

“IL TUO BEL NOME ETERNO”

A PERFORMANCE THESIS OF WOMEN COMPOSERS

by

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A THESIS

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In the field of classical music, there exists what is known as a “canon” of often performed, highly valued music. This repertoire is often well known to the general public, and includes iconic works such as Beethoven’s 9th Symphony or Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*. This canon is heavily populated by male, Caucasian composers; one 2022 study found that 87.7% of repertoire performed by orchestras globally was composed by white men (DiLaccio et al., 2022). Having participated in the field of classical music for nearly a decade, this is a trend I have also personally observed. For this reason, I decided to program a performance of choral music by women composers to fulfill my Honors College thesis. I felt that merely writing about these composers was not enough, and the most effective way to share their music with the general public was to perform it. There are six composers on the program for this performance: Hildegard von Bingen, Maddalena Casulana, Julia Perry, Chen Yi, Andrea Ramsey, and Mari Esabel Valverde. The musical styles and eras range from 11th-century chant to contemporary-style choral music by living composers. My goals with this project are twofold. First, I want to provide more resources for musicians to be able to program this music in their own concerts by providing a high quality, freely available recording of this performance. Second, I want to expose wider audiences to this music, emphasize its value through performance, and show fellow musicians that it is possible to bring these women’s voices to life with dedication and research.

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This thesis and performance are dedicated to every woman whose voice has gone unheard.

Table of Contents

Title page	1
Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments.....	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction.....	5
Concert Repertoire: Person, Piece, Process	7
“Best Wishes” - Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987).....	7
“Aura, che mormorando al bosco intorno” - Maddalena Casulana (~1540-1590).....	7
“The Bronze Taotie” from <i>From the Path of Beauty</i> - Chen Yi (b. 1953).....	10
“Song of Our Savior” - Julia Perry (1924-1979).....	12
“‘It Is Coming,’ Excerpt from <i>The Suffrage Cantata</i> - Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977)	14
“O Frondens Virga” - Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179).....	15
Concert Planning and Production	19
Appendix.....	24
References.....	27

Introduction

The world of classical music is one steeped in hundreds of years of tradition. There is an accepted “canon” of works that are well known and commonly performed; this canon includes the best-known names in classical music such as Mozart and Bach. However, this canon is also overwhelmingly made up of historical, Caucasian men. For example, Donne (an organization dedicated to promoting music by women) conducted a study of 20,400 pieces performed by 111 orchestras worldwide in the 2021-22 performance season. Of these twenty thousand compositions, only 7.7% (roughly 1,570 pieces) were written by women, and 87.7% were written by white men (Di Laccio, 2022). Of this 7.7%, 5.5% of compositions were by white women. This case is just one example of how the field of classical music severely lacks representation of women and especially women of color. Surprisingly, 27.5% of the works included in this study were written by a group of just ten historical European men; this is nearly four times more than all works by women combined (Di Laccio, 2022). There is no mystery as to who these composers are: Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Beethoven, and other men. Donne’s study was the impetus for this performance-based thesis. Though my specialty lies in choral, not orchestral music, I recognized many of the trends described in the study from my own experience. For example, having performed in and watched choral concerts for over a decade, I have only seen a composition by Hildegard von Bingen performed live once. I have performed in and seen many concerts where all of the music was composed by men, or where a major work by one of the “masters” was programmed to draw listeners, and barely promoted works by women or other marginalized groups were included seemingly as an afterthought.

In the classical world, performance of certain works promotes their visibility, and as a consequence makes a value statement on these works’ validity in the canon. Pieces performed more often are more well known, and well known pieces are performed more often. This is a

self-sustaining cycle that perpetuates the lack of diversity in this field. I am proud that three of the six pieces on tonight's concert are by living women: *The Suffrage Cantata*, "Best Wishes," and "The Bronze Taotie." Considering that classical programming often prioritizes deceased composers over living ones, I wanted to support living composers by bringing their music to a wider audience.

As I embarked on this project, it quickly became apparent that this music is simply not as well known as the mainstream canon, and that acts as a barrier to it being performed. Two of the songs on tonight's program, by Julia Perry and Maddalena Casulana, have no recordings available online, and this choir did the difficult work of bringing them together with no musical references. As a future choir teacher, one of the first things I do when looking for music to program is try to find a recording online. If there is none available and you are a teacher on a limited budget, purchasing music without knowing what it sounds or looks like is a gamble. Part of the reason I chose to incorporate a performance aspect into my thesis was to make a high quality recording that will be available to the general public, and give teachers more resources to program this music. Another goal of mine is to show that this music belongs in the canon alongside the male composers we venerate today. It may take more effort to find, program and perform these pieces, but I hope to show educators and performers that it is indeed possible if you are committed to bringing these women's voices to life.

