologically complicated music, Eliza's feelings in "Just You Wait" could not be more clearly stated. Her text oozes with fury, and the rough, *marcato* twang of her cockney accent further exacerbates her

rage. Loewe's music further builds on Eliza's obvious frustration, starting in a dark C minor

Pesante, with a heavy bass line that first descends by step and then furiously oscillates between

the tonic and dominant (see Example 3.9). Additionally, the vocal line sits very low in the female

voice, forcing Eliza to belt and even shout most of the piece.

Example 3.9: Fiery cockney rage in "Just You Wait," from *My Fair Lady* by Lerner and Loewe, mm. 1-7. Heavy bass line shown in red.

Loewe uses slightly different musical techniques to portray the same spunky and

forthright aspects of Eliza's nature in "Without You." Eliza sings the piece after she has

transformed into a refined gentlewoman, and Loewe reflects her change of character in a higher and more classical vocal line. Eliza sweetly sings without any trace of a cockney accent, cleverly returning the cool insults that Higgins has given her throughout the show:

You are not the beginning and the end! There'll be spring every year without you. England still will be here without you. There'll be fruit on the tree; and a shore by the sea; there'll be crumpets and tea without you.

Although Eliza's music seems more refined and restrained than in "Just You Wait," the cutting lyrics, coupled with the fairly chromatic accompaniment, indicate that Eliza's transformation into a gentlewoman has not diminished her inner fire. The music especially suggests Eliza's spunk when she sings, "If they can do without you, ducky, so can I!" This biting and sarcastic remark occurs in tandem with a quasi-big band moment. The tempo abruptly shifts from *poco meno* to *tempo giusto*, and the horns play a jazzy, syncopated chord progression over a chromatic bass line with *sf >p* dynamics (see Example 3.10). Although now much more poised and refined, Eliza is still fearless and outspoken. Higgins, although quite affronted by Eliza's challenge, cannot help but find her fiery spirit attractive, and remarks afterwards, "Eliza, you're magnificent! ...I like you like this!"

Example 3.10: Sudden, quasi-big band moment in "Without You," from *My Fair Lady* by Lerner and Loewe, 3 measures before Reh 60. Jazzy, syncopated chord progression is shown in red.

Taken together, all four of Eliza's songs suggest that she, unlike Higgins, is open and straightforward. Eliza makes her dreams and joys as obvious as she makes her frustrations and fury. She is not afraid to fight against Higgins' unkindness, and she does not let his brutality tarnish her optimistic view of life. Even as Eliza becomes a beautiful and eloquent lady, she retains the spirit of a fiery London flower girl. In contrast, Higgins is jaded, rude, and taciturn. He refuses to make his feelings plain, and he resorts to arrogant and often nasty rhetoric in order to prevent emotional vulnerability. This emotional dichotomy between Higgins and Eliza forms the basis of their miscommunication. Higgins is unwilling to reveal his true feelings, and Eliza often insists that all emotions be aired. However, this emotional dichotomy ultimately leads to

mutual attraction and more open communication, as Eliza's sweet, straightforward personality starts to soften Higgins' rougher one.

Like Menotti, Loewe also distinguishes between romantic discord and more harmonious communication by separating Eliza and Higgins' vocal lines in every song except "The Rain In Spain (Act I, No. 9). During the rest of the production, Eliza and Higgins have completely separate solo numbers and do not even engage in brief musical dialogue with one another. Loewe only unifies Eliza and Higgins' voices in "The Rain In Spain." Sung after Eliza finally masters a genteel accent, the gleeful song provides the first clue that Higgins and Eliza's relationship may be deeper than one of a professor and his student. Loewe gives the scene a playful mood through a lively, diatonic orchestral accompaniment and Spanish *habanera* rhythms. As Eliza and Higgins sing and dance together, Eliza's vocal line begins to soar upward for the first time in the production, to reflect her current state of happiness. Additionally, Loewe once again uses delightful flute countermelodies to underscore Eliza's joy in her present accomplishment, as well as in the great pleasure she finds in singing and dancing with her formerly terse and supercilious tutor. However, unlike the final scene of *The Telephone*, Eliza and Higgins' duet does not signify closure and lasting happiness. The two must develop their relationship further throughout the rest of the musical, even after the show comes to an end. Thus, "The Rain In Spain" represents the beginning of a real relationship between Higgins and Eliza—not one marked by shouting matches and childish insults, but one marked by mutual respect, communication, and perhaps, love.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

The goal of this dual research-performance honors project was to analyze opera, operetta, and American musical theater productions through the lens of both a scholar and a singer, and to use musical storytelling as a means to link these seemingly distinct genres of vocal music. As I have demonstrated in this thesis and accompanying honors recital, vocal music is an incredibly expressive form of storytelling. Subtle nuances in both the vocal line and the accompaniment can add hidden meaning to the text, suggest details about a character's frame of mind, and place the entire work within the context of a particular cultural, historical, or musical tradition. While opera, operetta, and American musical theater certainly differ in terms of musical style, technique, and time period, these genres share a remarkable ability to convey powerful messages through the marriage of text and music. Many of these works share common themes and tell similar types of stories.

