A Performance Guide for Thomas Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs for Voice and Piano

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A PERFORMANCE GUIDE FOR THOMAS PASATIERI’S *BEL CANTO SONGS* FOR VOICE AND PIANO

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by
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ABSTRACT

This document is a performance guide to Thomas Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs for Voice and Piano. Thomas Pasatieri is a well-known American art song and opera composer, who has also worked extensively as a film score orchestrator for major movie titles. The poet for the text in Bel Canto Songs is English poet, engraver, and artist William Blake, who lived from the mid-Eighteenth century into the Nineteenth century. Chapter One discussed the life and compositional style of Pasatieri. Chapter Two details Blake’s life, writing style, and major themes of his work. Chapter Three provides background information on Bel Canto Songs, including its compositional style, dedications, and details regarding the work’s premiere. Chapter Three also includes analysis of the poetry and music for Bel Canto Songs and musical examples to illustrate significant motives, text-painting, and other important compositional elements. Information provided by the composer for each song is contained herein, and the author’s performance recommendations are given. A Conclusion, Bibliography, and Appendices are included. The Appendices include the poetry of Bel Canto Songs and original illuminations by William Blake. A transcription of an interview with Thomas Pasatieri is provided, as well as a list of his vocal works and all of Blake’s written works, engravings, and other artwork. Letters of permission are also included.
INTRODUCTION

This document will present a performance guide to Thomas Pasatieri’s *Bel Canto Songs* for Voice and Piano, a collection of six settings of poems by William Blake. Of this work, Thomas Pasatieri has written, “The songs represent the fusion of nineteenth century vocal writing with contemporary harmonic approaches.”¹ In a review of the premiere of these songs, music critic Eric Myers noted,

Pasatieri’s objective, which he successfully achieves, is to set pure *bel canto*-style vocal lines to a contemporary harmonic palette in the piano accompaniment. For his singer, he pulls out the full *bel canto* arsenal of melismas, ornamentation and contrasting dynamics, masterfully wielding them to establish mood. [Ailyn] Pérez and accompanist Ken Noda, finely attuned to each other’s every nuance and need, were a superb pair in this challenging music.²

Musical analysis of these songs will explore the incorporation of a mixture of older and modern compositional styles by the composer.

Initially, *Bel Canto Songs* caught my attention as a possible dissertation project because of the title, hinting at the use of a nineteenth century vocal writing style. A blending of historical and contemporary classical musical styles, the pieces are highly melodic and likely to appeal to audiences. Because of the idiomatic shaping and tessitura of the vocal line, these songs could be successfully used, for pedagogical purposes, in the collegiate voice studio. In both the vocal and piano parts, the text is cleverly expressed through a variety of compositional techniques, and the poetry itself has a wide spectrum of tone and subject. Given the musical and poetic complexity of the songs, the beauty and approachability of the vocal line, the likelihood of wide audience

¹ Thomas Pasatieri, Facebook message to the author, April 17, 2012.

appeal, and the fact that the work or selections could be sung by singers with varying technical skills and ages, *Bel Canto Songs* should prove to be an important contemporary musical work.

Chapter One will discuss the life and vocal works of American composer Thomas Pasatieri. Biographical information will be included, and Pasatieri’s compositional style and process will be identified, especially his lyric approach to writing for the voice and infusion of older musical styles into his composition. “As an artist who largely developed his tastes and aesthetics before subjecting himself to the academy, Pasatieri felt no shame in carrying on the tonal, lyrical operatic traditions of Richard Strauss and especially Giacomo Puccini. His works blended *bel canto* and *verismo* traditions, with a slightly updated harmonic sense.”³ Pasatieri’s work as both an operatic composer and film score orchestrator will be discussed, and a listing of his solo vocal writing will be provided.

Chapter Two will explore the life, poetry, and visual art of William Blake. Biographical information will be presented. An overview of Blake’s body of work as a writer, poet, artist, and print-maker as well as contributing aspects of his spiritual and political outlooks will be explored. In the preface to his book, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, scholar David V. Erdman described the poet thus, “Blake thought of himself as a prophetic bard with a harp that could prostrate tyranny and overthrow armies—or, more simply, as an honest man uttering his opinion on public matters.”⁴

Although the poetry from *Bel Canto Songs* was chosen from various Blake collections, the original context and the poet-artist’s illuminations for the poems in question will be presented

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and discussed. The text for the songs “To the Evening Star” and “To the Muses” first appeared in the earliest of Blake’s works, *Poetical Sketches*.

Blake’s first and only printed volume of poetry was called *Poetical Sketches*, and appeared in 1783. It was published through the patronage of Blake’s friend [Reverend Anthony Stephen] Mathew, who contributes an apologetic preface. He explains that the book contains poems written by Blake between the ages of twelve and twenty, which Blake had not bothered to revise because he had determined to abandon poetry for “his chosen profession,” i.e., engraving. This may mean that Blake already had some scheme in mind of a canon of engraved poems.⁵

The poetry of the remaining four songs originated in William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, a complex and oft revised work that combined poetry and visual artistry first printed in various forms between 1789 and 1794.⁶ “In Blake’s *Songs*, the meaning of each gem-like illuminated page expands in relation to its many contexts; each poem, arresting in itself, means even more, and means differently, when read as a text-design unit, and when read with other poems.”⁷ As part of the Blake illuminated canon of works, “The Garden of Love,” “Laughing Song,” “The Lamb,” and “Hear the Voice” have corresponding visual art associated with their text. These illustrations will be provided.

Chapter Three will center on the music and poetry of Pasatieri’s *Bel Canto Songs* and will include background information, analysis, and detailed performance suggestions. The circumstances of the premiere of *Bel Canto Songs* will be discussed. Biographical and professional information for the original performers, soprano Ailyn Pérez and pianist Ken Noda, will be presented, and review information for the premiere will be provided.

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⁷ Ibid., 8.
Each of the six songs is dedicated to an individual musician with whom Thomas Pasatieri has worked. The dedications are to baritone Andrew Garland, soprano Martha Guth, bass Christopher Temporelli, baritone Morgan Smith, collaborative pianist Donna Lowey, and bass-baritone Daniel Okulitch. Their professional connections to the composer and biographical information for each person honored in the dedications will be provided. The published keys for the songs does not necessarily reflect the voice types of the singers, but the composer has stated that the songs may be transposed for any voice and performed as separate, stand-alone pieces.

A detailed analysis of the music and use of text and compositional style will be given for each piece. Musical excerpts will be provided to show specific instances of text painting as well as other musical motives and important gestures that are related to the poetry. A detailed chart for each song will show the overall harmonic progression and musical form. Performance suggestions for each song and the work as a whole, as well as recommendations for programming and possible pedagogical use and applicability, will be included.

Following the conclusion and bibliography, appendices will be provided with the texts of *Bel Canto Songs*, images of the original illuminations of the poetry by William Blake, transcripts of an interview with Thomas Pasatieri, a list of the solo vocal works of the composer, a works list for the poet William Blake, and letters of permission.

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8 Thomas Pasatieri, phone interview with the author, July 17, 2013.

9 Ibid.
CHAPTER 1: THOMAS PASATIERI

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Childhood and Education

Composer Thomas Pasatieri was born on October 20, 1945 into an Italian-American family in New York City. His mother Marie (née Carini) was a housewife, and his father Carmello, who used the name Thomas or Tommy, was a truck driver who worked as a distributor for Pepsi-Cola. His immediate family also included his two sisters, Jo Ann and Frances. Throughout grade school he attended Catholic parochial schools. He went to primary school at St. Ann in Flushing, where his family had moved when he was four, and later attended St. Francis Prep, an all-boys school, until his family moved again when he was fourteen. As a child he had difficulty fitting in with his classmates and the other neighborhood kids. Once he began studying music, playing piano and composition provided a welcome haven. Pasatieri was also drawn to religious study, and admitted that when he was twelve his career aspirations were split between being a professional musician and joining a religious order.

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11 Ibid.


13 Ibid., 123.

14 Ibid., 149.

15 Ibid., 140.
At the somewhat late age of nine, he started taking piano lessons with Vera Wells, who had been a student of Rachmaninoff.\textsuperscript{16} A natural prodigy on the instrument by the age of ten, Pasatieri was playing concerts throughout the New York area, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and even Boston. He said later,

I took lessons for a year, and I started giving concerts. I could play everything right away. I continued to study and give concerts. That truly was the shocking element...[t]o everybody, but not to me because I didn’t know it was any different. I never thought it was difficult to play the piano. It seemed easy to me. It was only when I entered Juilliard, when I was just shy of my seventeenth birthday, all these other pianists told me that [my] repertoire that I had been playing for six years was so difficult. That is when it became difficult for me to play. Up until that point, it was not; I had a great facility for it.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to concertizing, Pasatieri also began composing at the age of ten.\textsuperscript{18} His piano teacher Vera Wells, her violist husband, and their quartet violinist and friend Franco Allegro all encouraged and helped young Pasatieri in his early experiments with music composition for their instruments. His first composing endeavors were written for the piano, then for viola, violin, and cello, then string quartets, and finally for voice.\textsuperscript{19} In his mid-teens, Pasatieri acquired his first formal composition instructor, the famous Nadia Boulanger. As he later recalled,

Well, I must have been about fifteen, and I heard that Boulanger was coming to Manhattan to give a lecture at the Manhattan School of Music, so I cut school...I took my compositions with me, and I crashed, I went in, I walked into the lecture, and there she was. When she finished speaking, I went up on the stage with my music and introduced myself to her. I was this teenage kid!

I said, “I’m an American composer, and I know you help American composers. Here’s my music.” She said, “Write down your phone number.” I wrote it on the music and went back to Long Island. Now, when I think about it, what a bold thing to do, but I


\textsuperscript{17} Bauer interview, 150.

\textsuperscript{18} Nardolillo interview, 102.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 103.
had no fear in those days. It all happened the way I thought it was supposed to happen. She called me the next day and said, “Come to Manhattan and start lessons.” So I did.

I worked with her about a month. She went back to Paris, so we did correspondence for a year. I would send works, and she would critique them. Then, I was accepted at Juilliard, and the summer of ’62, just before I entered, she wrote to me saying, “You can only have one teacher. It is best to work with just one person.” Of course, she was right.20

About his time studying with Boulanger, Pasatieri said that she was an enormous influence on him as a composer “because I was so young, and she encouraged me.” He explained, “Hers was not so much a technical school of teaching because we were apart. We were separated by continent, but she was the first major person to encourage me to continue writing music.”21

Although he eventually ended up attending Juilliard, Pasatieri was also offered a generous scholarship and stipend by New England Conservatory. The composer recalled the circumstances of his audition there,

[W]hen it was time for me to apply to college (this was 1962) the first place I applied was the New England Conservatory. So I had to go to do an audition, and I went to Boston, and my parents came with me, and I went out on the stage to do my audition, to play, and...there was an audience there to hear me play my audition! The faculty had come to hear me play because they knew...me from my concerts! ...And I played a program for them! You know, they asked for a Beethoven Sonata, a Bach Prelude and Fugue, and my own sonata.22

After this impressive audition, he was immediately offered a full scholarship and additional money to cover all expenses. When he went to play for Juilliard a few days later, he was told that he had to turn down the offer from New England before being considered for Juilliard. He took the risk and declined New England’s offer. Luckily, he was accepted at

20 Bauer interview, 135.

21 Ibid., 145.

22 Nardolillo interview, 103.
Juilliard and so went on to study as a double major in piano performance and composition at that conservatory. After the first couple of years at Juilliard, he dropped his second major in piano and put his full attention on composition.\textsuperscript{23} As he later put it,

I was still giving concerts, but I was then phasing them out because I didn’t have time, and I was devoting all of my efforts towards composition. And also, I didn’t want to spend the time practicing anymore, and I needed to spend my time learning and working on my compositional techniques. So I phased them out, and the last concert I gave as a soloist [was when] I was about 18. ...And then I never played solo again for thirty years. I performed, of course, I would [do] chamber music or I would [play] with a singer. I certainly played a lot of concerts, mostly of my music, but I did a lot of concerts over the years.\textsuperscript{24}

At Juilliard, Pasatieri began his composition studies with Vittorino Giannini. Pasatieri credits Giannini with influencing his choice to become an opera composer. He said,

[Giannini] wrote many other things, but he was definitely an opera composer. His sister Dusolina Giannini was a famous opera soprano. She sang with Toscanini. His father was an opera singer - a tenor. His older sister, Eufemia, Madame Gregory, was a singer and a voice teacher at Curtis and was Anna Moffo’s teacher, so he was definitely an opera composer. [Under Giannini’s influence] it was natural for me to become an opera composer.\textsuperscript{25}

In addition to his regular courses, in the summer of 1963 Pasatieri attended the Brevard Festival. His teacher Giannini served as President of the festival. At Brevard, Pasatieri was able to take daily composition lessons.\textsuperscript{26} At both Juilliard and Brevard, Pasatieri had the opportunity to befriend and collaborate with many talented musicians, and he was able to have his compositions sung by talented vocalists and played by excellent chamber ensembles and orchestras. It was during his time at Juilliard that he wrote his first two (one-act) operas, \textit{The}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 103.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 103-104.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Bauer interview, 119.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 127.
\end{itemize}
Trysting Place and The Flowers of Ice, neither of which are published. After three years with Giannini, Pasatieri continued his composition studies at Juilliard with Vincent Persichetti.  

Pasatieri explained the enormous influence these two teachers had on him,

Vittorio Giannini was truly the basis of my technique. He was the one that taught me everything technically and also allowed me to open myself up to expansive writing without being inhibited about it. Persichetti, who came after Giannini, was wonderful because he taught me how to chisel what I was doing so it didn’t have too many notes. The combination of Giannini and Persichetti, I think, was ideal.

Persichetti was the last of his major teachers. Pasatieri took a single lesson with Luciano Berio, and he briefly studied composition with Darius Milhaud while attending the Aspen Music Festival in the summer of 1965. Pasatieri said, “Darius Milhaud....hated what I was doing. Absolutely hated it. There were composition classes, so it would be me and the other composers. We would play our music and he would criticize it. Mine was by far the one that he hated the most.” Milhaud’s wife, who was perhaps less critical of Pasatieri’s work, served as the stage director of Pasatieri’s opera offering The Women for its festival performance. When the opera was received with great enthusiasm by the audience, Milhaud and the other two judges, who were Milhaud’s former students, bestowed Pasatieri with the coveted Aspen Prize, awarded for the best piece to be composed that summer at the festival. Pasatieri later recalled, “Well, after

27 Fitzpatrick interview.
28 Bauer interview, 145.
29 Fitzpatrick interview.
30 Bauer interview, 139.
32 Ibid., 146.
that audience reaction, there was no way that they could not give me the prize. They had to give me the prize. It was always the public that came through for me, rather than the critics or other composers.”