Please see the appendix for a link to the performance of these pieces.

Concert Repertoire:

Person, Piece, Process

“Best Wishes” - Mari Esabel Valverde (b. 1987)

Mari Valverde is an award-winning composer as well as an experienced pedagogue. She has been commissioned by high level ensembles and organizations such as the American Choral Directors Association, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses, and Boston Choral Ensemble. A skilled singer herself, she sings with ensembles including the Dallas Chamber Choir, EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble (a choir dedicated to uplifting composers and singers of marginalized races), and Río Grande Valley’s Professional Choir. She has also translated vocal works and choral resources to and from languages including French, Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese. Having spent two years specializing in transgender voice pedagogy and training, she is a strong voice for trans inclusivity in the vocal realm. Valverde holds degrees from St. Olaf College, the European American Musical Alliance in Paris, and San Francisco Conservatory of Music (Resonance Ensemble). “Best Wishes” is a piece dedicated to the wedding of two of Valverde’s friends. This beautiful piece acknowledges the hardships that come with relationships. However, it also communicates the power of love to see us through. Valverde also included the option to change the pronouns in the text to best fit the context of the performance. I have chosen for this performance to use the gender neutral pronouns they/them/theirs.

“Aura, che mormorando al bosco intorno” - Maddalena Casulana (~1540-1590)

Maddalena Casulana is thought to have been born in roughly 1540 in Italy, though where exactly she was born is not known for certain. Her family was well off enough to provide her

with an education, but not so well off that it was considered extremely unbecoming for her to participate in music publicly, as was the case in noble families. Even if women were permitted to engage in music, during this time period they were often expected to retire from musical engagements once they married in order to focus on domestic duties (Wunsch, 2015).

Casulana may have received her musical training in Florence, and her musical career began with her performing vocal and lute music in private salons. Composing and singing for these patrons was how she first earned the respect of male musicians and sponsors, who then helped her to spread her compositions (Wunsch, 2015). In the dedication of her first book of madrigals, published in 1568, Casulana wrote that she hoped to “show the world” the “vain error of men [who believe] that they alone possess intellectual gifts, and who appear to believe that the same gifts are not possible for women” (Pescerelli, 1987, p.18). She was well respected in her time and considered at the same level, if not better than, her male contemporaries; Stras describes her as a “true master of polyphony,” or the art and study of creating intertwining musical lines (Schütz, 2022). There are also written records from her lifetime describing the praise she received, which is how historians know she was an esteemed composer, singer, lutenist, and voice teacher (Schutz, 2022, and Alberge, 2022).

This madrigal is taken from Casulana’s *Primo libro de madrigali a cinque voci* (First Book of Five Voice Madrigals), and is an example of Casulana’s impressive counterpoint skills. In the tradition of her time, these madrigals were written in what are known as partbooks. These are books specific to each voice part; for example the soprano partbook would contain only the soprano parts of every madrigal from this collection. All five partbooks were present, though not transcribed, before the alto partbook went missing from the Polish Academy of Sciences in Gdansk in the mid-1940s. The alto partbook was rediscovered in 2022 in the Russian State

Library by musicologist Laurie Stras (Stras, 2023). She has since transcribed and published these seventeen madrigals, making them available to be performed for the first time in over 400 years. There is currently a CD of the seventeen madrigals found in this collection in production, but to the author's knowledge this performance will result in the first freely available recording of this piece online.

I believe (and I think the singers would agree) that this madrigal was one of the hardest pieces of music on this program. Polyphonic music is difficult because it requires an understanding of how each musical line interacts with the other parts, as well as the ability to skillfully move between and tune each chord. Casulana expertly composed beautiful musical lines for each part while still adhering to the rules of polyphonic writing. This type of music requires a high level of mastery to compose and perform. This was even more challenging due to the fact that there are currently no freely available recordings of this piece. Additionally, there is no available pronunciation guide for the Italian text, meaning I embarked upon the task of making one myself (see appendix). This involved applying my training in the International Phonetic Alphabet and additional research on Italian pronunciation, a subject which contains contradicting opinions even among scholars. I am grateful to Eric Mentzel, Professor of Voice and graduate lyric diction at the University of Oregon, for his assistance in double-checking my original IPA. I also hope that my original IPA can serve as a resource for directors who want to program this madrigal going forward. I would like to thank our collaborative pianist, Michelle Sulaiman, for making a piano recording of this piece for the singers to study with. This recording is another resource which I hope to make freely available to other programmers of this madrigal. The title of this concert comes from this piece; "il tuo bel nome eterno" translates to "your

beautiful eternal name.” I found this a fitting title for a concert meant to bring to light the works of women whose names are often lost to history.

