

Anne-Marie Dicce, soprano
D.M.A. Dissertation Recital
My Life in Color: Synesthesia in Performance
November 5, 2008

Exultate Deo Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (c. 1525-1594)
 Angelica Eclar, Pamela Narbona, Anastasia Tilbury, *soprano*
 Leslie Edmonds, Timothy Maguire, Ruben Valenzuela, *alto*
 Gabriel Arregui, Brad Fox, Krishan Oberoi, Erick Rarick, *tenor*
 Patrick Anderson, Jeffrey Genzlinger, John Polhamus, *bass*
 Members of the Bach Collegium San Diego

With Verdure Clad from *The Creation* Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809)
 Stefani Walens, piano

Sea Blue-Green (like the waters of Brazil) Jason Rosenberg (b. 1979)

Ne Irascaris Domine/Civitas Sancti Tui William Byrd (c. 1540-1623)
 Members of the Bach Collegium San Diego

~Intermezzo~

Ave Virgo Sanctissima Francisco Guerrero (1528-1599)
 Members of the Bach Collegium San Diego

Fall Carolyn Chen (b. 1982)

Sicut Cervus/Sitivit Anima Mea Palestrina
 Members of the Bach Collegium San Diego

Lamento d'Arianna Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)
 Ruben Valenzuela, harpsichord

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina – *Exultate Deo*

Though Palestrina was known as a preeminent composer of sacred music, he was not unaware of other trends. He certainly knew, and participated in, the growing sixteenth century tradition of the madrigal. However, Palestrina exemplifies the culmination of an age in which strict counterpoint is a priority. A sacred liturgical text such as “Exsultate Deo,” the jubilant passage from the first three verses of Psalm 80, contains evocative images and actions. Palestrina, despite his reputation for reserve and musical balance in all things, responds accordingly to this text. The text itself is relatively onomatopoeic, with mention of percussion instruments (*tympanum*) and the “merry harp” (*cithara*).

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Jason Rosenberg – *Sea Blue-Green (like the ocean of Brazil)*

On Anne-Marie’s personal synesthetic color chart, the key of B is linked with “sea blue-green (as in the ocean in Brazil)”. Since I’m not a synesthete, I’m completely unable to directly match key with color; but the internal imagining of “sea blue-green (as in the ocean in Brazil)” certainly brings to mind particular music. This short piece in the key of B-minor is a reflection, if you will, of the way Anne-Marie experiences pieces in B; the process of creation as a negative/inverted image of a process of perception.

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Franz Josef Haydn – “With Verdure Clad” from *The Creation*

“With Verdure Clad” depicts part of the third day of creation and is filled with vivid visual images of nature. This pastoral aria contains flowing melismas on phrases

like “here shoots the healing plant.” Set in F major, I believe this aria is enlivened with bright red overtones throughout.

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William Byrd – *Ne Irascaris Domine/Civitas Sancti Tui*

These two motets of Byrd are perfect examples of vocal density. This occurs when “a) the contrast of different groups of voices in their color and density, and b) the placing of each voice in relation to the other voices and the blending of the tone qualities of the various registers of each voice.”¹ Notice the beautifully balanced voice groupings, both in his homophonic writing and in elaborate imitation.

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Francisco Guerrero – *Ave Virgo Sanctissima*

Francisco Guerrero spent much of his life as *maestro di cappella* at the Cathedral of Seville. During this time, he composed over one hundred motets, including this Marian antiphon (Antiphon for the Nativity of St. John the Baptist). Guerrero eloquently and exquisitely captures the text in praise of the virgin Mary. Listen for the strict canon in the two upper voices throughout the entire piece, and let the soothing lavender lighting surround the space to set the mood.

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Carolyn Chen – *Fall*

I do not see colors when I hear, but I do look for time to inhabit a sound, so this is why Anne-Marie's idea resonated with me. It seems that an interval or sonority can

¹ Andrews, H.K. *The Technique of Byrd's Vocal Polyphony*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 87.

contain a particular feeling that asks for time to be. The materials in Fall have something to do with singing shape-note songs, early music, and nursery rhymes. The first line of the poem ran into me, and the rest was pieced together, some words and lines reeling in others, or suggesting certain sonorities and shapes. I looked for flexibility with the language and the time.