The exuberant audience reaction to *The Women* at the Aspen Festival that summer strengthened his interest in writing vocal music. He said later, “I felt at that moment, opera was what I was supposed to do. This is what I did that elicited the greatest response from the audience, and so I went on then to write operas for many years.”

Although he composed over one hundred art songs in his youth and during his early years of conservatory study, Pasatieri does not plan to publish these works during his lifetime. He said in a 1995 interview with scholar Beth Bauer that he still has his student compositions, but he considers them to be of an immature quality compared to his output of his professional career.

Pasatieri completed three composition degrees at Juilliard. He earned his Bachelor of Music in 1965 and his Master of Science in 1967. In 1969 he received his Doctor of Musical Arts degree, making him the first person to receive a doctorate from that institution.

**Early Professional Work**

By the time he had finished his final degree at Juilliard, Pasatieri had composed well over one hundred art songs, which currently remain unpublished. By the mid-sixties, starting with *The Women*, for which he had won the Aspen Prize, Theodore Presser began publishing his operas. During the 1970s, most of Pasatieri’s operas and other material were published by Belwin Mills,

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33 Bauer interview, 139.
34 Ibid., 119.
35 Ibid., 128.
36 Fitzpatrick interview.
though G. Schirmer and Southern also published some works. Pasatieri explained his history with publishers,

Bob Holton, who was at that time the most powerful agent for a composer, represented Carlisle Floyd, Lee Hoiby, Aaron Copeland, Samuel Barber, Gian-Carlo Menotti, just absolutely everyone. ...He attended that performance [at the Aspen Festival in 1965] and was a great promoter of opera. He was one of the first to bring Benjamin Britten to America. ...So, he was there for the beginning of my career. When I got back to New York [from the Aspen Festival], he contacted me, and the Juilliard School was doing two of my operas, The Women and La Divina. The Premiere of La Divina was in 1966. Bob was at those performances. At that time, he was with Schirmer, and they offered me a contract, which I signed. Shortly after signing and before publishing the works, Bob left to go to Presser. He asked me to take these three early works away from Schirmer and publish them at Presser, and I said, “fine.” So I signed with Presser, and my first published works were with them - La Divina, The Women, Padrevia. Then he left Presser and went to Belwin-Mills, so all the rest of those [early] works are published by Belwin-Mills. Now many years later, 1980 - I had been with Belwin-Mills for a decade at least, and I was very unhappy with Bob’s work and with Belwin-Mills, so I left and went to Schirmer. Then Bob died, and Belwin-Mills was no longer really handling opera or art song, so their whole catalog went back to Presser. I thought as long as my works are being handled by Presser, I might as well go back. Early on, there was one publisher, Southern, where a friend of mine was running the company. He was a singer and asked for a book of my songs.37

While Pasatieri did write some instrumental music in his early career, he concentrated on song literature and operas. He later said, “For many, many years, I wrote only vocal music. ...I always turned down every commission for anything that didn’t involve voice. There were a couple of exceptions, but very few.”38 His works were well received by audiences and performers, and he found fame as a young American opera and art song composer. His connections with various singers and other musicians continued to expand, and he was regularly commissioned by individuals, conservatories, universities, and opera companies to produce vocal

37 Bauer interview, 127-128.

38 Ibid., 119.
works. His operas were premiered with several opera companies, including Houston Grand Opera, Baltimore Opera, Seattle Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, and Fort Worth Opera.\textsuperscript{39}

While audiences and performers alike appreciated and praised his writing, some critics were especially harsh. In a 1995 interview, Pasatieri recalled one critic in particular who was extremely negative toward his work,

There was a critic in New York named Alan Rich, and this started in 1972. He wrote for \textit{New York Magazine}, and my first piece reviewed by him was the \textit{Trial of Mary Lincoln}, and it was an enormously successful opera on television. It garnered fantastic reviews, an Emmy and certainly put me on the map. Now I would say ninety-eight percent of the reviews for \textit{Mary Lincoln} were fantastic. The worst review was from Alan Rich, and his first sentence about me was, and I will never forget it, he said, “I don’t know from under which rock Mr. Pasatieri crawled out, but he should crawl back in,” and he continued on like that almost every month in \textit{New York Magazine} - even if he wasn’t reviewing me. He would be writing about somebody else and say, “This is terrible music, but not as bad as...” and then would do a paragraph about how terrible I was. It was just awful. And of course, at the time, I was traumatized. ...I was in my early twenties and was just so vulnerable. But now in retrospect, I realize that it was that review - those reviews - that got people talking about me and created interest in my career. So now I don’t regret any of that, but it was difficult for [someone] as insecure as I was, to receive those kinds of reviews.

Looking back on a thirty-year career, I would say that reviews are very important in the beginning of a career. What matters is if more people like you than don’t. If more people don’t like you, then you won’t have a career. And if there is controversy, it probably will help, and I was certainly controversial.\textsuperscript{40}

Perhaps the main reason for the discrepancy of response to Pasatieri’s music between some reviewers, and even other composers, and the general public and singers was that while his music is Romantic, tonal, and melodic in nature, in the mid-to-late twentieth century, the fashion among classical composers at the time was to produce more \textit{avant garde}, atonal music. Pasatieri’s understanding and love of the voice led him to write beautiful, lyric lines for that


\textsuperscript{40} Bauer interview, 129.
In addition to composing, Pasatieri also did some teaching in his early career. He had been hired to teach ear training classes in just his second year as a student at Juilliard. After he finished his doctorate, he was hired at Manhattan School of Music, where he taught for two years. A teaching career did not appeal to him. As he recalled,

I’m not crazy about teaching. It’s okay in small doses. I don’t mind a very talented student now and then, but there are several reasons why I didn’t like teaching. First of all, the commitment that I make to a student is to take them from wherever they are to a full-fledged composer, which is an enormous commitment - a lifetime commitment - but you have to do it. I was interested for a small amount of time, but otherwise I would have to say no. Masterclasses were more interesting to me because I could go in and work with singers, mostly singers, sometimes composers. To work with singers was a bit more interesting to me than working with composers.

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41 Ibid., 129.
42 Ibid., 140.
43 Fitzpatrick interview.
44 Bauer interview, 117-118.
While he also taught briefly at the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, it did not satisfy him because of political drama with other faculty members. Pasatieri observes, “There was a jealousy among the faculty because they publish salaries. I was there only one day a month, and my fee was higher than their full-time salary. I had a career, so there was a lot of jealousy.” 45

Pasatieri also worked as a stage director and opera producer. Sometime after directing a production at Atlanta Opera of his work The Seagull, he was asked to be the Artistic Director of that company which was called Atlanta Civic Opera. He took that position in June 1980 and held it for four years. 46 Of his time running Atlanta Civic Opera, Pasatieri said,

In my first season, I produced a gala. It presented thirteen opera singers [including] Sam Ramey, Catherine Malfitano, [and] Ashley Putnam. Everyone came down to do the benefit for me. ...Robert Jacobson, who was the editor of Opera News, was the M.C. It was a great success. That was the first event I produced. Following that, I did The Consul of Gian-Carlo Menotti, [which] David Alden directed, then Ariadne auf Naxos [by] Richard Strauss. The next season, I directed Black Widow and Cenerentola [by] Rossini. Then I produced a whole series of cabaret concerts. We did all kinds of things, Verdi rarities, a Viennese evening, an American music theatre evening, ...a number of things. They were called “Sundays at Seven.” The last season, I did a double-bill of The Medium [by] Menotti and Dido and Aeneas [by] Purcell. The last opera I produced [for that company] was The Barber of Seville [by] Rossini. 47

Although he had quickly established an international-level reputation as a composer, he eventually became disillusioned with his prospects of maintaining a career writing opera in New York. In 1995, when comparing the modern composer’s experience to that of previous generations, Pasatieri said,

It is a very different situation with opera in the twentieth-century, particularly in America. You have to fight for everything. It is so hard to get works repeated. They’ll do

45 Reid interview, 148.

46 Fitzpatrick interview.

47 Bauer interview, 145-146.
world premieres and that’s it, no matter how successful the pieces are. It doesn’t make any difference. You see this time and time again. People in the past decade have been telling me, “it’s changing, it’s changing,” but I don’t see it changing in opera. It’s just that more companies are doing one work. They’ll do one round of them, because they pitch in for the expenses, but then it drops out and again, it’s not done any more. Even with the people that have been very successful like Philip Glass, where are the repeats of his operas? ...There is no lasting...contemporary opera tradition - especially in America. The only person that came close to that was Gian-Carlo Menotti, and even that has stopped so much - but nobody else. None of the works are repeated or done with great frequency.48

Regarding a classical composer’s prospects in New York, he said,

As a musician, as a composer, your choices are very limited. You can either make your living writing music, which is very tough to do...a very limited income, or teach at a university, which I did not want to do. I had already done that. Or you can somehow work in an industry that will pay you for music. There is a recording industry in New York - you can get a job as a record producer, work for a record company, or work in film and television. Those are the only areas [to work in] unless you want to conduct, and then you are a conductor rather than a composer.49

So in 1984, Pasatieri changed career paths. For the first time in his life, he moved away from New York City to begin a new chapter as a film industry orchestrator and music producer. His decision was met with criticism from the classical music world. He explained his reasoning later,

I had been traveling so much of my life as a composer and a pianist - you know I was running an opera [company] - so I was commuting from New York to Atlanta. I was teaching at the University of Cincinnati for a year, commuting there, too. I wanted to live in one place and not travel anymore, but to do that, it had to be a place where I could earn a living, and I wouldn’t have to rely on a concert career to earn a living. Los Angeles was the obvious choice because [there] I [could] work in the film industry and not have to travel.50

48 Ibid., 124-125.
49 Ibid., 148.
50 Ibid., 117.
The last opera he wrote before he left New York was Maria Elena, which was commissioned by the University of Arizona and written in 1982. While he would continue to write classical music and would eventually return to the opera world, in 1984 his career focus was shifted to the film industry for the next two decades.

**Work in Hollywood**

Via a writer friend already in California, Pasatieri was brought into contact with an agency focused on film composers, and with their help he began working right away. The first project that he worked on as an orchestrator was a television mini-series called Space. His next opportunity came from another friend, Charlie Fox. That 1985 project was Pasatieri’s first movie score, for the movie European Vacation with Chevy Chase. From there, his career as a film orchestrator and music producer kicked into full gear. He produced and orchestrated music for such television series as Twilight Zone, Space, Blue Skies, and The Fanelli Boys, for which he also composed some music. Over the course of the next nineteen years and then some, Pasatieri orchestrated and produced film scores for well over one hundred movies, including major blockbusters. Much of his film score work was done in partnership with composer Thomas Newman and include Legends of the Fall, Little Mermaid, Pretty Woman, Dick Tracy, Fried Green Tomatoes, Little Women, Shawshank Redemption, Pelican Brief, A Walk in the Clouds, Fabulous Baker Boys, How to Make an American Quilt, The Page Master, Scent of a Woman, The Green Mile, American Beauty, Little Shop of Horrors, Oliver & Company, Dirty Rotten

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51 Ibid., 111.

52 Ibid., 146.

"Scoundrels, Meet Joe Black, Erin Brockovich, Pay It Forward, Punch-Drunk Love, Road to Perdition, White Oleander, Finding Nemo, WALL-E, and Wreck-It-Ralph."54

Comparing his work as a composer to that of a film orchestrator, Pasatieri said, “I like the movie work and doing orchestrations for films. I enjoy the orchestration part of it. The only problem is it is not artistic. It is not a good artistic endeavor. It is easy for me to do orchestrations. It is work, but nothing that I have to agonize over. It is more of a labor than a creative process.”55 He further explained, regarding his preference for orchestrating over film composition, “Well, see when you write, you actually write the melodies; you have to do exactly what the [film] director wants. They will alter it to whatever they want, and I really don’t like to work like that. But in orchestration, I’m left completely to myself to decide whatever colors or the orchestra I want to use. I’m more in charge. Nobody interferes, and I like that.”56

Pasatieri formed his own production company, Topaz Productions, through which he handles his works as a music producer and opera director. He said, “...if I produce a segment, usually an opera segment, in a movie, like in Pretty Woman, when they went to San Francisco Opera. The opera was La Traviata. ...or in Dick Tracy, I wrote a little opera for Dick Tracy, or T.V. things that need opera - my production company produces that, and everything filters through that.”57 Of his other film production duties, in 1999 he said,

I have to be [in Los Angeles] because I also supervise the music productions. Sometimes I conduct, which I don’t like to do. .....About thirty percent of the time the contracts require that I conduct, but I really dislike it. ....It’s very tiring and also it’s not satisfying.


55 Bauer interview, 126.

56 Ibid., 138.

57 Ibid., 125.
If you’ve ever been to a film recording session, you have headphones on and you can’t really hear well unless you’re in the booth where you can hear everything, which I much prefer to do.58

Pasatieri never completely stopped writing classical music. He continued to compose and publish instrumental, choral, and vocal works, but this output was less frequent than what he had previously produced. He also later did some performing, especially of his own music, and gave lectures and masterclasses occasionally. He recalled, “I was no longer earning my living by being a ‘serious’ composer or ‘classical,’ whatever term you want to use. I earned my living in Hollywood. ...I didn’t stop; I just wound down for a while.”59 He also said, “That is just the reality of a ‘serious’ artist. At some point, you must decide if you are willing to live the ‘starving artist’ life forever or if you are going to be practical. I was practical, but now I can compose again.”60 He explained, “For several years I did very little writing of a serious nature - concert music maybe - sometimes I would do one piece a year. ...Then I started writing a great deal - all instrumental music - a piano concerto, a concerto for two pianos and orchestra, a sonata for viola and piano, serenade for violin and orchestra. Those pieces all came very quickly.”61

In addition to writing instrumental music, Pasatieri took on the occasional commissioned vocal project and continued to write art songs. During this period of his career, he composed several vocal works, including the Sieben Lehmannlieder, based on poetry by Lotte Lehmann; Three Poems of Theodore Ramsay, which were commissioned by the poet;62 Three California

58 Reid interview, 125.
59 Bauer interview, 147-148.
60 Ibid., 172.
61 Ibid., 126.
62 Ibid., 157.
Songs, written for mezzo-soprano Marvelle Cariaga;\textsuperscript{63} Windsong, a chamber piece for soprano, piano, and viola;\textsuperscript{64} Alleluia, which he composed for Thomas Hampson for his Christmas album Christmas with Thomas Hampson released in 1991,\textsuperscript{65} Three Poems of Oscar Wilde, which he also composed for Hampson, whose appearance reminded the composer of that poet;\textsuperscript{66} and Letter to Warsaw, which was commissioned by soprano Jane Eaglen.\textsuperscript{67}

\textbf{Return to Opera}

Having enjoyed an successful music career in the film industry, Pasatieri’s original idea of changing paths to provide for a more secure financial future for himself had been met. As he said in a 2013 email to music scholar and soprano Catherine Clarke Nardolillo,

By 2003 I had achieved that goal. I bought a duplex in Manhattan and a country house in CT and drive myself and the dogs back to the east coast. For four years I continued working in film, commuting bi-coastally and then in 2007, I did my last [at that time] film. It was Wall-E. Starting with 2003 I was returning to my opera/concert career full time.\textsuperscript{68}

Even before his official return to the New York opera scene, Pasatieri began revising his operas for new performances. In 2002, a Manhattan School of Music performance marked the New York premiere of his revised 1972 opera The Seagull.\textsuperscript{69} In April 2007, a full article in

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\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 158-159.