“The Bronze Taotie” from *From the Path of Beauty* - Chen Yi (b. 1953)

Chen Yi was born in 1953 in Guangzhou, southern China. Both of her parents were doctors who practiced music in their free time, and Chen and her siblings were trained in western classical piano and violin from a young age (Miller, 2019). In 1958, when she was only five, Chen’s family was targeted in an anti-rightist campaign by the Chinese government. Because the family spoke English and had western ties such as their interest in classical music, their home was raided and they were labeled as “suspected international spies” by authorities (Miller, 2019, p. 331). However, their troubles with the Chinese government did not end there. In 1966, when the Cultural Revolution began and “undesirable” citizens, including the Chen family, were blocked from formal schooling, Chen’s father was sent to train doctors in the rural countryside. During this period Yi and her siblings threaded a blanket between the hammers and strings of their piano and played with heavy mutes on their violins to hide the fact they were playing Western music (Miller, 2019, and Guo, 2002). During one government raid in September of 1968, Chen planted herself firmly on the piano bench, which contained Western classical scores inside. The Revolutionary Committee members conducting the raid were not aware that the bench opened, and her family was spared certain punishment. Shortly after this raid, Chen’s mother was taken prisoner at the hospital where she worked; she would remain there for the next ten months (Miller, 2019). Also in 1968, Chen met a similar fate to her father and was sent to the countryside for reeducation. She worked in the rice fields and attended middle school by day, and at night she entertained her fellow farmers with revolutionary songs on the violin. However,

she slyly incorporated her love of classical music by adding western extended techniques, similar to Paganini's caprices, to these state-sanctioned songs (Guo, 2002).

Chen experienced much hardship during her teenage years, from working in rice fields to being sent to Conghua district to help construct a concrete watchtower. Because of rising tensions between China and the USSR, 16-year-old, 90-pound Yi was part of a group of laborers who hauled baskets of wet concrete nearly equal to their body weight up a mountain, sixteen hours a day for three weeks. In a stroke of luck, she was able to join a traveling Beijing opera troupe as concertmaster in 1970, where she traveled throughout China performing state-sanctioned political operas (Miller, 2019).

Chinese leader Mao Zedong died in 1976, leading to more lax national policies and allowance of Western classical music. When the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music reopened in 1978, Chen was part of the less than 1% of applicants accepted into the inaugural class. She received her bachelors and masters degrees there, and was also the first woman to receive a Master of Arts in music composition from this institution. During her time there she was also able to study traditional Chinese folk music, which had been banned during the Cultural Revolution. The influences of this genre can be heard throughout her compositions thereafter. After completing her masters, she was recruited for her doctoral degree in composition at Columbia University. She has lived in the United States since, and has served as a distinguished professor of composition at the University of Missouri, Kansas City since 1998 (Miller, 2019).

I could not have done this piece justice without the help of Grace Kuo, a current doctoral candidate in Music Education at the University of Oregon. She helped me to interpret both the text and the historical references this song contains. "The Bronze Taotie" is the first movement of Chen Yi's song cycle *From the Path of Beauty*. This song cycle references many eras

throughout Chinese history, with the first movement referring to the earliest dynasty in Chinese history, the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600- c. 1100 BCE). Bronze carries special significance in this piece because scholars believe that only rulers could own bronze products during the Shang Dynasty (Xu, 2019). The title of this movement comes from a bronze vessel depicting the taotie, an ancient, evil beast which represents fear and power. This auspicious symbol was used in ancient protective and sacrificial ceremonies (Xu, 2019). Starting on a unison, chant-like rhythm sung on nonsense syllables taken from Chinese folk songs, this movement brings to mind the practice of chant among Chinese Buddhist monks. However, this peaceful unison quickly devolves into dissonance and cluster chords which convey the malicious power of the taotie. Both musically and vocally challenging, this piece includes powerful moments such as a C#2 in the bass part, an incredibly low note that almost emulates a monster's growl.