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Palestrina – *Sicut Cervus/Sitivit Anima Mea*

Palestrina's setting of the beginning of Psalm 42 was published in 1581 in Venice. At first glance, the piece's impression is one of effortless simplicity, and yet the contrapuntal technique underlying it is truly extraordinarily profound. The first section is made of just three melodic ideas, each one shorter than the last, which therefore provides a subtle acceleration. The second section shows similar ideas, but perhaps more overt expression at its conclusion when the soprano line suddenly proclaims the last idea in high notes (*lacrymae* – “tears”) over a much lower, dissonant texture. Slowly, the other voices imitate this descending, mournful motion as the sound dies away.

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Claudio Monteverdi – *Lamento d'Arianna*

The *Lamento d'Arianna* is the only known surviving piece from Monteverdi's opera *Arianna* based upon the Greek tragedy of Ariadne and Theseus. Written following the death of Monteverdi's own wife, Claudia, this piece exemplifies the epitome of drama and angst. Within each musical line is a kind of freedom of character, intermingled with very deliberate intervals that are the cries, the wails, and the sighs of Ariadne's lament. She sings on the rock when she has been abandoned by Theseus, which “was acted with

much emotion and in so piteous a way that no one hearing it was left unmoved, nor among the ladies was there one who did not shed a few tears at her plaint.”² Because of the wide success of the *Lamento* aria, composers of all levels soon followed suit with their own laments for half a century to follow. The *Lamento d’Arianna* was, in fact, the first great popular operatic *scena* according to author and Monteverdi biographer Denis Arnold. It seemed clear to me that this piece is colorful enough on its own, but I wanted it to further stand out as the culmination of everything leading to this point in the program. This dramatic lament is so wrought with fervor, melancholy, rage, love, and loss. Rinuccini’s libretto alone is enough to keep readers on the edge of their seats – it’s the music that so eloquently captures this colorful text.

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Exsultate Deo, adjutori nostro:
 jubilate Deo Jacob.
 Sumite psalmum et date tympanum:
 psalterium dum cum cithara.
 Buccinate in Neomenia tuba: insigni die
 solemnitatis vestrae.

*Rejoice unto God our helper:
 sing aloud unto the God of Jacob.
 Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel:
 the pleasant psaltery with the harp.
 Blow the trumpet in the new moon: on
 the noted day of your solemnity.*

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Franz Josef Haydn – “With Verdure Clad” from *The Creation*

Recitative – Gabriel

*And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree
 yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so.*

Aria – Gabriel

*With verdure clad the fields appear,
 Delightful to the ravished sense;
 By flowers sweet and gay,
 Adorned is the charming sight.
 Here fragrant herbs give forth their scent,
 Here shoots the healing plant.
 With copious fruits the spreading boughs are hung;
 In leafy arches twine the shady groves,
 O'er lofty hills majestic forests rise.*

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Jason Rosenberg – *Sea Blue-Green (like the Ocean of Brazil)*

Leiden
 Leidenschaft

*Suffering
 Pain*

•••

Ne irascaris Domine satis,
 et ne ultra memineris iniquitatis nostrae.
 Ecce respice populus tuus omnes nos.

*Be not angry, O Lord,
 and remember our iniquity no more.
 Behold, we are all your people.*

Civitas sancti tui facta est deserta.
 Sion deserta facta est,
 Jerusalem desolata est.

*Your holy city has become a wilderness.
 Zion has become a wilderness,
 Jerusalem has been made desolate.*

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Ave virgo sanctissima
 Dei mater piissima
 Maris stella clarissima
 Salve semper gloriosa
 Margarita pretiosa
 Sicut lilium formosa
 Nitens olens velut rosa

*Hail, Holy Virgin,
 most blessed Mother of God,
 bright star of the sea.
 Hail, ever glorious,
 precious pearl,
 lovely as the lily,
 beautiful and perfumed as the rose.*

•••

Carolyn Chen – Fall

*In the season flies fall down like raisins
 we fill our pails with wings*

*no wind no light we chew we chew
 pails & pails& pails of wings*

*for to raining for to bury run home hanging
 in the arms, pails*

*heavy light hanging in our arms
 pale, hanging, light
 ran down*

*wash down flutterhurt you chew wind chew light
 you*

*chew fly run water fall
 fall &chew &chew chew*

*Light for reason, I chose rain
 rustle & rise your rows&rows of wings
 rustle little fighter raisin fall
 slant light hanging for and to.*