\textsuperscript{65} Bauer interview, 160-161.

\textsuperscript{66} Thomas Pasatieri, phone interview by author, July 12, 2013.

\textsuperscript{67} Burdette, 89.

\textsuperscript{68} Nardolillo, 8.

Opera News by Richard Dyer announced Pasatieri’s return to the opera world. That same year, the composer premiered two new operas, Frau Margot and The Hotel Casablanca. Frau Margot, a three act opera based on Frank Corsaro’s play Lyric Suite, premiered in June at Fort Worth Opera, and The Hotel Casablanca, a two-act opera based on George Feydeau’s A Flea in Her Ear, premiered in San Francisco two months later. As he had prior to his film industry pursuits, Pasatieri’s opera output since returning to full-time composition has been prolific. He followed up these operas with composing and premiering about one new opera a year, and several of his operas have received repeat performances by various companies, festivals, and schools. New works are available from his current publisher Theodore Presser.

Pasatieri’s chamber, choral, and art song composition have also continued. In the summer of 2009, he composed the subject of this paper, the Bel Canto Songs. He continues to travel frequently to give masterclasses and attend performances of his works, and he has begun republishing many of his art songs from earlier in his career. Two volumes of Pasatieri’s most popular and previously published art songs are now available in an anthology entitled Autumn Leaves. In August 2016, he plans to play piano as part of a Pheonica Festival production starring soprano Lauren Flanigan of his three monodramas of the Shakespeare characters Desdemona, Juliet, and Lady Macbeth, which were composed originally for concert use but are sometimes staged. Thomas Pasatieri currently lives in Florida. He continues to actively compose, perform, and give masterclasses.

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70 Burdette, 84-85.

71 Phone interview by author.

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Influences

Several of Pasatieri’s earliest influences as a composer came from the music he encountered as a young pianist. He said,

[M]y piano teacher, ...Vera Wells, ...exposed me to all kinds of music..., right from the beginning. In other words, I didn’t only play Bach and Mozart and Chopin, I mean, I played all of those things, and Beethoven and Brahms, but I also played Rachmaninoff, Bartok, Khachaturian, Copland, Gershwin, ...I mean, she gave me everything. There were all kinds of music for me to play, but none of it was Electronic Music or Twelve-Tone, or anything like that. This was way back in the ‘50s, we’re talking about... Okay, so then I started to write my own music [at the age of ten] and of course, the influences were the pianists, you know, Rachmaninoff, Chopin - those were the influences in the beginning.  

His primary teacher at Juilliard, Vittorio Giannini, who was himself an opera composer, encouraged him in his early operatic and vocal compositions. Pasatieri’s admiration of great singers and beautiful singing also shaped the style and type of his output, which has been primarily opera and art song. In addition to being friends with singers, he worked with singers as a collaborative pianist and coach, and while at Juilliard, he observed many voice lessons. The teaching of Jennie Tourel was especially influential. Of Jennie Tourel, whom he credits as being “one of the greatest singers that ever lived, and one of the greatest artists” and who was returned to the stage in order to perform a role in his early opera Black Widow, Pasatieri said, “she was a great influence on me. ....I went to her masterclasses, and when she would teach French music or Russian music, it was...they were experiences that will never be duplicated, you

73 Nardolillo interview, 102.

74 Bauer interview, 119.

75 Ibid., 130.

76 Ibid.
can’t find that anywhere.” In 1977, Opera News hired Pasatieri to write an article in celebration of the eightieth birthday of Rosa Ponselle, for which he interviewed the soprano, with whom he was friends and who he cites as another strong influence on his vocal music. Of soprano Maria Callas, he said,

She was the greatest - probably one of the greatest influences of anyone in the twentieth-century, as far as I’m concerned. I only saw her a couple of times, but just the presence of this person would make the music come alive - who could sing and sound like she was speaking at the same time. She, who transformed the musical language - Oh, yes, definitely, I would listen over and over to the performance of hers - learning what it is to really create drama through the vocal line was as important as studying composition.

Discussing his overall influences as a composer, Pasatieri said,

Let me say that if I were to put my finger on the composers that influenced me most, I should start that I believe every composer is influenced by everything. All the music that you hear and all the music that you like and even music that you don’t like. And also, in my case, singers. It could be operatic singers like Maria Callas, or it could be song singers like Jennie Tourel. It could be popular singers like Peggy Lee or Barbra Streisand. You never know where the sub-conscious influence comes from. Having said that, if I were forced to pick what composers I was most influenced by, I would say Rachmaninoff. I would say Poulenc. I would say Richard Strauss, and maybe Samuel Barber.

The enthusiasm of audiences for his vocal music also had a great impact on the composer’s output. He credits his early success at the Aspen Festival with The Women as one of

77 Ibid., 130.


79 Bauer interview, 130-131.

80 Ibid., 131.

81 Fitzpatrick interview.
the things that steered him into a career writing opera and strengthened his resolve to continue to write tonal music.\(^{82}\)

**Characteristics of Style**

Pasatieri is a melodist, and his works are often compared to that of Romantic and Verismo composers. With some exceptions, most of his art songs are settings of poetry in English. His operas are mostly in English, the only current exception being *Maria Elena*, the libretto for which includes both English and Spanish. He wrote or adapted librettos for several of his operas, but also works with librettists.\(^{83}\)

Throughout his conservatory days and early career, the traditional nature of his music was criticized, but he remained steadfast in his composition style. He explained,

> [T]here I was [at Juilliard] with other composers, and they WERE into Serialism and Electronic Music and all of that stuff, and I was not. And yes, there was....definite ostracism from the other composers to me...however, when we would have a concert, ...a Composer’s Concert, my music would always get the most applause, the biggest public reaction, and that was not true with the others. And so that furthered their resentment of me, but I didn’t care. I just went on with what I was doing, and that was it.\(^{84}\)

Scholar Susanne Reid pinpointed several key characteristics of Pasatieri’s vocal compositional style in her 2000 dissertation on his song cycle, *Sieben Lehmannlieder*. These characteristics were soaring melodic lines, doubling of the vocal line in the accompaniment, repetition of words, sectionalized organization, tonality with a non-traditional approach to harmony and tonal centers, chromaticism, poly-chord clusters and rolled chords, frequent meter changes to fit the text, and word painting.\(^{85}\) Additional important characteristics include his

\(^{82}\) Bauer interview, 119.

\(^{83}\) Burdette, 83-85.

\(^{84}\) Nardolillo interview, 102.

\(^{85}\) Reid interview, 154-161.
placement of rests where he intends for singers to breathe\textsuperscript{86} and the heavy use of motives, which can be connected to a character or idea\textsuperscript{87} and which are also sometimes used to create unity within a piece.\textsuperscript{88} As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, most of these characteristics are present in \textit{Bel Canto Songs}. Additionally, in \textit{Bel Canto Songs}, Pasatieri drew intentional parallels between the stylistic characteristics of the \textit{bel canto} period and the writing for that work.

Many of Pasatieri’s operas feature baritones as male leads, instead of tenors. When asked about this, Pasatieri said that few well-known tenors at the time were doing modern opera in English. He explained, “...basically the people who were singing contemporary music were baritones, and they were the people I felt it was more practical to write for.”\textsuperscript{89} Pasatieri also said that many of his art songs were composed for the soprano voice, with clear exceptions being those pieces that were commissioned by or dedicated to men, but that many, if not most, of his songs could be sung by either gender.\textsuperscript{90} He has said that if he writes a song for a specific person, then he does so with their voice and sound in mind, but this is not the case if the work is not commissioned by or for a certain singer.\textsuperscript{91} When he composes art songs, Pasatieri sings through the vocal line himself as he’s writing.\textsuperscript{92}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Nardolillo interview, 99-100.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Penelope Ann Speedie, “American Operas on American Themes by American Composers: A Survey of Characteristics and Influences,” DMA diss., Ohio State University, 1991, 565.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 568.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Fitzpatrick interview.
\item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Reid interview, 139.
\item \textsuperscript{92} Interview by author.
\end{itemize}
Of his vocal writing, he said,

Melody has to be primary. However, I think sometimes in my songs, particularly the early songs, for the sake of clarity of text I will sacrifice a little bit of the long melody. If you take a piece like the [The Harp that Once through Tara’s Halls] that is based primarily on melody, there are some syllables that are not so easy to sing, because they are high for many people. But in that case, I was going totally for melody, where in other songs it has been more important to go for a description of the words.93

Of his writing for the piano accompaniments in art songs, he noted that his pianistic technique has been a strong influence. He said, “Some of them are simple, and some are difficult. I think it would be impossible for it to not be affected by the fact that [piano] is my main instrument.”94 Of his compositional style he said,

I use melody, harmony, and rhythm - all the elements of composition. If they are cohesive and well-conceived, it is probably because I follow the text. I’m concerned with the text, and at the same time, musical structure. [Creating] a world in a short space of time has to be done with whatever means you have at the moment. So I would say [it is significant] NOT to be too far out in the harmonic reaches. In other words, keeping it in the framework helps to make it cohesive. The same thing is true vocally. Not having large sections that are diverse from earlier sections helps to keep it cohesive.

He went on to say,

Rhythm and harmony go together. Of course, there is harmonic rhythm, the degree to which the harmony changes, the rhythm of the changes of the harmony. It is all one; it is like not being able to separate something that has several layers, phyllo-dough, you know what I mean? When you have something that you cannot separate without destroying the individual parts. They are stuck together...rhythm, harmony, and melody, but certainly rhythm and harmony.95

In multiple interviews Pasatieri has said that he does not strictly analyze his own work as part of his composition process. He recognizes that he has an individual style and acknowledges

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93 Bauer interview, 144-145.
94 Ibid., 143.
95 Ibid., 144-145.
certain characteristics of his work, but he doesn’t think about his music in that way as he composes. When asked about specific style choices in a 1999 interview, he replied,

I have said before that I’ve written hundreds of songs and [at that time] seventeen operas, and I don’t remember writing any of them. ....I mean I do remember sitting there, the physical act, but I really don’t [remember] because when I’m writing....you are there, and you’re also not there. That’s how I feel. You are thinking, [and] the technique, the actual compositional technique, supports you while you are doing it, but I don’t have any formalized process like other composers do who can really talk about things like [self-analysis of their music].

He stated that he doesn’t sketch out melodies or other elements before he begins to compose formally. He explained,

Most of my process is done mentally, and I feel that it continues even into my conscious mind. So by the time I write it, the process has been going on. ...I can tell you that the way I know whether or not I’m going to accept a commission or not is whether I can already hear, even if it’s fairly distant, but I already hear the music. So, I remember reading the poems, then I was sitting down listening to the inside of my head, if I could hear it, what the music was. And it was distant, but it was there. So then I know that I was going to write it. And there have been a few times in my life that I have accepted a commission and then turned it down because it wasn’t there.

In a more recent interview, Pasatieri expanded upon his creative process when he said that his experience was the same with all forms that he composes. He said,

[T]he process happens in the ether. I mean, the way I feel when I’m writing, whatever it is, [there is] no difference between songs or opera or chamber music or symphonic music... I feel that the music is already there. ...I'm listening, and the music exists someplace, and I can hear it, and it’s coming down. It’s like something opens up...the top of my head or my brain or my consciousness or whatever, but something opens up and then the music comes down. And then as you work on it, ...you realize what you got right and what you didn’t. So that’s how you make your changes and you work on it. Then of course, ...your technique steps up to the plate and takes over... So, all of those things happen in exactly the same way for me as a composer. I don’t know about other composers, but that’s how it feels for me.

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96 Reid interview, 143.

97 Ibid., 143-144.

98 Nardolillo interview, 101.
Comparing the differences between writing opera and writing songs, Pasatieri said that while the vocal line might be treated the same way, “the thing about a song is you have to create a whole world in a short space of time. With an opera, you have many different colors, and there is a theatrical theme. You can take time and develop with an opera, but with songs it is quite different. You have to learn to compress them, but I have enjoyed writing songs just as much as opera.”

According to Pasatieri, rarely does he consciously quote other works in his music. One exception being the appearance of Brunhilda’s “Ho jo ta ho” at the end of the comedic song *Overweight, Overwrought, Over You,* which is a friendly joke in reference to the poet Sheila Nader, a well-known Wagnerian soprano.

**Interpreting His Work**

Pasatieri encourages performers to find their own expression and allows them to take liberty in choosing tempi and other performance details, where they are absent from his scores. He said, “I specifically don’t put in metronome marks because I want everyone to interpret the music individually. There’s no right or wrong with that. They have to feel it for themselves and make it their own, rather than anything prescribed.” Citing the example of one of his most famous songs, *Vocal Modesty,* he said,

Years ago, I was in New York buying music at Patelson’s, which is no longer there but [was] the big music store [in town], and the cashier...was a singer. She saw my credit card and my name, and so she said, “I would like to ask you at what tempo I should sing ‘Vocal Modesty.’” I said, “Well, Janet Baker sings it very slowly. She savors everything.

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99 Bauer interview, 119-120.

100 Interview by author.

101 Fitzpatrick interview.

102 Interview by author.
Elizabeth Söderström sings it very fast. And they’re both great in it, so sing it at any tempo that you like.”

He indicated that it does not bother him when performers sing in a different key that he originally published to better fit their individual voices or when they sing selections from a larger set, such as Bel Canto Songs, out of context. He also noted that collaborative pianists should feel free to peddle as they see fit in the absence of marks in the score.

Pasatieri has revised a few of his songs and other works, although he does this rarely. Scholar Catherine Clarke Nardolillo noted that “[s]ome of Pasatieri’s songs, including Alleluia, two of the [Sieben] Lehmannlieder, The Little Stone, Vocal Modesty, Instead of Words, As in a Theatre, The Harp, and Overweight, Overwrought, Over You, have been rewritten by the composer, so two printed versions exist.” Pasatieri also revised his 1972 opera The Seagull in 2002 for its revival performance at Manhattan School of Music that year.