“Song of Our Savior” - Julia Perry (1924-1979)

Julia Amanda Perry was a successful and respected composer in the twentieth century, yet her music is little known and rarely performed today. Much of her body of work, from her master's thesis composition to her Violin Sonata that won the Prix Fontainebleau competition, is now lost. Many other pieces only exist in manuscript form (Westby, 2022).

Perry was born in 1924 in Lexington, Kentucky, and moved to Akron, Ohio at the age of ten. Her parents were both amateur musicians who encouraged her interest in music. She graduated high school in 1942, and received a music scholarship to the Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, where she studied composition, in addition to voice, piano, violin, and conducting. She graduated in 1948, and completed her masters degree at Westminster Choir College as well. Perry also won first prize in both the composition and voice categories in

the National Association of Negro Musicians competition the year she completed her masters degree (Westby, 2022).

In the 1950s Perry's international career began to take off, and she would go on to study with some of the most influential composers/teachers of the twentieth century, including Luigi Dallapiccola and Nadia Boulanger (Laughlin, 2013). After working in Florence, Italy for two years, Perry returned to the United States in 1953. In 1954 she received the first of two Guggenheim Fellowships. She returned to Italy in 1955, and received her second Fellowship in 1957. This grant enabled her to remain in Europe until 1959; during this time she wrote and premiered *Three Negro Spirituals for Soprano and Orchestra* in Rome. Her most-performed piece remains her *Stabat Mater* for soprano and string orchestra, which she premiered in 1951 to critical acclaim and also performed in for several years as the soloist. Despite suffering a severe stroke in 1970, Perry continued composing by training herself to write with her left hand. Her pieces including her *Symphony No. 11* ("Space Symphony"), her *12th Symphony* ("Simple Symphony"), were composed after her hospitalization (Westby, 2022). Unfortunately, the composer suffered further strokes in the 1970s which left her largely unable to compose. She died in her former home of Akron, Ohio on April 24th, 1979, after suffering a heart attack. She was 55. Part of the reason many of Perry's works remain lost is because she tried to have them published rather than donate them to a university or library; her handwritten manuscripts from after her stroke were difficult to read, and unfortunately she stopped receiving publication offers as a result (Westby, 2022).

Early in her career Perry wrote many choral pieces, and often arranged settings of traditional African American spirituals (Laughlin, 2013). The influence of this style appears in her later works, including "Song of Our Savior." I stumbled upon this piece while scouring the

internet for Perry's choral compositions; I ultimately found a blog where someone had taken it upon themselves to compile all her available works in one place. Perry employs common techniques from American Spirituals, including the repeating ostinato patterns that appear throughout much of the piece. This song also exemplifies her use of "declamatory" vocal lines, with little use of melismatic text setting (Westby, 2022).

"It Is Coming," Excerpt from *The Suffrage Cantata* - Andrea Ramsey (b. 1977)

Andrea Ramsey was born in 1977 in Arkansas. Coming from a lower socio-economic family, her parents made sacrifices to provide her and her brother with music lessons. Some of her first forays into composing came from her piano lessons. In one interview she noted: "I was a horrible piano student. Rather than practice, I just wanted to experiment with sounds. I would add notes to my assigned piano pieces, or just play with sounds instead of practicing" (MusicSpoke). Having previously served on the faculties of both The Ohio State University and the University of Colorado Boulder, she has since left higher education to focus on guest work, composition, and commissions (MusicSpoke). I was lucky enough to sing under Dr. Ramsey in the spring of 2023, when she directed the University of Oregon Chamber Choir while the head of Music Performance, Dr. Sharon Paul, was on sabbatical. In addition to being a gifted composer, I can personally attest that Dr. Ramsey is an incredible choral conductor and vocal instructor.

The Suffrage Cantata is a five-movement work that traces the Suffrage movement in America, from its beginnings to the ratification of the 19th amendment. Written for treble choir, narrator, piano, string quartet and percussion, the first movement of this powerful work opens with a lyric taken from a letter by American abolitionist and women's and Native American rights activist Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880). Child's original quote reads: "deeply, deeply do I

feel the degradation of being a woman. Not the degradation of being what God made woman, but what man has made her”. Similarly to Casulana, Child points out the irony of women being historically discriminated against, and their subsequent lack of achievement and inclusion being pointed to as evidence of their inferiority. It is heartbreaking how little has changed in the over 300 years and thousands of miles of distance between these women’s writings.