As I demonstrated in this thesis, operas, operettas, and musical theater productions can create spectacular fairytales and fantasies, convey moral messages, and provide entertainment in the form of comedy and complex romantic drama. In Chapter II, I demonstrated how the composers of *Cendrillon* and *Cinderella* used distinct compositional techniques to portray the fairy godmother as enchanting and otherworldly, yet down-to-earth and relatable. Although *Cendrillon* is a Romantic-era opera and *Cinderella* is a Golden-Age musical theater production, both works ultimately illustrate the same theme. In Chapter III, I discussed how the music of *Die Zauberflöte* and *Once Upon A Mattress* gives similar characters distinct roles in each production. I also discussed how these unique musical characterizations ultimately reflect the underlying purpose behind each story. While Pamina's serious music embodies the moral message of *Die Zauberflöte*, Fred's comical music is typical of the pantomime style, which primarily seeks to

entertain the audience. In Chapter IV, I explained the ways in which music provides a powerful commentary on the unfolding of tumultuous romantic relationships. In *The Telephone*, chromatic motives and tonal instability underscore Ben's inner conflict, and lengthy coloratura arias reflect Lucy's overbearing personality, until diatonic, harmonious music brings the couple together. In *My Fair Lady,* Higgins' complex *Sprechstimme* music contrasts with Eliza's emotionally straightforward music, to demonstrate their transition from a tempestuous relationship to one of implied future happiness. The comparative analysis of these six works thus suggests that the beauty of opera, operetta, and American musical theater works lies in their ability to tell similar stories in unique ways.

I hope that this thesis inspires future studies of other themes that link opera, operetta, and musical theater productions. Music is a complex language that adds beauty to the text that it accompanies, and both theoretical and historical perspectives provide the tools and terminology to decipher these powerful messages. I hope that this thesis will spark an interest in a more holistic approach to musical scholarship in opera, operetta, and American musical theater, in which music, text, culture, history, and society are equally analyzed to provide a well-rounded understanding of these three genres.

Ultimately, my musical analysis allowed me to effectively demonstrate the aforementioned musical and dramatic themes in my accompanying honors recital. As I explained in Chapter I, musical analysis informs the practice of singing and performing onstage. I found that simultaneously analyzing and performing the repertoire gave me deeper insights into the music and allowed me to further refine my vocal and dramatic techniques. Additionally, performing the music and giving life to the words and notes on the page made it much easier to approach the music from a scholarly perspective.

There is something about the raw beauty of the human voice making music with everyday language that can penetrate the deepest parts of our inner selves. Singing can awaken dormant feelings and emotions. It can touch a primitive nerve, or convey some revolutionary, yet universal truth about the human experience. Thus, a singer, by the very nature of his or her art, is a storyteller. I hope that this project will inspire future scholarship that bridges the gap between opera, operetta, and American musical theater. I also hope that this project will encourage both scholars and performers to study, observe, and treasure the incredible storytelling power that can be found in vocal music.

APPENDIX: PROGRAM FOR ACCOMPANYING HONORS RECITAL

<u>Repertoire Pertaining to Honors Thesis</u>

Cendrillon   Jules Massenet (1842-1912)
  "Douce enfant, ta plainte legere...Je veux que cette enfant charmante"

The Magic Flute   W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
  "Ach, ich fühl's"

Once Upon A Mattress   Mary Rodgers (1931-2014)
                                                               Roger Barer (1923-1998)

  "Happily Ever After"

The Telephone   Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007)
  "Hello! Oh, Margaret, It's You"

My Fair Lady   Alan Jay Lerner (1918-1986)
                                                           Frederick Loewe (1901-1988)

  "Just You Wait"

<u>Additional Repertoire</u>

Cosi Fan Tutte   W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
  *"*Una donna a quindici anni"

L'Elisir d'Amore   Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)
  "Prendi, per mi se libero"

The Music Man   Meredith Wilson (1902-1984)
  "My White Knight"

La Fille du Régiment   Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)
  "Chacun le sait, Chacun le dit"

Pirates of Penzance   W.S. Gilbert (1836-1911)
                                                           Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

  "Poor Wand'ring One"

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