Regarding his revision of art songs, Pasatieri said, “[For] all of the songs that have revisions, the original is still available, because there are libraries that have them, and people [have access to the older versions] all of the time, but in general, ....what I would prefer, something simpler, ...is the new version.”

Pasatieri puts great value on the expression of the individual musician and the connection that is forged between the performers and their audience. In talking about his ideas about the measure of success in a musical career, he said,

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103 Interview by author.
104 Interview by author.
105 Burdette, 90.
106 Dyer, 16.
107 Nardolillo interview, 95.
[My] career happened so fast. I used to think that to be successful you have to have a big international audience. Then in later years I changed my mind. Really success is in the communication and that if you are a singer, and you sing a song cycle for thirty people, and you have a profound effect on two people, you are just as successful as Luciano Pavarotti who [sang] for 600,000 people. I’ve come to believe that success just cannot be measured by numbers or money or anything like that - fame. But success has to be an emotional, artistic thing for the one person you’re going to reach. And there really is no competition. ...Because, after all, every talent is unique. Because if we have a competition, then you have to say that Barry Manilow is more successful than Mozart! You’d have to say that! He’s certainly made a lot of money....[more] well-known. So how can that be the measure? So if that’s true...that it is not the number of people [in one’s audience], nor the amount of financial success that creates [success], then what is it? It has to be integrity, being true to your talent, and expressing. When I used to teach composers, ...I would always say, the only thing a composer needs to do is to learn to speak his own language and then express emotion through their language. That really is the thing that every artist, whether it’s a painter, or dancer, or poet does. The emotions are really the same. They haven’t changed. Our voices are the same.108

108 Reid interview, 145-146.
CHAPTER 2: WILLIAM BLAKE

BIографical information

Childhood & Family

William Blake was born on November 28, 1757 in the Soho section of London. He was a middle child in a modest tradesman family. The oldest child of the Blake family, James, named after his father, followed in his father’s footsteps, taking over the family business. The second child, John, died as a toddler. The Blakes also named their fourth child John. William, who was the third oldest child, resented his parents’ favoritism toward his younger brother John but was extremely close with his youngest brother, Robert. His sister Catherine, who would remain unmarried throughout her life and serve in a domestic capacity to her older brother James, was the youngest child and only daughter of the family.

Parents, James Blake (a hosier) and Catherine Hermitage, were religious dissenters. As such, they did not belong to the Church of England and followed an alternative Christian creed that valued private devotion and Biblical interpretation by the individual worshipper. If they belonged to a specific sect, of which there were many at the time, it is unknown. In line with the anti-establishment beliefs of his parents, William received his early education at home, primarily through reading the Bible. According to recent Blake biographer Peter Ackroyd:


112 Ackroyd, 18.
He did not attend any of the Dissenting academies, ...and he was never even dispatched to a local dame school or ‘horn book’ school[. ] Blake once explained to a persistent enquirer, “There is no use in education, I hold it wrong. It is the great Sin. It is eating of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.” But he may just have been reverting to the Dissenting tradition of his own family - that radical milieu may indeed be the root - since, in many antinomian sects, Reason and Education were also considered the great sin. 114

At the age of four, William saw a vision of God putting his head against the window of the Blake house. 115 This would be the first of many such supernatural experiences, and soon enough, he reported seeing angels and other spectral figures. “Clearly both parents were concerned by Blake’s stories of seeing visions, though the fault may have lain not in seeing the visions but in speaking of them.” 116 These visions would continue throughout his life, and as an adult, he believed unreservedly in them and spoke of them to others with great zeal and conviction. 117

**Apprenticeship and Training**

Although his father originally wanted William to become a hosier, the boy was more drawn to artistic pursuits and wandering around London on foot than to business and arithmetic. 118 His interest in art and his ability to draw were clear from an early age, and at the

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113 According to Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary, a dame school was “a school in which the rudiments of reading and writing were taught by a woman in her own home,” and a horn-book was “a child’s primer consisting of a sheet of parchment paper protected by a sheet of transparent horn.”

114 Ibid., 23.

115 Bentley, 19.

116 Ibid., 20.

117 Ackroyd, 35.

118 Bentley, 21-22.
age of ten, he was enrolled in the Drawing School of Henry Pars. As a young art student, he was exposed to copies of great classical art and allowed access to a number of private art galleries in the homes of the London nobility. It was during this time that he became enamored with the work of Raphael and especially Michelangelo, who was to remain a prominent artistic influence throughout his life.

In addition to paying William’s tuition, his father bought him several miniature casts of famous sculptures to study, and Blake began a collection of art prints and books, into which he wrote his own thoughts. “At the same time that he was studying at Par’s Drawing School and buying prints and casts and books and pouring over them, he was writing poetry. His earliest surviving poetry was written when he was eleven, and it would be surprising if he had not written earlier poems which were discarded.” His earliest known poem “How sweet I roam’d from field to field” would later be included in Poetical Sketches, the early collection from which two of the poems of Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs would be taken.

At the age of fourteen, Blake was apprenticed by his father to distinguished engraver, James Basire. His apprenticeship contract was for a seven year term, for which he would live with his master and work as part of his business. “Basire’s style was old-fashioned line-engraving, the style of Dürer and Marcantonio, rather than the flashier and more fashionable stipple or mezzotint or (later) lithography. His forte was the accurate representation of old

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119 Ibid., 22.
120 Ibid., 24-25.
121 Ibid., 26-27.
122 Ibid., 27.
123 Line engraving uses lines and hashes of crossed lines to produce shading and texture. Stippling accomplishes the same purpose with patterns of dots created by individual strokes by
buildings and monuments.”124 Because of Blake’s ability and prior training in drawing, he was quickly entrusted with drafting and copying other artwork, in addition to his more tedious duties of the engraver’s craft.

Blake’s mature artwork would be influenced by the gothic art in Westminster Abbey that he spent many hours sketching for his master,125 but his interest in gothic style and the medieval period also extended to literature. In addition to his newfound devotion to Dante and Chaucer, his continuing visions began to feature more historical and literary figures. He later claimed to have seen and sometimes conversed with English kings and queens, William Wallace, Milton, and biblical prophets.126

Blake may have originally had his sights set on a career beyond a tradesman engraver, a skill that was considered little more than mechanical and not usually afforded particular artistic respect at the time. According to scholar Aileen Ward:

His voracious reading, in history and aesthetics as well as poetry, and his study of his great art of the past, both unusual in an engraver’s apprentice, seem deliberate steps toward a career in history painting... It was evidently this ambition to move him to decide, at the end of his apprenticeship in 1779, not to join the Stationer’s Guild - a prerequisite to becoming a master engraver - but rather to apply for admission to the Royal Academy Schools of Design.127

the engraver. Mezzotint also uses dots, which are created by rolling a textured tool over the surface being engraved, giving the finished image a softer, more uniform tint. Images are produced in lithography without traditional engraving by contrasting an oil-based ink-attracting material with a water-based ink-repelling material on a printing surface.

124 Bentley, 33.

125 Ibid., 41.

126 Ibid., 42-43.

He was admitted to the Academy Schools, but as an engraver rather than a painter. As an engraver, he could never become a full member of the Royal Academy. “Engravings were rarely shown in the Academy exhibitions, and the Academy continued to regard engraving as a reproductive rather than an original art[.].” Nevertheless, he seems to have done well early on at the school, having several paintings exhibited and probably also sold. Classes were held in the evening hours, so he could attend even as he began professional engraving work in 1780. He eventually fell out of favor, being associated with “lesser arts” watercolor and engraving, and by isolating himself with his professors.

He was vehement in his private complaints against the Academy’s president, Joshua Reynolds, due to the man’s constructive criticism of Blake’s artwork, although he would in later life uphold similar artistic values, such as looking to the great masters of the past to enlighten the work of the present. In contrast to the teachings of the Academy, Blake held fast in preferring watercolor and fresco and even engraving to oil painting. He persisted in revering Michelangelo and decrying the more elaborate baroque style of Rubens to the chagrin of his masters. The only teacher whom he admired, Irish historical painter James Barry, was also antagonistic to the art establishment in his criticisms of Reynolds. Blake’s documented arguments with the school’s president and other professors show not only his keen, independent

128 Ibid., 78.
129 Ibid., 78.
130 Ibid., 79.
131 Bentley, 52.
132 Ward, 79.
133 Ibid., 80.
mind and a pulling away from mainstream thought, but also a bristly personality that would put him at odds with others throughout his life. Yet not all of his creative and professional relationships during this period were negative. While studying at the Royal Academy, Blake befriended several men who would become important to his life and career. In addition to Barry, he became close with artist and writer George Cumberland, sculptor John Flaxman, illustration designer Thomas Stothard, and fellow engraver William Sharp.134

**Gordon Riots & Arrest at Upnor Castle**

In June 1780, the year Blake began attending the Royal Academy, Lord George Gordon encouraged a populist uprising against a Parliamentary Act intended to provide better equality to Roman Catholics. The resulting mob rampaged across London for about a week, burning Catholic churches, homes, and other property, as well as looting businesses and breaking prisoners out from incarceration.135 Blake was caught up, perhaps unintentionally, in the angry crowd’s advance through the neighborhood of his former master Basire. Both he and his friend Cumberland were horrified by the destruction they witnessed.136 Many of the rioters, some of them children, were later caught and hanged. “The images of ‘burning,’ ‘fire,’ ‘flames,’ and ‘rage’ in his poetry and his picture of ‘Fire’ are likely to be related to the scenes he saw during the Gordon riots.”137

Later that same year, Blake, Stothard, and James Parker, also a former apprentice of Basire, were captured and held on suspicion of espionage while on an innocent boating and

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134 Bentley, 57-58.
135 Ibid., 55.
136 Ibid., 56-57.
137 Ibid., 57.
sketching holiday on the River Medway. England was at war with France at the time, and the young artists had rowed into a large naval base and had begun sketching the fortifications and vessels. They were arrested, but were released after a messenger returned with confirmation of their claims that they were art students from the Royal Academy. According to Blake’s recent biographer G. E. Bentley, “the incident must have confirmed what [Blake] had always suspected about the arbitrariness of civil and military power, about how easily such power is abused - and about how such power is an abuse in itself.”

Despite the difficulties in his studies and the political turmoil of his environment, Blake continued at the Royal Academy for six more years, during which he began to establish himself in his profession and in his personal life.

**Marriage**

After a failed romance in London, Blake went to stay in Battersea with extended family. While there, he met the sympathetic Catherine Boucher, and they quickly agreed to marry. She was from the large brood of a poor market gardener and was illiterate, as shown by her inability to write her own name on the church’s marriage register when they were wed in August, 1782.

She would never provide him with children, but Catherine became a staunch supporter and helper to her husband. They lived most of their lives together without servants, as she herself took care of the physical needs of their small household. In time, William taught his wife to read and write and trained her to assist him in his work, sometimes in helping him add color to his

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138 Ibid., 59-60.
139 Ibid., 60.
140 Ackroyd, 81-81.
141 Ibid., 81.
prints and by working the printing press. In turn, having been educated by and completely devoted to her husband, she parroted her husband’s beliefs, especially in fervent faith in his visions.\textsuperscript{142}

With his marriage to Catherine, Blake secured his household needs and acquired a life-long assistant and devotee. His professional network of friends and patrons, while not as secure, would also slowly grow as he began his career.

\textbf{Mathew Circle & Poetical Sketches}

His sculptor friend Flaxman introduced Blake to art patrons Reverend Anthony Stephen Mathew and his wife Harriet.\textsuperscript{143} The couple often hosted salon parties at their home that brought together artistic, musical, and literary intellectuals with interested society members. Blake attended such gatherings, where he read and sang his poetry. Although he was not musically trained and could not provide notation, he often made up melodies, and he conceived at least some of his poetry as songs.\textsuperscript{144}

It was this connection with the Mathews and their friends that the first collection of Blake’s poetry was produced. It was a small, private printing. The advertisement-preface, attributed to Rev. Mathew,\textsuperscript{145} introduces the work apologetically:

The following Sketches were the production of untutored youth, commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till [sic] his twentieth year; since which time, his talents having been wholly directed to the attainment of excellence in his profession, he has been deprived of the leisure required to such a revisal of these sheets, as might have rendered them less unfit to meet the public eye.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 83.

\textsuperscript{143} Bentley, 73-74.

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid.

Conscious of the irregularities and defects to be found in almost every page, his friends have still believed that they possessed a poetical originality, which merited some respite from oblivion. These their opinions remain, however, to be now reproved or confirmed by a less partial public.\footnote{William Blake, \textit{Poetical Sketches}, Reproduction of Copy Q, Advertisement from the original edition (New York: Harry N. Abrams, [1783] 2007).}

The resulting book, \textit{Poetical Sketches}, is a record of some of Blake’s earliest work. It contains several typographical errors, and in some of the surviving copies, Blake made corrections by hand.\footnote{Geoffrey Keynes Kt., \textit{Blake Studies: Essays on His Life and Work}, 2$^\text{nd}$ edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 35-45.} Many of the poems contained in it were presented as bardic songs, as indicated in their titles. Several of them are labeled simply “SONG.” In the introduction essay of a modern facsimile copy of the work, Robin Hamlyn writes:

Most distinct in \textit{Poetical Sketches} is Blake’s interest in songs, some of which we have good reason to believe that he must have sung. Blake was familiar with the classical Muses and their god Apollo with his lyre, who guided the creative imagination, and all but one of whom bear a musical instrument as an attribute; likewise he knew well the Old Testament Bible songs of the prophets, and stories sung by legendary Celtic bards with “a tuneful voice.” ...It seems that in his mind Blake knew it fell to him to renew poetry in a way many other poets of his time had failed to do. Great poets have a natural affinity not only with the sounds of words but also with the power of music - a power which Blake was well aware of by the 1780s. Milton was known to have composed and practiced music as well [as] sung to it... Blake was just such a poet and singer, and his prophetic, bardic voice in \textit{Poetical Sketches} points us to its significance for him.\footnote{Robin Hamlyn, Introduction to \textit{Poetical Sketches}, by William Blake, Reproduction of Copy Q (New York: Harry N. Abrams, [1783] 2007), xiii.}

Many of the copies were given or sold to friends in the Mathew circle, and Flaxman sent copies to would-be patrons on behalf of his friend. One such potential benefactor, John Hawkins, impressed with the tome, offered to assist in raising money for Blake to travel to Rome to complete his artistic studies. Unfortunately, this remarkable opportunity did not come to fruition,
and Blake remained in England.\footnote{Bentley, 76-78.} Less interested in distributing \textit{Poetical Sketches} than his friends, he kept many copies of this early work among his private belongings for the rest of his life.\footnote{Ibid., 76.}