“O Frondens Virga” - Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179)

Hildegard von Bingen was born in 1098 in Bermersheim in Rheinhessen, modern-day Germany. As she was the tenth-born in her family, she was dedicated to God at the age of 8 and given as a companion to an abbess named Jutta, who brought her to the Benedictine monastery where her religious education began. She reported seeing visions as young as three years old, which she could not communicate at that age. Throughout her life she dealt with illness and frailty that seemed to coincide with trying to repress her God-given gifts, and when she accepted the visions and used them to teach others she would often quickly recover (Godefridus, et al., 1995).

Sometime between the ages of 14 and 17 Hildegard was cloistered with Jutta; this was a religious practice in which a devotee to God was enclosed in a small structure away from the outside world as a demonstration of religious devotion. When Jutta died in 1136, Hildegard was unanimously elected as the monastery head in her place (Ferzoco, Kienzle, & Stoudt, 2013). In 1141 she claimed to have been commissioned by God for a “great work,” and resisted because she was afraid and deemed herself unworthy. She fell ill, but once she started to write her prophetic work which would come to be known as *Scivias*, her health improved (Godefridus, et al., 1995).

Von Bingen worked on *Scivias* for seven years, and in 1148 Pope Eugene III read it to a gathering of cardinals, bishops, priests, and theologians at the Synod of Trier. The pope had also earlier had her claims of visions examined, and determined that they were authentic. These two events were instrumental in establishing Hildegard as a well-respected religious figure, and she maintained correspondence with Pope Eugene going forward (Godefridus, et al., 1995). Also in 1148, Hildegard received a vision of building a new convent, as Disibodenburg was becoming overcrowded. The monks heavily disagreed with her proposal, but could not argue with a command from God, and in 1150 construction began on a new convent across the Nahe river at Rupertsburg (Godefridus, et al., 1995). This convent would become so successful that in 1165 Hildegard established another one in Eibingen (Gardiner, 2021).

Hildegard was widely respected as a religious theologian, polymath, prophet, and composer during her lifetime. She used this privilege, incredibly rare for a woman of her time, to do what she considered Godly even when it directly conflicted with the orders of the church. For example, in roughly 1178-79, Hildegard and her nuns buried a man on convent property who had previously been excommunicated from the church. Though he had supposedly received absolution before his death, Hildegard and her convent faced backlash from the clergy to whom they were accountable, and their superiors ordered them to disinter the man's body and rebury him on unholy ground. Hildegard refused, arguing that the man in question had been forgiven for his sins, and she and her nuns concealed the man's grave. As punishment, the nuns were ordered to cease all musical activity at the convent, from chanting and celebrating public Mass to the ringing of the church bells. In her correspondence with the clergy of Mainz, who had passed down this verdict, she strongly condemned their punishment, and iterated the importance of music in worship. She also suggested that their decision to implement this unjust punishment

was influenced by the devil himself, and made a comparison between God's vengeance and female warriors who fight against injustice. Six months before she died, the punishment was lifted and the verdict reversed (Gardiner, 2021). Hildegard died on September 17th, 1179, at the impressive age of 82. In her biography, the monks describe a double rainbow and bright light in the sky overhead, as she passed at twilight on a Sunday (Godefridus, et al., 1995).

Hildegard was an active devotee of the Virgin Mary, which was not uncommon in her time. There was a rich tradition of the cult of Mary dating back to the fifth century. She wrote a total of sixteen songs (known as Marian Music) dedicated to the Virgin Mary, including "O Frondens Virga," the closing piece of this concert (Stark, 2001). Hildegard masterfully sets the text to this antiphon, emphasizing the frailty of humanity and the divinity of Mary through contrasting vocal lines.

I first learned of Hildegard in my sixth-grade music appreciation class. I was immediately entranced by this woman, who both devoted her entire being to her religion yet also refused to accept the unfair and often misogynistic standards of her day. I have loved her music ever since, and am saddened that so many barriers exist which prevent it from being widely performed. This unfortunate truth is despite the fact that Hildegard leaves behind the largest body of work of any composer in the Middle Ages (Gardiner, 2021). I encountered many of these roadblocks to programming her music firsthand when preparing "O Frondens Virga".

I am extremely grateful to Professor Eric Mentzel, Professor of Voice, for his assistance with bringing this piece to life. Programming and performing early music (or music from the mid 18th century and earlier) is difficult, and Professor Mentzel's knowledge of this musical era was integral to this process. Having extensive expertise in what is known as Historical Performance Practice, or the practice of performing music as it would have been when it was first composed,

he provided valuable insight into Hildegard's music. For example, he shared with me a scan of the source material for this antiphon, which is a nearly 400-page, handwritten manuscript from the late 1100s. Early chant was written using what are known as neumes, or notes that can have different appearances which dictate how they should be treated in performance. Though historians cannot be completely certain how each piece was performed, Professor Mentzel walked me through the original score for this chant, pointing out neumes which indicate ornamentation, interpretation and text stress. He was also kind enough to work with Lauren Haendler (tonight's soloist) and myself to craft a performance which is as faithful to the source material as possible.