•••

Sicut cervus desiderat ad fontes
 aquarum, ita desiderat
 anima mea ad te, Deus.
 Sitivit anima mea ad Deum fortem
 vivum: quando veniam et apparebo ante
 faciem Dei?
 Fuerunt mihi lacrymae meae panes die
 ac nocte, dum dicitur mihi quotidie: Ubi
 est Deus tuus?

*As the hart panteth after the water
 brooks, so panteth my soul
 after thee, O God.
 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living
 God: when shall I come and appear
 before God?
 My tears have been my meat day and
 night, while they continually say unto
 me, Where is thy God?*

Lamento d' Arianna, 1614
text: Ottavio Rinuccini

Prima Parte

Lasciatemi morire!
E chi volete voi che mi conforte
in così dura sorte,
in così gran martire?
Lasciatemi morire!

Seconda Parte

O Teseo, o Teseo mio,
sì che mio ti vo' dir,
chè mio pur sei,
benché t'involi, ahi crudo!
a gli occhi miei.
Volgiti, Teseo mio,
volgiti, Teseo, o Dio!
Volgiti indietro a rimirar colei
che lasciato ha per te
la patria e il regno,
e'n queste arene ancora,
cibo di fere dispietate e crude,
lascierà l'ossa ignude.
O Teseo, o Teseo mio,
se tu sapessi, o Dio!
Se tu sapessi, ohimè!, come s'affanna
la povera Arianna,
forse forse pentito
rivolgeresti ancor la prora al lito.
Ma, con l'aure serene
tu te ne vai felice,
et io qui piango.
A te prepara Atene
liete pompe superbe,
et io rimango
cibo di fere in solitarie arene.
Te l'uno e l'altro tuo vecchio parente
stringeran lieti,
et io più non vedrovi,
o madre, o padre mio!

Ariadne's Lament, 1614

Part One

*Let me die,
and who do you think can comfort me
in such harsh fate,
in such great suffering?
Let me die!*

Part Two

*Oh Theseus, my Theseus
I still want to call you mine,
cruel one,
even though
you flee from my eyes.
Turn back, my Theseus,
turn back Theseus, oh God!
Turn back to gaze on her
who abandoned
her country and kingdom just for you,
and who will leave her bare bones
on these sands as food for fierce and
merciless animals.
Oh, Theseus,
if you only knew, oh god!
Alas, if you only knew the terrible fear
poor Ariadne is suffering,
perhaps you would relent
and point your prow back to the shore.
But, you leave with joy
on gentle breezes,
while I lament here.
Athens is preparing
joyful proud ceremonies for you,
and I remain
food for beasts on these lonely sands.
You will joyfully embrace
Your happy aged parents
but, oh mother, oh father,
I will never see you again.*

Terza Parte

Dove, dove è la fede,
 che tanto mi giuravi?
 Così ne l'alta sede
 tu mi ripon de gli avi?
 Son queste le corone
 onde m'adorni il crine?
 Questi gli scettri sono,
 queste le gemme e gl'ori?
 Lasciarmi in abbandono
 a fera che mi strazi e mi divori?
 Ah Teseo, a Teseo mio,
 lascerai tu morire,
 in van piangendo,
 in van gridando aita,
 la misera Arianna
 che a te fidossi e ti diè gloria e vita?

Quarta Parte

Ahi, che non pur risponde!
 Ahi, che più d'aspe è sordo a'miei
 lamenti!
 O nemi, o turbi, o venti,
 sommergetelo voi dentr'a quell'onde!
 Correte, orche e balene,
 e delle membra immonde
 empiete le voragini profonde!
 Che parlo, ahi! Che vaneggio?
 Misera, ohimè! Che chieggió?
 O Teseo, o Teseo mio,
 non son, non son quell'io,
 non son quell'io che i ferì detti sciolse:
 Parlò l'affanno mio, parlò il dolore;
 Parlò la lingua sì, ma non già 'l core.