In about 1784, Blake privately wrote a parody, later called \textit{An Island in the Moon}, inspired by the personalities and conversations of the Mathew’s salon and other society figures, artists, and intellectuals of London.\footnote{Ibid., 81.} According to recent biographer G.E. Bentley, Jr., “It [was] something between a burlesque and a satire and a comic vignette of a self-important society in which everybody talks but nobody listens.”\footnote{Ibid., 81.} While this caricature was not intended for publication, it gives insight into Blake’s thoughts on various contemporaries and serves as a pointed social commentary.\footnote{Ackroyd, 91-93.}

\textbf{Family Deaths and Business Failures}

Sometime after the death of his father in 1784 and the subsequent disbursal of the estate, Blake purchased a printing press and opened a short-lived engraving and printing business with his former fellow Basire apprentice James Parker. William’s oldest brother James took over the family haberdashery business and household. The favorite of the family, John, whom William hated and called “the evil one,” also started a doomed business as a baker with his inheritance.\footnote{Bentley, 92.}
William took his younger brother Robert, with whom he was very close, into his household. Robert would later tragically succumb to consumption just a few years later, dying at the age of just twenty-four. This loss had a profound effect on William Blake and his work.\textsuperscript{155} In stark contrast, just a few years later, the financial ruin and death of the hated brother John was met with embittered indifference. When his bakery failed, John Blake enlisted as a soldier and was killed in battle a few days into his service.\textsuperscript{156}

\textbf{Invention of Relief Etching & Illuminated Books}

Like Swedenborg, Blake also claimed to have life-changing visions. His brother Robert had been a close companion in life, and after his death, William continued the relationship commune with his spirit. Blake gave the credit of his greatest achievement in innovation to his dead brother, whom he said had given him the idea in such a vision. Ackroyd writes:

Robert may have come to him in a dream, or he may have been running over in his head one of the conversations that had once had about such matters and \textit{heard} him again. The consequence was, in any event, that he adopted the technique of ‘relief etching.’ It was not entirely a new process - variants of it had been employed for three centuries, in which the letter or image was raised from the surrounding metal rather than being etched or engraved into it. It stands up in ‘relief’ against the flat plain of the copper plate, to be inked and printed. But Blake took the practice a significant stage further. In an age that encouraged the alignment of poetry and painting as an aesthetic whole, and in which illustrated books of various kinds were enormously popular, he hit upon a method of creating words and images in a single operation. He put his artistic training to exemplary use, and found a way of printing rather than engraving the copper plate.\textsuperscript{157}

Traditionally, engravers would use acid to burn lines or carve them directly with tools into a copper plate, which would then be covered in ink and wiped so that the ink pooled in the

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\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 98-99.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{157} Ackroyd, 112.
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crevices of the design or text. The ink would then be transferred to paper with a press.\textsuperscript{158} Pre-existing, but rarely used, techniques for relief etching, dating back to experiments by Leonardo da Vinci, involved covering the copper plate in a wax-like coating. The artist would then carve a design into the wax, exposing the copper beneath. The carving was then filled with an acid-resistant varnish, and the plate would then be washed in acid. The acid would bite through the copper around the varnished carving lines, leaving a raised surface.\textsuperscript{159}

Blake’s innovation was to paint (in reverse) a design in a quick-drying varnish directly unto the copper before applying the acid, skipping a step.\textsuperscript{160} Because this method more closely resembled the art of painting than mechanically carving into the copper or wax, he was able to more freely and quickly produce plates that could easily combine text and illustrations and that could be pressed in a similar method as was used for text-only printing.\textsuperscript{161}

Using this new technique of relief etching, Blake began creating works that he later described as “Illuminated.”\textsuperscript{162} He was able to print these himself, without having to convince or pay a printer to typeset his words. He could combine text and artwork on the same plate that could be used to quickly produce his creations.

His first product of this new process was a series of small pieces, \textit{There is No Natural Religion} and \textit{All Religions Are One}, that he created in about 1788. These were left uncolored and

\textsuperscript{158} Bentley, 101-102.


\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{161} Bentley, 103.

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
were not published or distributed in his lifetime. His next Illuminated project was *Songs of Innocence* (1789), which he later paired with *Songs of Experience* (1794). These two small books combined Blake’s poems (or songs) with illustrations. Some of his most well-known poetry, including what is probably his most famous poem, “The Tyger,” is contained within them, and four of the poems set by Pasatieri in *Bel Canto Songs* are from these books. “The Lamb” and “The Laughing Song” appear in *Songs of Innocence*, and “The Garden of Love” and “The Voice of the Bard” appear in *Songs of Experience*. In William Blake: *The Complete Illuminated Books*, Blake scholar David Bindman introduces these combined works:

*Songs of Innocence* is a collection of pastoral poems, some of which probably date from very early in Blake’s career. They can be read as children’s poems, but they subsume profound meditations upon the state of childhood and the presence of Christ. The influence of Swedenborg is evident. *Songs of Experience* was added to it in 1794, many of the poems being counterparts from the Fallen world of the poems in Innocence, though in early copies of the combined volume at least three of the plates can be found in either part.

*Songs of Innocence and of Experience* was the one Illuminated book to achieve even limited success in Blake’s lifetime, and he reprinted and coloured [sic] it until the very end of his life.164

Following *Songs of Innocence*, Blake began producing epic illuminated works, incorporating his visual artwork in the form of engraving in the print of his written compositions, two of which Blake labelled as “Prophesy,” but many scholars refer to all of these larger works as such. The use of this term was not a claim of prediction, but rather a reference to the epic tale-telling of the Bible.165 Like Dante and Milton before him, Blake was developing his own personal mythology and using it to express his religious and social philosophies in these

163 Ibid., 131.


165 Bentley, 130.
Illuminated works. Most of these books would be published and sold privately to individual patrons and admirers of his work for the rest of his life. They include *The Book of Thel* (1789), *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth* (c. 1790), *America: A Prophecy* (1793), *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793) later revised as *For the Sexes* (c. 1826), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793), *Europe: A Prophecy* (1794), *The First Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Ahania* (1795), *The Book of Los* (1795), *The Song of Los* (1795), *Vala* later retitled *The Four Zoas* (c. 1796-1807), *Milton: A Poem* (1804-1811), *Jerusalem* (1804-c. 1820), and three smaller late works *On Homer’s Poetry* [and] *On Virgil* (c. 1821), *The Ghost of Abel* (1822), and *Laocoon* (c. 1826). These were made in addition to his many professional commissions, unpublished manuscripts, and other projects.

**William Hayley and Blake’s Life in Felpham**

Sixteen years earlier, in sending copies of Blake’s *Poetical Sketches* to potential patrons, Flaxman had attempted to find patronage for Blake to study art in Rome, as he himself later did to great success. Although that chance to travel never materialized for Blake, one of the potential patrons for the venture would become extremely important in Blake’s life, beginning with another opportunity provided by Flaxman. William Hayley, a learned gentleman poet of moderate fame at the time, had entrusted the education of his only son Tom to Flaxman, who taught him sculpture, religion, and classical languages. Although the boy showed promise as an artist, he became incapacitated by a painful disease, which would prove fatal. During the boy’s illness, his father “composed a poetical Essay on Sculpture: In a series of Epistles to John

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166 Ibid., 455-463.

167 Bentley, 76-77.

168 Ibid., 203-204.
Flaxman, which was partly a celebration of his Tom and Tom’s master.”¹⁶⁹ It would include a design by his son as well as a portrait of him by a Mr. Howard from a medallion made by Flaxman, both to be engraved by Blake.¹⁷⁰ The portrait was unsatisfactory to the family, but Blake was able to improve upon the original in his revised engraving.¹⁷¹ This led to a closer connection between Blake and Hayley, who encouraged Blake to move nearer to him to begin a period of intensive collaborative work.

At the behest of Hayley, William and Catherine Blake moved from the tumultuous city life of London to a small, rural seaside village near the Hayley estate in Sussex called Felpham.¹⁷² Within days of arriving at their new cottage home, Blake immediately began work on designing and engraving illustrations for Haley’s poetry, but according to Ackroyd:

> The fact that he was now illustrating the work of a poet far inferior to himself cannot have escaped his attention, although, in a depressingly humble letter to Hayley, he declares that he and his wife “determine...to be happy.” He might have been less happy if he had known that Hayley was now referring to him as “my secretary.”¹⁷³

In addition to traditional engraving work, Hayley also hired Blake to paint eighteen decorative literary portraits for the library of his house and set him up with commissions to paint portrait miniatures for his family and friends.¹⁷⁴ While perhaps well-intentioned in finding steady employment for Blake in the Felpham area, Hayley’s letters reveal the condescending and possessive way that he viewed him. Blake scholar Geoffrey Keynes reported the contents of a

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 205.
¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 205.
¹⁷¹ Ibid., 206-207.
¹⁷² Bentley, 207-213.
¹⁷³ Ackroyd, 220.
¹⁷⁴ Bentley, 220-224.
letter in his possession that Hayley sent along with a completed miniature by Blake of the late Mrs. Hayley. In the following excerpt, I have added emphasis to highlight how Hayley claims to have taught Blake the art of miniature painting:

My dear Tom [his son] intended to execute for you such a Resemblance of Mrs. H. His own calamitous Illness & Death precluded Him from that pleasure — I have recently formed a new artist for this purpose by teaching a worthy creature (by profession an Engraver) who lives in a little cottage very near me to paint in miniature — accept this little specimen of his Talent as a mark of kind remembrance from

yr [sic] sincere & affectionate Friend

W. Hayley

While it is highly unlikely that Hayley had much to teach Blake in the areas of art or even poetry, He did expose Blake to different languages and assist him in learning Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and French. Hayley set Blake up with small commissions from his friends, he had Blake engrave illustrations for a collection of animal ballads intended to profit Blake, and he had Blake work on a portrait engraving of William Cowper to be included in Hayley’s biography of that recently deceased poet. While keeping Blake steadily employed with these various tasks, Hayley may not have been paying Blake a fair rate. According to Bentley, “Blake must have felt at times degraded from Hayley’s engraver-in-ordinary to his personal copy machine. It would be agreeable but probably illusory to think that for these professional services Blake received professional cash rewards.” Eventually, Blake would sour on working for Hayley. Bentley noted:

175 William Hayley to Daniel Parker Coke, May 13, 1801, In Geoffrey Keynes Kt., Blake Studies: Essays on His Life and Work, 112.

176 Bentley, 229-230.

177 Ibid., 224-226, 231, 235-240.

178 Ibid., 231.
But though Blake’s labours [sic] did not clash with Hayley’s, Hayley’s labours, or at least his priorities, seemed increasingly to clash with those of his protégé. Blake was often “so full of work that I have no time to go on with the Ballads” or with his own writings and designs, and his head was often “full of botheration about various projected works” of Hayley’s.

Blake was discovering that corporeal friends may be spiritual enemies, and he was more and more often torn between Hayley’s daily insistence that Blake should confine himself to engraving and the imperatives of his creative genius.179

The relationship of the two men may have cooled somewhat, and Blake began to long for a return to London where he could regain more of his independence. Yet they continued to be friends and work together. Having brought his tools to Hayley’s house, Blake worked alongside Hayley, often on separate projects, on a daily basis. Biographer G.E. Bentley surmised that Blake must have created his Illuminated books *Milton* and *Jerusalem* in Hayley’s study, because they were produced during this period when Blake’s materials were kept there.180 Despite any clashes of personality, Hayley would soon prove the value of his friendship to Blake.

**Sedition Trial and Return to London**

By 1803, England was again at war with France, and because there was fear that Napoleon would attempt an invasion of England, soldiers were being quartered in towns throughout the countryside and concentrated in seaside communities such as Felpham.181 On August 12 of that year, Blake had an argument with a soldier whom he found in his yard. The soldier refused to leave the property at Blake’s request. What began as a heated exchange of words resulted in William forcibly dragging the soldier out of his garden and through the village to the inn where the man was residing.182 This event led to the soldier, whose name was Private

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179 Ibid., 232.
180 Ibid., 242-243.
181 Ackroyd, 244.
182 Ibid., 244-245.
John Scofield, along with a fellow soldier named Cox, accusing Blake of seditious ranting against the King. Scofield was a disgraced soldier, having been demoted from the rank of sergeant for drunkenness, and his pride was hurt from being humiliated in front of the entire village by a disgruntled civilian. He bragged that he would have Blake hanged. The townsfolk and Hayley came to Blake’s defense, but at the first of several court proceedings on the matter Blake was charged with sedition and assault. Because of a recently passed law, he was not in danger of being executed, but if he was ultimately found guilty of the charge, he would be subject to heavy fines and imprisonment.

When their regular lease on the Felpham cottage ended that fall, the Blakes abandoned the village to return to their life in London. At first, they stayed with William’s brother James and his family, but they eventually found new lodgings of their own. The sedition charge continued to haunt Blake, but his friend Hayley found him legal representation and probably paid for it. In January of 1805, Blake’s sedition trial took place in Sussex. According to Ackroyd,

The transcript of the trial has not survived, but there are reports from Hayley, Blake, and others. It seems that the witnesses in his defense were of the type that would have recommended itself to a jury — an ostler [horse stableman], the wife of a miller’s servant — and they all declared he had said nothing at all approaching sedition, had not uttered “Damn the King” [as the soldiers claimed] or any such words. His accusers were soldiers of the lowest rank, however, and somewhat dubious reputation. Scofield...had been reduced in office some years before. Samuel Rose [Blake’s barrister], in defense made a powerful if somewhat disingenuous speech in which he claimed, “Mr. Blake is as loyal a subject as any man in this court” and that the crime of which he was accused was of such “extraordinary malignity” that it would brand him forever with “indelible disgrace”... Then Rose proceeded to depict his client in the most equable light, before denouncing Scofield as a “degraded” man who was not to be trusted. He continued to describe the

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183 Ibid., 244-247.
184 Ibid., 246.
185 Ibid., 247.
186 Ibid., 250.
testimony of the various witnesses but then, only half-way through his prepared defense, he was seized with some illness and could only conclude his remarks, according to Hayley, “with apparent infirmity.” He could not even reply to the prosecuting counsel’s closing speech, but there was no need to do so. The conflicting testimony of the soldiers themselves seems to have decided the matter[.] ...the jury’s verdict was swift, and the trial lasted only one hour. Blake was acquitted and, as the Sussex Advertiser reported a few days later, the verdict “so gratified the auditory that the court was, in defiance of all decency, thrown into an uproar by their noisy exultations.”187

Finally released from his worry over the sedition charges, Blake resumed his work in London. He continued to act on Hayley’s behalf in the city and began rebuilding his engraving business. Hayley’s Ballads, for which Blake had made designs and engravings and for which he had a substantial financial liability with the publisher, did not sell well. A fire later destroyed the remaining stock, and Blake went into debt on the project instead of making any money.188 He met with another bad business venture when he agreed to design illustrations for an edition of Scottish poet Robert Blair’s The Grave. The publisher, Robert Hartley Cromek, paid Blake very poorly for the designs and then ended up cheating him again when he hired a different engraver to produce the plates for the project.189 Ironically, while he did not profit directly from its success, Blake’s designs for The Grave were some of his best known work in the nineteenth century.190 Luckily, Blake was able to take on other commissions from his friends Butts, Flaxman, Fuseli, and others. He was also given an annual salary for taking on the son of Thomas Butts as a student.191

187 Ibid., 251.
188 Bentley, 274-276.
189 Ibid., 276-285.
190 Ibid., 304-308.
191 Ibid., 288.
Blake was unsuccessful in getting his water-colors and other artwork exhibited publicly by institutions such as the Royal Academy and could not afford to pay for them to be shown at private galleries. He decided to give a public exhibition of his work at his brother James’s haberdashery shop. In the May 15, 1809 advertisement for the exhibition, Blake wrote:

The execution of my Designs, being all in Water-colours [sic], (that is in Fresco) are regularly refused to be exhibited by the Royal Academy, and the British Institution has, this year, followed its example, and has effectually excluded me by this Resolution; I therefore invite those Noblemen and Gentlem[e]n, who are its Subscribers, to inspect what they have excluded: and those who have been told that my Works are but an unscientific and irregular Eccentricity, a Madman’s Scravls, I demand of them to do me the justice to examine before they decide.