Concert Planning and Production Process

At the suggestion of my Honors College advisor, Brian McWhorter, I have decided to include a short description of the elements that went into planning and producing the performance aspect of this thesis. This is not an exhaustive list of all the tasks I undertook, as I am surely forgetting aspects of the planning process.

In the planning phase of this project, I was faced with the difficult task of narrowing down the programming to six pieces. There were many composers and beautiful works I wanted to include in this concert but could not due to time constraints. I attempted to create a program that was musically diverse, spanning from 11th-century chant to contemporary-style music by living composers. I also made decisions that I thought would bring underappreciated works to light. For example, I had originally planned to program a piece by Undine Smith Moore, who is perhaps best known for her oratorio *Scenes from the Life of a Martyr*, based on the life of Martin Luther King Jr. However, I decided to instead program “Song of Our Savior” by Julia Perry because there were no recordings of this piece available online. Undine Smith Moore is relatively well known today, but despite Julia Perry’s international fame and recognition during her lifetime I had never heard of her before embarking on this project. I also intentionally included a piece by Mari Esabel Valverde, who is a transgender woman, as her music deserves to be uplifted alongside these other women. “Best Wishes” became my first choice of her compositions because it is one of a few pieces for SATB choir for which Valverde wrote the lyrics herself; I felt this was the best way for her voice to shine through.

Besides the difficulty of narrowing down the program to only six pieces by six composers, I also had to procure funding to pay for the sheet music as well as the services of the instrumentalists involved in this project. I am grateful to the Center for Undergraduate Research

and Engagement (CURE) as well as the Music Education department for providing funding which made this concert possible. In order to secure this funding I wrote proposals, emails, and contacted several potential funding providers in the School of Music and Dance such as the Dean's Student Advisory Council, who do not offer funding during Winter term but will be providing a personal reimbursement to me next term to cover the cost of hiring three of the four string quartet members. I booked Beall Hall for the dress rehearsal and performance at the beginning of Fall term and was lucky to find a date and time in week ten of Winter term when it was available. As the performance came closer I worked with the production team to stage the concert and communicate instructions so that the performance ran smoothly. There were many aspects of putting on a performance that I had never considered before, such as the fact that I needed a microphone for acknowledgements and chairs for the percussionists to sit in during the final piece. My dress rehearsal was not staffed, but I am lucky that one of the stage managers for the School of Music was singing in the choir in this project and helped to procure a piano for the dress rehearsal when I arrived and realized that there was not one on stage.

When ordering the music, I faced several difficulties, including the fact that I had no idea of what Casulana's madrigal might sound like, how difficult it was, or how long the piece would be. This song ended up being a very challenging, 17-page piece of music. Part of the reason I opted to have this piece performed with basso continuo on cello was because of its sheer difficulty and the mastery it requires. With only roughly 15.5 total hours of rehearsal with the choir, there simply was not enough time to prepare it to a place where it could be performed without accompaniment. Another difficulty I encountered was working with the publisher of Chen Yi's music, as I encountered language barriers when communicating with their customer service and even accidentally ordered the wrong arrangement of the song cycle that contains

“The Bronze Taotie.” However, Andrea Ramsey was kind enough to provide the scores to *The Suffrage Cantata* for free, for which I am extremely grateful. Mari Valverde also offered to provide “Best Wishes” free of charge, but I chose to pay her using the funds from my CURE grant. Once the music was purchased, I spent roughly two hours printing, organizing, stapling, and numbering every piece.

When it came time to actually begin rehearsing the music, I again had to creatively problem solve. I had several musicians who had previously committed to this project but had to drop out due to other commitments, and I struggled to find replacements. The membership of the choir was not finalized until the third or fourth rehearsal because of this. I was lucky to find 15 highly skilled singers who were willing to donate their time and effort to this project.