Part Three

*Where is the faithfulness
 that you swore to me so much?
 Is this how you set me on the high throne
 of your ancestors?
 Are these the crowns
 with which you adorn my locks?
 Are these the sceptres,
 the jewels and the gold:
 to leave me, abandoned
 for the wild beast to tear and devour?
 Ah, my Theseus,
 will you leave to die,
 weeping and calling in vain for help,
 wretched Ariadne,
 who trusted you and
 gave you glory and saved your very life?*

Part Four

*Alas, he doesn't even answer!
 Alas, he is deafen than a snake to my
 cries!
 Oh clouds, storms, winds!
 bury him beneath those waves!
 Hurry, you whales and sea monsters,
 and fill your deep whirlpools
 with his filthy limbs!
 But What am I saying? Why do I rage so?
 Alas, wretch that I am, what am I asking for?
 Oh, my Theseus,
 it is not I, no, I am not the one
 who uttered those terrible words;
 It was my beathless fear and pain that spoke;
 my tongue may have spoken, but not my heart.*

MY LIFE IN COLOR: SYNESTHESIA IN PERFORMANCE

Synesthesia: A condition in which one type of stimulation evokes the sensation of another, as when the hearing of a sound produces the visualization of a color.

When I started thinking about tying together my perception of synesthesia with music in performance, I knew I wanted to create a recital based on my experiences with sound and color. I have known for many years that I possess the ability to encounter two senses at once – in my case, musical key areas and colors. During my masters degree, I spent a great deal of time researching the phenomenon of synesthesia itself and of people who possess it. I read about certain composers who were known to have synesthesia or synesthetic experiences, including Rimsky-Korsakov, Liszt, Messiaen and Ligeti, to name a few. Each of these composers perceived color through music in very diverse ways, and learning about them propelled me to examine my own personal connection to synesthesia. It should be noted that I sense synesthesia very mildly, and the changes in color are relatively kaleidoscopic, changing rather frequently and melding into the next color with each changing key area.

In 2004, I began my doctoral degree and knew that I would embark on a journey toward this final D.M.A. recital. Since then, I have envisioned a recital that would create a visual landscape of my synesthetic perceptions. In this way, I have chosen pieces that best represent the varying changes in color that occur during my musical listening and performing. I only experience synesthesia – or any perception of color – in music within a specific key area. For instance, the key of E-flat Major is a warm yellow, C Major is purple, and b minor is sea blue-green. Therefore, I do not experience any synesthesia with atonal music.

Since vocal music is indeed such a visual art in itself, driven by text, it seemed most fitting to relate the colors I experience in a select handful of pieces that would be the ideal representations of my synesthesia. Once the pieces for the recital had been carefully selected, I provided the stage crew with my “color scheme” to prepare the lighting for the recital. I met with the crew to realize my vision of this color-enhanced musical performance. Together, we designed a lighting sequence for each piece that would change according to the changes in key or mood. A base color for each piece is represented by the tonic key, which I have outlined in the above descriptions of the musical selections. However, as the music changes key areas, so too do the colors in this kaleidoscopic fashion. Because it is nearly impossible to constantly change the color of the lights in the Recital Hall, it was necessary to change colors at major points of change according to my perceptions of the music. This provided a change in lighting about three or four times in each piece on average.

The lighting is the most crucial aspect to this program. By enhancing the music with colorful lighting, the audience will have a glimpse into my experience with synesthesia. I envisioned white sheets lining the walls of the stage area and some of the surrounding walls of the hall. The colors would reach the sheets, creating a much more vivid version of each color than projecting them from a computer or than having the lights reaching only the stage itself. I also envisioned some of the lights looking up from the floor onto the performers themselves, creating a more dramatic effect. Given the nature of the music, especially Monteverdi’s *Lamento d’Arianna*, this lighting style seemed to be the most effective choice.

In many respects, this recital captures, in a very real sense, the various aspects to my musical career and as a graduate student. During my years at UCSD, I have discovered many facets of who I am as a musician and as a performer of music of many genres. Synesthesia has only further developed my musical tastes and discoveries, and can only propel my future endeavors in new and exciting ways. I hope to continue to be a student of my own synesthetic experience, and to explore how it affects my musical life and pursuits.