There cannot be more than two or three great Painters or Poets in any Age or Country; and these, in a corrupt state of Society, are easily excluded, but not so easily obstructed. They have ex[c]luded Water-colours [sic]; it is [sic] therefore become necessary that I should exhibit to the Public, in an Exhibition of my own, my Designs, Painted in Water-colours [sic]. If Italy is enriched and made great by RAPHAEL, if MICHAEL ANGELO is its supreme glory, if Art is the glory of a Nation, if Genius and Inspiration are the great Origin and Bond of Society, the distinction of my Works have obtained from those who best understand such things, calls for my Exhibition as the greatest of Duties to my Country.

To accompany the exhibition, explain each painting, and advertise the unique vision of his work, Blake produced a Descriptive Catalogue. In it he ranted against other artists and other techniques and presented what was seen as a very strange fusion of British history and radical Biblical interpretation. According to Bentley, “[D]espite its rarity, the Descriptive Catalogue was for many years the best known literary work which Blake published. It is described and quoted by all his early biographers, and it is implicit in most of the arguments concerning his

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192 Ibid., 325.
madness.” The exhibition ran from May 1809 until at least June 1810. An anonymous review of the showing denounced the art and catalogue as the work of a delusional lunatic. The exhibition was an embarrassing failure.

**Quietly Growing Public Interest**

For the next nine years, Blake retreated quietly from the public eye. He still worked on his own Illuminated books and other projects, and he continued to receive designing and engraving commissions. Beyond his artistic and poetic talents, his reputation for being insane and his insistence on the reality of his visions brought him into the notice of several admirers, including journalist and diarist Crabb Robinson, who wrote publicly about Blake, praising his eccentricities and artistic vision. Robinson was connected to several famous literary figures of the time, including William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Robert Southey, with whom he shared the poetry, artwork, and tales of madness of William Blake. Blake’s reputation as an eccentric artist and poet began to grow. Although he continued to work as an engraver and even occasionally to sell sets of his Illuminated books to collectors, the Blakes lived in poverty.

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194 Bentley, 331-332.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid., 332-333.
197 Ibid., 335.
198 Ibid., 337-343.
199 Ibid., 360-361.
William Blake met John Linnell, a young artist, in 1818.\textsuperscript{200} Linnell became a good friend, protégé, and eventually patron to Blake. Like Blake, he was a Dissenter, painter, and engraver, but unlike his mentor, his business was a commercial success. In addition to his own artwork, he was the art teacher of the son of Blake’s friend and longtime supporter George Cumberland. Some scholars believe that his friendship with Linnell inspired Blake to adopt a lighter engraving style, which was more in vogue at the time.\textsuperscript{201} He would remain an important financial supporter for the older artist for the rest of Blake’s life, and he introduced Blake to others who would become important patrons, such as James Vine and Robert Thornton, and fellow admirers, such as John Varley.\textsuperscript{202}

\textbf{Blake’s Visionary Heads}

John Varley was a painter and former teacher of Blake’s friend Linnell.\textsuperscript{203} He shared an interest with Blake and Linnell in physiognomy,\textsuperscript{204} the pseudo-science of reading the supposed relationship between physical features, especially of the face and head, and emotional states or temperament. Varley became extremely interested in Blake’s visions and convinced Blake to make a record of them for later study. Blake would sketch the heads of the people who appeared to him for his new friend to analyze, sometimes several a night, as his friend slept nearby.\textsuperscript{205} Bentley wrote, “These midnight séances attracted the attention of many who otherwise would

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 363-365.
\item Ackroyd, 326.
\item Ibid., 327.
\item Ibid., 328.
\item Bentley, 368-369.
\item Ibid., 369-371.
\end{enumerate}
have ignored Blake, and a surprising number of lurid accounts were published about them - accounts which may, however, be substantially true. At least they are fairly consistent both with each other and with the inscriptions on the Visionary Heads themselves.” Bentley goes on to say:

Naturally many who heard that Blake drew pictures of the famous and infamous dead and had conversations with his invisible visitants concluded that he must be mad. And any lingering suspension of disbelief was likely to be banished when they learned that some of the visitants were not long-dead men and women but heretofore unimagined beings, such as Gemini and Cancer and the Ghost of a Flea. So plain was Blake’s madness to some that they assumed he must be confined in a madhouse.

After 1820, most accounts for Blake refer to his Visionary Heads either as evidence of his madness or as something to be explained away — perhaps as a joke on Varley. Scarcely anyone allows for the possibility that Blake drew what he really saw and that what he saw was really there, an extraordinary or spiritual phenomenon.

Blake was often considered insane by his peers, whether they knew him personally or only through his poetry. He was reported as being crazed or agitated by his earlier close associates, but according to Bentley, a change seems to have occurred in his demeanor as he aged, because descriptions of him in later life report a more calm personality.

**Final Projects**

For many years, Blake worked and reworked designs to illustrate the biblical Book of Job, a project that began as a commission from his friend Thomas Butts. Linnell further commissioned Blake to add to his designs, which he published in 1826. The engravings were

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206 Ibid., 372.
207 Ibid., 379.
208 Ibid., 380-381.
209 Ibid., 394-399.
highly praised by some, but the profits from the book sales may have only covered the costs of production.210

Linnell’s doctor, Robert Thornton, commissioned both Linnell and Blake to illustrate his edition of Virgil, adapted to teach English and Latin in schools.211 Blake at first used his innovative technique of relief etching for this project, but when this caused problems with the wood-engravers, who tried to “correct” his work with a lack-luster version in wood engraving, he revised his work by engraving the designs into wood himself.212 While his woodblock etchings for this project met with mixed reception from the publisher and others, these plates would prove very influential to other artists, especially those who associated with the group called The Ancients.213

The Ancients were a group of regularly meeting young artists, including Edward Calvert, Samuel Palmer, George Richmond, and Fredrick Tatham, who greatly admired William Blake and his work.214 They visited Blake often, calling him “the Interpreter.”215 Blake became a mentor and inspiration to them. Their glowing and conservative opinions and experiences of him were the basis for some of Blake’s earliest biographers, who because of this did not accurately report some of Blake’s more heretical or controversial thoughts and work.216

210 Ibid., 399-400.
211 Ibid., 388.
212 Ibid., 390.
213 Ibid., 392.
214 Ibid., 400-401.
215 Ibid., 401.
216 Ibid., 408-409.
Blake’s last project was his designs for Dante’s *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*. This commission was made by Linnell in the hopes to support his friend, who at that point had little, if any, other income. Although he was already an admirer of Dante from the translations he had read, Blake learned medieval Italian to be able to read the original for inspiration of his designs.217 While Blake never completed the massive project, leaving his 102 original watercolors unfinished and only producing six engravings, they show Blake at the height of his artistic prowess.218 According to Bentley,

> These were the last large plates he ever made - but they were enough to show him at his very best. The prints for Job and Dante are triumphs of the engraver’s art, among the finest line-engravings ever made.

Blake’s disciples were equally impressed by the engravings. Samuel Palmer wrote that “nothing can be finer: they are Art in its sublime nakedness...and in its eternal abstraction from cloggy corporeal substances. They are not of this World.” However, none of his friends could see them during Blake’s lifetime.219

**Blake’s Death and Catherine’s Widowhood**

Blake was occasionally in ill health in the last few years of his life. He complained of “shivering fits” and may have suffered from a gallbladder inflammation as well as severe digestive problems.220 In a letter dated May 19, 1826, Blake described his affliction to Linnell,

> I have had another desperate Shivring [sic] Fit. [I]t came on yesterday afternoon after as good a morning as I ever experienced. It began by a gnawing Pain in the Stomach & soon spread[,] a deathly feel all over the limbs which brings on the shivring fit when I am forced to go to bed where I contrive to get into a little Perspiration which takes it quite away[.] It was night when it left me so I did not get up[,] but just as I was going to rise this morning[,] the shivering fit attackd [sic] me again & the pain with its accompanying deathly feel[,] I got again into a perspiration & was well but so much weakend [sic] that I

217 Ibid., 422.
218 Ibid., 423-424.
219 Ibid., 424.
220 Ackroyd, 362-364.
am still in bed. This entirely [sic] prevents me from the pleasure of seeing you on Sunday at Hampstead as I fear the attack when I am away from home[.]\textsuperscript{221}

Even though he never lost his mental faculties nor completely stopped working, his physical condition worsened in the last months of his life as he suffered from a series of infections. Linnell made a sketch of him on his death bed on one of his visits, and the day that he died, Blake himself made a sketch of his wife who was always at his side.\textsuperscript{222} Among those present when he finally passed away the evening of August 12, 1827 were Catherine Blake and George Richmond, who later wrote to Samuel Parker that William had expressed contentment and then burst into song about his visions of Heaven just before he died.\textsuperscript{223}

Linnell took Catherine into his care after her husband’s death, lending her money to pay for William’s small funeral,\textsuperscript{224} which was presided over by Linnell’s father in law.\textsuperscript{225} Catherine went to live with Linnell as his housekeeper, but moved to stay with Frederick Tantham in the same capacity only a few months later. She argued with both men and eventually moved out to her own lodgings before her own death.\textsuperscript{226} After her husband’s death, she claimed that William visited her in visions, and she consulted his spirit for many decisions.\textsuperscript{227} She printed several of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} William Blake to John Linnell, May 19, 1826, in The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake, 777.
\item \textsuperscript{222} Ackroyd, 367.
\item \textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 367.
\item \textsuperscript{224} Bentley, 440.
\item \textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 440.
\item \textsuperscript{226} Ackroyd, 368.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
William’s books and prints for sale in an attempt to support herself.\textsuperscript{228} Catherine died on October 18, 1831 from bowel inflammation attended by Tantham and his wife. She was buried with her husband at the Dissenter’s Bunhill Fields.\textsuperscript{229}

Upon Catherine’s death, Blake’s remaining manuscripts and artwork were kept by Frederick Tantham. Tantham destroyed some of Blake’s more erotic or otherwise blasphemous material out of religious zeal. He printed and sold Blake’s books, lost many of Blake’s important copperplates, and sold off Blake’s artwork for years.\textsuperscript{230}

\textbf{RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF WORK}

Blake’s work is heavily colored by his unconventional worldview. To better interpret his creative output as a poet, even in early works such as \textit{Poetical Sketches} and \textit{Songs of Innocence and Experience}, upon which Pasatieri’s \textit{Bel Canto Songs} are based, an understanding of Blake’s unusual attitudes on various issues is extremely important.

\textbf{Dissenting and Enthusiasm}

As previously discussed, Blake followed a tradition that rejected many orthodox religious teachings and the organized church system. According to Bentley,

Blake’s parents raised their children in the Dissenting tradition of private devotion and private Bible reading rather than public catechism and public worship. ...Like most Dissenter’s they believed that all truth lies in the Bible and that the proper interpreter of that truth is the individual conscience, not the priest or the church. The term used in the

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{229} Bentley, 444-445.

\textsuperscript{230} Ibid., 446.
eighteenth century for extreme Dissent like this was Enthusiasm, and Blake identified as an “Enthusiastic hope-fostered visionary.”

This repudiation of religious tradition led to a sense of individual responsibility for Biblical interpretation and devotion that can be seen throughout Blake’s work. In addition to attacking the established church system in various ways, he also reimagined Biblical stories into his own epic mythology.

**Visions**

Blake based many of his works on his visions, which he claimed were both his own imagination and supernatural inspiration. He even said that some of his written work was given to him in dictation, although as noted by scholar Anthony Blunt, this did not keep the poet from revising this same work. Many or his contemporaries judged him to be insane because of his visionary claims, but Blake’s vivid imagination that fed these visions was kept in check enough for him to function somewhat normally in society and business, although perhaps not without difficulty.

**Anti-Newtonian Views**

As a religious dissenter, Blake had been brought up in an environment that distrusted organized religion and traditional education. He exalted imagination and Biblical knowledge and was suspicious of the newly forming ideas of Natural Philosophy, which we now call Science, and even Logic. Newton, Locke, Bacon, and others were extremely influential in forming modern ideas of rejecting supernatural explanations in favor of physical proves and

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231 Ibid., 7-8.


233 Ibid.
experimentation. This led to a sense of strict materialism in which the unseen forces of the divine or the spiritual were either rejected or ignored. As a religious visionary, this world view was distasteful to Blake. As noted by Damon, “according to Blake, the trouble with Newton’s universe was that it left out God, man, life, and all the values which make life worth living.” Blake attacked Newton as holding a short-sighted philosophy.

**Church and Government**

In his rejection of organized religion, Blake equated church, priests, and monasticism with evil. He saw them as a distortion of the true faith. Religious figures and trappings in his writings should be interpreted with this in mind. Many Protestants equated the Church of Rome with the biblical Whore of Babylon. Blake made many references to this idea, and also held that the government was an extension of that depravity. He referred to the state as the Beast, meaning the seven-headed creature upon which the Whore rides. Blake held that religion is the secret root of all war and that the state was its complicit executor, and this Whore and Beast imagery, as well as other negative references to religion and government, is common in his work. While Blake’s sedition trial eventually exonerated him of any wrongdoing, Blake definitely held anti-monarchy and anti-government views. His distrust of religious and governmental establishment was evident in his writing and tie into an overarching theme of oppression.