Teaching and rehearsing this music challenged me as a musician and educator, as I learned how to prioritize and rethink my expectations of what a productive and successful rehearsal looked like. Two rehearsals I had originally planned had to be canceled, one because of the ice storm that struck Eugene in the last week of January and one because I chose to attend the regional American Choral Directors Association conference in Spokane. I had also originally programmed three movements of Chen Yi’s song cycle *From the Path of Beauty*, but after reviewing the music with a friend of mine who is studying cello performance it became apparent that the string parts for these movements were more difficult than is reasonable to ask of undergraduate string musicians. I approached the graduate string quartet at the UO to see if they were interested in participating in the project, but they did not have the time to take on the task of learning the music this term. I ended up cutting the two movements for combined choir and string quartet from the program as a result.

Directing a choir of strangers is intimidating, but as our teaching methods professors often remind us, directing your peers is even harder. I had to very quickly learn how to put my ego aside and accept criticism and correction when it came to working with musicians who are my age or older, but I also learned to navigate the rehearsal process with confidence despite feeling that many of my choir members were more skilled musicians than I. As the only time that everyone was available to rehearse was on Monday nights from 7-9pm, I had to learn how to put my personal emotions and feelings to the side in order to create a positive rehearsal environment despite myself and all the musicians being tired and sometimes easily frustrated by that time in the evening. I (and at least four of the choir members) have an 8:30am class on Mondays, in addition to student teaching, so learning to take care of myself on these 13-hour workdays so that I had the energy to lead these rehearsals was a steep learning curve. I also have thoracic outlet issues that cause pinched nerves in both of my arms, and hypermobility issues that cause great bodily pain even if I am constantly aware of my conducting technique and how I move. I have been relearning how to stand and sit in a way that works with my anatomy, and these long rehearsals took a toll on my body. I had to very intentionally re-incorporate exercises learned in physical therapy into my daily routine in order to prevent further injury, and even with these changes I still had increased pain from the rehearsal process.

Another aspect of the process I had not anticipated was finding time to rehearse with instrumentalists outside of the choir rehearsal. I made a WhenisGood survey and had to schedule rehearsals with only the quartet, pianist and percussionists at odd times during the week or on the weekend. I had two rehearsals with the instrumentalists, and there was not a rehearsal where they were all available and present until they joined the choir about two weeks before the performance. On a related note, I had to make many reservations for rooms for rehearsals,

meaning I was constantly in communication with one of the SOMD operations and events managers, Brooke Cagno.

On the more administrative side of things, I designed the posters for this concert, learning how to use Canva for the first time. I formatted them and printed them using my own money, and hung them in many places in the School of Music, around the UO campus, and even at the high school I am currently student teaching at. I visited the Chamber Choir and University Singers to advertise the performance in addition to announcing my project in my non-music related classes, as I wanted to present this concert to as large an audience as possible. I personally reached out to many people in my life (including some of the composers on this program) to either invite them in person or to view the livestream when the former option was not possible. I wrote and edited the programs, and when it came time to print them it took an hour and a half to reformat them so that the pages appeared in the correct order without blank pages in the center. I had to print about ten test copies just to make sure that they would print the way I intended. I then spent time folding the 150 sheets of paper that comprised the 50 programs I printed. Because each program was six pages long, I also chose to individually staple each one so that no pages would fall out.

There were many, many aspects of this project that I had not anticipated, but they are also things I know I will have to do when I am a full-time teacher. Though this process was difficult and many times felt endless and impossible to navigate, I am grateful to have gained this valuable experience, as I know it will serve me well in the future. Everything I did was in service of these composers and their music, and the feeling of being able to present this beautiful concert made it all worth it.

Appendix

Figure A1: “Aura, che mormorando al bosco intorno” translation and IPA

Prima parte

Aura, che mormorando al bosco intorno, 'aura ke mormo'rando al 'bɔsko in'torno	Breeze, that murmuring around the wood
Tempri la fiamma de l'ardente sole. 'tɛmpri la 'fjamma 'dɛllear'dɛnte 'sole.	Tempers the flame of the ardent sun,
Volati, prego, hor che su'l mezzo giorno vo'lati, 'prɛgo, or ke sul 'mɛdzso 'dʒorno	Fly you, I beg, now that at noon
Te sola attenda e dorme il mio bel sole; te 'sola at'tɛnda e 'dorme il 'mio bɛl 'sole	my lovely Sun waits for you alone, and sleeps;
E vaga nel suo morbido soggiorno e 'vaga nɛl 'suo 'mɔrbido so'dʒorno	And wander into her soft rest
Te assidi, e cingi di rose e viole te as'sidi, e 'tʃɪndʒi di 'roze e 'vjole	Sit down by her and weave with roses and violets
Il biondo crine e d'un sì nobile velo il 'bjondo 'krine 'e 'dun si 'nɔbil 'velo	and her golden locks such a noble veil
Che non l'offenda mai caldo, né gelo. ke non loff'ɛnda m'aj k'aldo ne dʒ'ɛlo	that heat nor cold will never bother her.