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236 Erdman, 512-513.

237 Damon, 82-83.
Sexuality and Slavery

In *A Blake Dictionary*, S. Foster Damon writes, “Sex, according to Blake, is our most immediate and all-pervading problem. He exalted in the act as few Christians have done, extolling its holiness and purity, and preaching the right of free love.”

Although there is no evidence that Blake acted on his ideas of polygamy or other sexual freedoms, his poetry champions these ideas and eschews more traditional, conservative views of sexuality and marriage. Beyond simply thinking that sex could be a religious act of natural expression, Blake also felt that sexual repression was one of the reasons for human aggression. As Damon noted, “War grows out of acquisitiveness and jealousy and mischanneled sexual energy, all of which grow out of the intrusion of possessiveness into human relations.”

Not only an issue between men and women in traditional ideas of marriage and sex, this possessiveness was evident in Blake’s time in the blatant form of human slavery. Early in Blake’s career, he was commissioned to produce engravings for a memoir of Captain John Gabriele Stedman, which included graphic designs by the author that showed the horrors of the Dutch slave trade. According to Erdman:

Blake’s engravings, with a force of expression absent from the others, emphasize the dignity of Negro men and women stoical under cruel torture: the wise, reproachful look of the Negro hung alive by the Ribs to a Gallows who lived three days unmurmuring and upbraided a flogged comrade for crying; the bitter concern in the face of the Negro executioner compelled to break the bones of a crucified rebel; the warm, self-possessed look of his victim, who jested with the crowd and offered the sentinel “my hand that was chopped off” to eat with his piece of dry bread: for how was it “that he, a white man, should have no meat to eat along with it?” Though Blake signed most of the plates, he shrank from signing his engraving of this bloody document, *The Execution of “Breaking on the Rack;”* but the image of the courageous rebel on the cruciform rack bit into his

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238 Ibid., 367.

239 Erdman, 227.

240 Bentley, 113-114.
heart, and in the Preludium of America he drew Orc in the same posture to represent the spirit of human freedom defiant of tyranny.241

Blake drew ideas from Stedman’s story of his inability to protect his slave-wife when he wrote the tale of Oothoon in Visions of the Daughters of Albion, and anti-slavery imagery and themes are common in his work. In his poem “Little Black Boy” from Songs of Experience, Blake gives voice to the idea that skin color is superficial. As Erdman put it, “Blake explained that any skin color is a cloud that cannot obscure the essential brotherhood of man in a fully enlightened society, such as Heaven.”242

**WRITING STYLE**

In Poetical Sketches and Song of Innocence and Experience, both of which serve as sources for Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs, Blake’s writing style differs considerably from his later illuminated works. In these early works, his lines are generally fairly short and uses a more repetitive, percussive rhythm in his composition. These early poems also have a clearer rhyming pattern, although the types of rhyme and meter vary. Later works typically utilize longer lines and semi-prose forms.

Blake paid at least some heed to the traditional use of ten-syllable lines, but he stands apart with his use of unconventional rhythmic stress and line variations.243 His frequent repetition of words and sounds is significant. According to Ostriker,

In Innocence, the following words (or variants of them) all occur over ten times: bird, child, infant, lamb, little, laugh, mother, father, sweet. Weep, sleep, and joy occur over

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241 Erdman, 231.

242 Ibid., 239

twenty times. Blake portrays the infant’s and child’s world by suggesting the child’s limited, intense, and affective vocabulary. Some of these words are distributed evenly through the lyrics, but intensity is also heightened by clustering in single poems... You cannot look anywhere in Song of Innocence without finding these hypnotic repetitions. Then, reinforcing them, you find parallel structures of phrase. ...In Experience, which is a briefer group, only love, weep, and night appear more than ten times, although variations of self, father, hand, and fear follow closely behind. Experience is slightly less mesmeric than Innocence, less restricted. As befits its broader world, where symbols can be more diverse, fewer terms repeat from song to song. Within the poems there is still a fairly high degree of repetition... The rule of parallel phrasing also still holds.244

In addition to alliteration and other forms of repetition, Blake also used sound effects to express the text symbolically. Ostriker explains an example of this when she writes, “The sound pattern [in Tiriel] is full of s’s and r’s, wherein Tiriel inadvertently imitates the serpent’s hiss and curl. Consonants cluster and impede the motion. Cacophonous off-rhymes like wreathing-feasting set a shrill tone. The clawing repetitions, especially of “serpents,” reveal Tiriel’s hysterical obsessiveness, his self-imprisonment, his mistaking of words for things.”245 In this way, Blake not only creates onomatopoeic effects, he is also creating an additional layer of meaning and mood using the sounds of his words.

Blake often uses irony in his writing by expressing ideas or describing people, situations, or institutions, such as the church, in unexpectedly contrary ways. According to Hazard Adams,

Blake is a subtle manipulator of point of view... In fiction, irony is often created by making manifest some divorce between the author’s point of view and the focus of narration or perspective of various characters in the story. Blake’s ironies are almost always achieved by this method, and he is capable of delicate variations of the distance between author and speaker.246

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244 Ibid., 57.

245 Ibid., 147.

He also set up dichotomies within his writing, such as in the premise and title of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* or his pairing of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* into one unit. As Alicia Ostriker points out,

No satire seems implicit in the *Songs of Innocence*, until its publication along with *Songs of Experience* makes clear that the ‘two contrary states of the human soul’ are parodies of each other in which ‘the Eye altering alters all.’ ...By publishing the two sets of songs together, Blake tried to make it impossible for anyone to react sentimentally to either set. Whoever wished to babble over the natural sweetness and happiness of childhood would be reminded by *Songs of Experience* that childhood was by no means always sweet, and that happiness was against Nature.\(^{247}\)

Blake seemed to be a creature of irony, fundamentally a contrarian, as expressed by his religious and political beliefs. Blake scholar Martin K. Nurmi writes of what he calls Blake’s “Doctrine of Contraries,”

Blake’s contraries neither progress, disappear, nor alternate because they polarize human life. They are cosmic forces to be seen in every “individual.” Not, however, as forces external to individuals, but as immanences. Tigers and horses are contraries, but that which makes them contraries is not separable from them, for their contrariety is in everything they are and do. Everything, moreover, has an eternal “identity” in the cosmic scheme as either active or passive contrary: tigers and horses, male and female, poets and philosophers, plowmen and harrowers. And active and passive contraries exist [everywhere and in everything]. The tension of opposition is in every fibre of Blake’s world.\(^{248}\)

Some scholars note that Blake’s ironies may show a broader inconsistency of his own changing beliefs about various subjects, making it difficult to tell if his intentions are satirical.\(^{249}\) His writing style echoes his rebellious nature in challenging the expectations of the reader and contradicting societal norms of the day.

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\(^{247}\) Ostriker, 47.


Influences and Prophetic Style

Blake’s style departed from that of his shorter poetic form with his later writing. He turned his attention to his own mythic lore and his writing became more Biblical or Miltonian in style. Instead of short songs and poems, his mature work was epic verse that tended toward prose. These mystic tales, that he called Prophecies, mixed early British and Biblical history into an original and complex mythological pantheon of characters and storylines.

In most of his Prophecies, Blake used septenary, which had been the most common meter in Medieval Latin and English ballad poetry and had been used by Macpherson in his Ossian in an altered form of prose-poetry, which may have served as an inspiration for Blake’s writing form.\(^{250}\) Also called heptameter or fourteener, septenary is a meter of poetry typically based on groups of seven iambic feet, often grouped into two lines. Blake used this older verse form in his Prophecies, but altered it freely and inventively to the point that his writing approaches the free style of oratory prose.\(^{251}\) He also experimented with other forms and meters in some of his writing, including a type of free verse.\(^{252}\)

During his time in Felpham, Blake was exposed to a variety of language studies by his patron Hayley. In a letter from Blake to his brother James, written January 30, 1803 while he was living in Felpham:

I go on Merrily with my Greek & Latin: am very sorry that I did not begin to learn languages early in life as I find it very Easy. [A]m now learning my Hebrew אבג [“alphabet” in Hebrew] I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar & the Testament is my chief master. [A]stonishing indeed is the English Translation[.] [I]t is almost word for

\(^{250}\) Ostriker, 124-125.

\(^{251}\) Ibid., 132-144.

\(^{252}\) Ibid., 161-164.
Blake enjoyed learning languages and there is evidence that he continued to read works in various languages. This linguistic interest can be seen in his later works, as he sometimes infuses his art and poetry with other languages and was able to refer to works in their original language when preparing his engraving designs.

Blake’s writing was heavily influenced by the Bible. With his Dissenter upbringing and devotion to reading and even translating biblical scripture, his familiarity with this religious text helped to shape the writing style of his Prophecies. Ostriker writes,

> The Old and New Testaments offered Blake an endless banquet of narrative material, phrases, and images; they provided models for the rhetoric of lamentation, song of praise, pastoral, aphorism, invective. A few of the Biblical structural devices are also conspicuous in Blake; for example the concrete noun-abstract noun linkages like “Rock of Eternity,” “Furnaces of affliction,” “Tree of Mystery;” genealogical catalogues and formula statements like “And the number of his Sons is eight million & eight;” sentences beginning with “For” or “Behold” or “Lo.” Parallelism, which is considered the most important structural principle of Biblical poetry, is very common in Blake, both in couplets...and in triplets.

Although he differs from biblical poets by his tendency for repetition, expansion, and even exaggeration, traits that may show the heavy influence of Milton, Blake used Biblical language style and imagery to imbue his narrative with a sense of heroism and moral gravity.

**Synthesis of Artistic Media**

Perhaps the most defining element of Blake’s work is that he combined his talents as a visual artist and engraver with his efforts as a poet and writer. His illuminated works are a

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254 Ostriker, 127.

255 Ibid., 129-130.
stunning marriage of text and art. A similar connection between these two art forms was already common in his time, and in fact, much of Blake’s professional career was built upon illustrating the text of other writers. However, besides inventing the method, Blake’s great innovation was to act as both poet and artist, assuming complete control over his product. Blake scholar Stephen C. Behrendt describes Blake’s connection of visual art and written word thusly,

Blake’s illuminated poems generate what is essentially a ‘third text,’ a meta-text that partakes of both the verbal and visual texts, but that is neither the sum of, nor identical with either of, those two texts. The verbal and visual texts stimulate different varieties of aesthetic, intellectual, and affective responses which are firmly grounded in the disciplinary natures of the two media and in the tradition and ‘vocabulary’ (or reference systems) particular to each.256

In this way, Blake could visually accompany the text as he wished, whether to simply illustrate element of the text or to add a contrast or otherwise unexpected element to the meaning.257 In addition to the artwork surrounding his words, he may also have intended his blocks of texts to create a meaningful visual element beyond the expression of the words themselves.258

There is also evidence that Blake was musically inclined and intended at least some of his poetry, much of which he labeled as “Song,” to be set to music. Blake contemporary John Thomas Smith noted, “...Blake wrote many other songs, to which he also composed tunes. These he would occasionally sing to his friends; and though, according to his confession, he was entirely unacquainted with the science of music, his ear was so good, that his tunes were


257 Ibid., 551-553.

sometimes most singularly beautiful, and were noted down by musical professors."²⁵⁹

Unfortunately, no record of his compositions is known. It is at fitting perhaps that Blake’s early poetry is often set to music by others, as it seems likely that he would have approved of this additional artistic element.

CHAPTER 3: BEL CANTO SONGS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Thomas Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs is a musical setting of six William Blake poems, in English, for solo voice and piano. The title of the work refers to the composer’s intent to model the vocal line in each song on characteristics of vocal writing of the bel canto period. The individual pieces that became his Bel Canto Songs were written in the summer of 2009, and in 2010, were published by the Theodore Presser Company. The premiere of the work was on October 16, 2011 in New York City given as part of the 17th Annual George London Foundation Recital Series. Soprano Ailyn Pérez and pianist Ken Noda premiered the work.

Poetry

Pasatieri said that, due to his extensive song output, he could not recall whether he had or had not set any of William Blake’s poetry prior to these songs. The composer has a large collection of poetry in his library, and he said that the poems used for Bel Canto Songs were most likely found in his volume of Blake’s collected poetry. All poetry contained in the set is from Blake’s early works Poetical Sketches and Songs of Innocence and of Experience, with one small exception that will be discussed as part of the text analysis of the first song. Songs of Innocence and of Experience was initially published as two distinct, but related volumes of illuminated poetry, with graphic designs by the poet. Blake later published Songs of innocence and Songs of Experience together as a unit, hence the combined title used by scholars, but they retained their individual title pages. The separate nature of the original three sources was not part of the composer’s process of arranging the songs in order for publication. Nevertheless, there is a

260 Ibid.
chiastic pattern present in their published order. The outer songs of the set, “Garden of Love” and “Hear the Voice,” are settings of poems from *Songs of Experience*. The next, intermediate layer of songs, “Laughing Song” and “The Lamb,” are from *Songs of Innocence*, and the innermost songs in the center of the set, “To the Evening Star” and “To the Muses,” are from *Poetical Sketches*.

**Premiere**

When asked about the premiere for *Bel Canto Songs*, Pasatieri excitedly explained that the circumstances of the event were interesting. As he finished the compositional process and decided that he wanted a New York City premiere for the work, he called his friend Nora London, wife of the late bass-baritone George London and President of the George London Foundation for Singers. Pasatieri had a long-standing relationship with the Londons and the Foundation and has enjoyed having several of his works premiered at their events. It was arranged that soprano Ailyn Pérez, a George London Foundation competition winner, would perform *Bel Canto Songs* as part of the Foundation’s annual recital series in late 2009. Pérez, then still an emerging artist, was forced to cancel that appearance to take a larger performing opportunity abroad. Because her substitute for that recital had not prepared the same program, the original premiere was cancelled. The following year, the Foundation tried again to have the work premiered by American soprano Julianna Di Giacomo. This recital was to take place on December 12, 2010 in New York, and pianist Craig Rutenberg was set to play that premiere.261 Although Ms. Di Giacomo was prepared to perform *Bel Canto Songs*, the recital had to be cancelled because of illness, so the premiere was again put on hold. Finally, a few months later,

Ailyn Pérez, now an established artist, was able to premiere the work on another George London Foundation recital, which she was giving along with her singer husband at the time Steven Costello. This premiere took place at 5:00 PM in the Gilder Lehrman Hall at the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City on Sunday, October 16, 2011. Pianist Ken Noda accompanied Pérez for the concert. Pasatieri indicated that the *Bel Canto Songs* were published prior to their official premiere due to the unusual delays.²⁶²

American soprano Ailyn Pérez hails from Chicago and is the daughter of first-generation Mexican immigrants. She attended Indiana University and Philadelphia Academy of Vocal Arts. She has won or placed for numerous prestigious awards and vocal competitions, including the 2012 Richard Tucker Award and the Shoshana Foundation Career award. She was a George London Foundation winner in 2006.²⁶³ She is currently enjoying a successful international career, singing a mixture of traditional operatic fare as well as performing new compositions, recently in October and November of 2015, appearing in Dallas Opera’s world premiere of American composer Jake Heggie’s new opera *Great Scott*.²⁶⁴ In recent years, she has performed leading roles with many major opera companies, including Teatro alla Scala (Milan), the Royal Opera House (London), Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Houston Grand Opera. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut in February 2015 in the role of Micaëla in *Carmen*.²⁶⁵ In addition to opera, Ms. Pérez also frequently appears in recital.