Seconda parte

Così non senti mai novo furore ko'zi non 'senti maj 'nɔvo fu'rore	Thus you will never hear the new furore
Del freddo Borea combattendo il verno, del 'fredo 'borea kɔmbat'tɛndo il 'vɛrno,	of the cold Borea combatting the winter
Né con turbato ciel, turbato humore ne kon tur'bato 'tʃɛl, tur'bato u'more	nor will with turbulent heavens, turbulent water
Discenda not'a darti affanno interno; di'fɛnda 'nɔta 'darti af'fanno in'terno;	come down [at night] to give you internal trouble;
E'l vivo del tuo caro ardito ardore el 'vivo del 'tuo 'karo ar'dito ar'dore	and the life of your sweet, bold ardour
Sia teco e nel tuo amante sempiterno: 'sia 'tɛko e 'nɛl 'tuo a'mante sɛmpi'terno	will be with you and in your lover forever:

Né gelosia lo spenga, o nova fiamma,
ne dʒelo'zia lo 'spenga, ɔ 'nɔva 'fjamma,
Lo scemi, o lo consumi a dramma a dramma
lo 'femi, ɔ lo 'komʒumi a 'dramma a 'dramma

Terza parte

lo, d'odorate frondi e di bei fiori,
'lo, dɔdo'rate 'frondi e di 'bei 'fjori,
Che la felice Arabia in grembo asconde,
ke la fe'litʃe a'rabia in 'grɛmbo as'konde,
Te sacro un gran altar tra verdi allori
te 'sakro un gran al'tar tra 'verdi al'lɔri
Ch'arda mai sempre qui vicino a l'onde;
'karda maj 'sɛmpre kwi vi'tʃino a 'londe;
E de le Ninfe de la nobil Clori
e de le 'nimfɛ de la 'nobil 'klori
Meco la più leggiadra, in queste sponde,
'meko la pju led'dʒadra, in 'kwɛste sp'onde,
Canterà le tue lodi ad una ad una
kantɛ'ra le 'tue 'lɔdi ad 'una 'ad 'una
Finché col Sol il ciel tutto s'imbruna.
fin'ke kol sol il 'tʃɛl 'tuto sim'bruna.

Quarta parte

E vedrem poi destarsi, lieta e bella,
e 'vedrem pɔi de'starsi li'ɛta e 'bella,
Dal dolce sonno la mia cara luce,
dal 'dɔltʃe 'sɔnno la 'mia 'kara 'lutʃe,
E far con l'una e l'altra ardente stella
e far kon 'luna e 'altra ar'dente 'stella
Invidia al sol quando più splende é luce;
in'vidia al sol 'kwando pju 'splende e 'lutʃe;
E poi, cantando in questa parte e'n quella,
e pɔi, kan'tando in 'kwesta 'parte en 'kwella,
Con l'armonia che sol al ciel m'adduce

Nor will jealousy extinguish it, o new
flame,
or diminish it, or consume it bit by bit

I, of the fragrant plants and the beautiful
flowers,
that happy Arabia hides in her breast,
I will consecrate a grand altar in the
green laurels
that will burn forever here by the waves;
and the loveliest of the noble Cloris's
Nymphs
with me on these shores
will sing your praises to each other
until the sky darkens all [from] the Sun.

And we will then see her wake up, happy
and beautiful,
from sweet sleep, my dear light,
and make one and another burning star
envious of the Sun, since her light is
brighter;
and then, singing in this place and in
that,
in harmony with which the Sun leads me

kon larmo'nia ke sol al tʃɛl mad'dutʃɛ

to heaven

In novo stile, il tuo bel nome eterno
in 'nɔvo 'stile, il 'tuo bɛl 'nome e'tɛrno

in a new style, your beautiful eternal
name

Farà per queste selve estate e verno.
fa'ra per 'kweste 'selve ɛs'tate e 'vɛrno.

will make summer and winter for these
woods.

Translation by Laurie Stras, original IPA by Ashton Stith

Figure A2: Performance Recording

Please see the linked URL for the recording of this performance:

<https://youtu.be/Yamv2aYY1Pc?si=j10V2FjxbcKL9Umu>.

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