²⁶² Pasatieri interview with the author.


²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.
Pianist Ken Noda, an American of Japanese descent from New York, was a child prodigy who studied at Juilliard from the age of seven.\textsuperscript{266} His primary piano teacher was Daniel Barenboim.\textsuperscript{267} He retired from a successful career as a full-time solo concert pianist in 1991 when he joined the Metropolitan Opera artistic administration staff as Musical Assistant to conductor James Levine.\textsuperscript{268} As a prominent vocal coach, he teaches singers as part of the Met’s Lindemann Young Artist Program, the Marlboro Music Festival, and the Renata Scotto Opera Academy.\textsuperscript{269} Based in New York City, he continues to play as a collaborative pianist with top vocal artists in recital and gives masterclasses for various institutions, including Juilliard, Yale, and the Ravinia Festival.\textsuperscript{270}

Pasatieri attended the premiere, and by his account, the premiere was extremely successful and well-received.\textsuperscript{271} In his \textit{Opera News} review, music critic Eric Myers noted,

Pasatieri’s objective, which he successfully achieves, is to set pure \textit{bel canto} style vocal lines to a contemporary harmonic palette in the piano accompaniment. For his singer, he pulls out the full \textit{bel canto} arsenal of melismas, ornamentation and contrasting dynamics, masterfully wielding them to establish mood. [Ailyn] Pérez and accompanist Ken Noda, finely attuned to each other’s every nuance and need, were a superb pair in this challenging music.\textsuperscript{272}


\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{269} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{271} Pasatieri interview with the author.

Online reviews were somewhat mixed, with one blogger reporting that the “vocal line did not hold interest,” but for this fault the English poetry was blamed.\(^{273}\) Another, more detailed account shared on an opera community list-serve praised both the performance and the composition,

My reaction and that of the audience would suggest that [Pasatieri] succeeded [at fusing bel canto and modern compositional approaches]. He could not have found a better advocate for his music than Ms. Pérez. She practically took us by the hand through the uncharted territory of the songs and showed us each step of the way that she knew where to go and what it all meant and wanted us to share in that understanding. Her voice was beautiful and even, her intonation secure, her dynamic palette varied and appropriate. She was in character for each of the wide range of songs. At the end, Ken Noda, her excellent pianist, emphatically joined in the applause, suggesting that the vocal line was more difficult than she made it sound.\(^{274}\)

Since the premiere, many undergraduate students and other performers have performed the songs, as is evident from recent YouTube.com videos of some of them. Pasatieri mentioned that they have also been offered by performers in his own masterclasses.\(^{275}\) It is the opinion of this author that Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs will continue to gain in popularity and will, like many of his previous works, become part of the standard American song repertoire.

DEDICATIONS

Pasatieri often dedicates art songs to an individual, and Bel Canto Songs are no exception. The songs in the set are each dedicated to a different musician, each of whom has performed Thomas Pasatieri’s works professionally. The song titles and their respective


\(^{275}\) Pasatieri interview with the author.
dedicatee are, in the published order, “The Garden of Love” to Andrew Garland, “Laughing Song” to Martha Guth, “To the Evening Star” to Christopher Temporelli, “To the Muses” to Morgan Smith, “The Lamb” to Donna Loewy, and “Hear the Voice” to Daniel Okulitch.

Pasatieri often dedicates art songs to an individual, and Bel Canto Songs are no exception. The dedications are not necessarily an indication of voice type for each song, as the group was intended by the composer to be performed as a set. He indicated in an interview with the author that it was common for his songs to be transposed to fit the needs of individual singers, and he is not bothered by this tradition.

1. Andrew Garland

The composer said that American baritone Andrew Garland had previously given a recital sponsored by the Marilyn Horne Foundation which included Pasatieri’s songs as part of a festival where his opera Frau Margot was also being performed. Along with his collaborative pianist Donna Lowey, Garland has toured the United States presenting recitals of songs by living American composers, including Thomas Pasatieri. “Garden of Love” is dedicated to Garland. Hailed by for his coloratura, vocal warmth, and acting, Garland has found much success in an operatic career, singing with major opera companies, including Seattle Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Fort Worth Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera. In addition to singing standard and contemporary operatic repertoire throughout the United States, Garland

276 Ibid.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.
has also performed baroque music and oratorio with various ensembles and has released multiple commercial CDs.\textsuperscript{280}

\textbf{2. Martha Guth}

Canadian soprano Martha Guth was chosen for a dedication because she premiered Pasatieri’s \textit{The Daughter of Capulet} and has performed many of the composer’s other art songs.\textsuperscript{281} “Laughing Song,” full of florid passages and ending in the highest note of the set, is dedicated to her. Guth attended Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and the Hochschule für Musik in Augsburg/Nürnberg. She enjoys a successful career in both opera and oratorio repertory, performing with opera companies and symphonies throughout North America and Europe. She has served on the faculty of the Vancouver International Song Institute, has been the co-host of online music magazine \textit{Sparks and Wiry Cries}, and she has been the curator for the Casement Fund Song Series in New York City.\textsuperscript{282}

\textbf{3. Christopher Temporelli}

American bass Christopher Temporelli sings internationally in opera and oratorio productions and in recitals. He is based primarily in the United States and South Korea, where he serves on the music faculty of Yeungnam University.\textsuperscript{283} He produced a well-received CD entitled \textit{House of the Storyteller}, and he has appeared frequently on television, especially in Korea.\textsuperscript{284}

\textsuperscript{280} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{281} Pasatieri interview with the author.

\textsuperscript{282} Martha Guth Biography, matthewsprizzo.com/Martha_Guth.html (accessed August 6, 2013).


\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
Pasatieri began writing what would become his *Bel Canto Songs* with a song specifically intended as a dedication to Temporelli, who is also a friend of the composer, after the two traveled together to attend a festival performance of Pasatieri’s opera *Hotel Casablanca*.285 This first song written, dedicated for Christopher Temporelli, is “To the Evening Star.”

4. Morgan Smith

Morgan Smith is an American baritone, known especially for his singing of contemporary opera and other new music.286 He frequently appears in opera productions with major American and Canadian opera companies, including Seattle Opera, San Francisco Opera, San Diego Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, and Opéra de Montréal.287 He attended Mannes School of Music in New York City. Morgan Smith performed the role of Ted Steinert in the world premiere of Pasatieri’s opera *Frau Margot* in 2007.288 The composer dedicated “To the Muses” to Smith.

5. Donna Loewy

Pianist Donna Loewy, the only non-singer for whom a song within this set is dedicated, accompanied baritone Andrew Garland in a Living American Composers recital sponsored by the Marilyn Horne Foundation. This inspired the composer to devote a song to each of them.289 “Little Lamb” is dedicated to her. Loewy has been a faculty member of the Cincinnati

285 Pasatieri interview with the author.


288 Pasatieri interview with the author.

289 Ibid.
Conservatory of Music, SongFest, New Music on the Point, and the Barcelona Festival of Song. She has been a coach and pianist with various opera companies, institutions, and festivals, including the Israeli Vocal Arts Institute, International Institute of Vocal Arts in Chiari, Italy, Cincinnati Opera, Dayton Opera, and the Opera Theatre and Music Festival of Lucca, Italy.\(^{290}\) As a collaborative pianist, she has played recitals throughout the United States and Europe.

6. Daniel Okulitch

The composer dedicated the last song of the group, “Hear the Voice,” to Daniel Okulitch, who premiered the role of Inspector Gert Osterland in Pasatieri’s opera *Frau Margot* at Fort Worth Opera.\(^{291}\) Okulitch, a Canadian bass-baritone, was in the original cast of Baz Luhrmann’s Tony Award winning Broadway production of *La Boheme* in the role of Schaunard. In addition to his traditional operatic repertoire, he has premiered leading roles in numerous contemporary operas with major opera companies. He has sung opera extensively throughout North America as well as having made his debut at Teatro alla Scala in Italy. Okulitch has won many prestigious awards, including those from the George London Foundation, the Sullivan Foundation, the Licia Albanese/Puccini Foundation Competition, the Joyce Dutka Arts Foundation, the Singers Development Fund, and the Palm Beach Vocal Competition, and was a regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions. He attended both Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and Oberlin Conservatory of Music.\(^{292}\)


\(^{291}\) Pasatieri interview with the author.

1. “The Garden of Love”

I laid me down upon a bank,
Where love lay sleeping;
I heard among the rushes dank
Weeping, Weeping.

Then I went to the heath & the wild, (5)
To the thistles & thorns of the waste;
And they told me how they were beguil’d
Driven out and compel’d to be chaste

I went to the Garden of Love. (10)
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And Thou shalt not writ over the door;
So I turn’d to the Garden of Love, (15)
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires. (20)

Text information

The first two stanzas of this song setting, while often published as part of the poem “The Garden of Love,” are actually a separate poem found in Blake’s Rossetti Manuscript, a handwritten sketchbook written circa 1793 in which Blake composed many of his early

Note that the poem texts given this chapter recreate Blake’s original spelling, punctuation, and (in some cases) wording. The texts of Bel Canto Songs differ from the original, primarily in spelling and punctuation. For comparison, Pasatieri’s version of the text can be found in Appendix A of this document.
poems.\textsuperscript{294} In the original manuscript, there was a line drawn, separating these two poems. The mistake of putting them together was common among early publishers, so the combination of these two poems under the title of “The Garden of Love” exists in several sources.\textsuperscript{295}

The original poem “I Laid Me Down” is given above, with a line to separate it from Blake’s “The Garden of Love,” which appeared both in the Rossetti Manuscript as a sketch and in published form in Blake’s \textit{Songs of Experience}. In the illuminated \textit{Songs of Experience}, “The Garden of Love” is only three stanzas in length. These two poems, while different in location setting and specifics, have similar themes of sexual repression and do compliment each other in their combination.

In the last line of the second stanza of “I Laid Me Down” the penultimate word is “be,” not “the” as it appears in the combined version of the poem often seen and in Pasatieri’s setting. The latter word replaced the original in faulty early publications of Blake’s poetry, so the typo has survived.

While Pasatieri and others set this last line as “Driven out and compelled to THE chaste,” Blake’s original text read “Driven out and compel’d to BE chaste,” which makes the meaning of the line and thereby the entire poem much clearer. While this discrepancy exists between the original intent of Blake and some published versions of the poem used by Pasatieri as well as other composers, this author does not recommend a correction in the song’s text underlay. Rather, performers should allow this to inform their interpretation without a change in words.


\textsuperscript{295} Ibid.
According to Blake scholar Alicia Ostiker, the alliteration of the consonant “B” is very often used by Blake to negatively illustrate sorrow or anger.\textsuperscript{296} An example of this can be found in the recurrent b’s in “black gowns” and “binding with briars” in this poem. The alliteration of “L” in the phrases “I laid me down upon a bank, Where love lay sleeping” may be a reference to tenderness and happiness.\textsuperscript{297}

Note that Blake uses false rhyme, a common occurrence in his early poetry, with the pairing of “gowns” and “rounds.” Ostiker says of this poem’s meaning,

Blake wrote numerous mini-dramas illustrating how possessiveness and jealousy, prudery and hypocrisy poison the lives of lovers. ...One of his two major statements [the other being “London”] in \textit{Songs of Experience} is the deceptively simple “The Garden of Love,” in which the speaker discovers a Chapel built where he “used to play on the green.” The garden has a long scriptural and literary ancestry...[in which it symbolizes] at once the earthy paradise and the body of a woman. Probably Blake saw it so. Later he would draw the nude torso of a woman with a cathedral where her genitals should be. The briars at the poem’s close half-suggest that the speaker is being crowned with something like thorns, somewhere about the anatomy, and it anticipates Blake’s outraged demand, near the close of his life, in the Everlasting Gospel: “Was Jesus chaste? Or did he / Give any lessons of chastity?” Since the design [the illumination by Blake himself] for “The Garden of Love” depicts a priest and two children kneeling at an open grave beside a church, the forbidden love may be a parent as well as a peer, and the speaker might be of either sex: all repression is one. It is important that the tone here is neither angry nor self-righteous, but pathetic and passive - indeed, pathetically passive, for after the opening “I went,” the governing verb is “saw.” That the speaker only “saw...my joys and desires” being bound with briars and did not “feel” anything, should shock us into realizing that this speaker, at least by the poem’s last line, has been effectively self-alienated. Repression has worked not merely from without, but from within.”\textsuperscript{298}

In addition to recalling the Ten Commandments and Deuteronomy 6:9, which calls upon believers to write those Commandments and their love for God “upon the posts of thy house, and

\textsuperscript{296} Alicia Ostriker, \textit{Vision and Verse in William Blake} (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 84.

\textsuperscript{297} Ibid.

on thy gates,” line 6 of the poem, “Thou shalt not write over the door” may also be a reference to locked or forbidden private pews and chapels reserved exclusively for wealthy patrons. This interpretation is also supported by line 5, “And the gates of this Chapel were shut.”

With his Dissenter upbringing, Blake had an extremely negative view of the Church of England and orthodox religions. Pasatieri himself pointed out that the reference to “Priests in black gowns” in the penultimate line of the poem was meant as an insult, a disparaging sexual reference by Blake to effeminate or sexually repressed clergy. “Briars” in the last line may be a reference to Christ’s crown of thorns, which serves as a symbol for worldly suffering and even unjust torture.

### Musical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-6</th>
<th>7-10</th>
<th>11-14</th>
<th>15-19</th>
<th>20-23</th>
<th>24-31</th>
<th>32-35</th>
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<td>bII - #vii</td>
<td>i - V</td>
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</tbody>
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Figure 1: Musical structure of “The Garden of Love”

The piano accompaniment of this piece is built on short motivic phrases and arpeggiated chords, while the vocal line has lyric phrases that move mostly by step. For these reasons, the texture of this piece is reminiscent of the style of bel canto era composer Vincenzo Bellini, whose work is much admired by Pasatieri. Pasatieri confirmed that he used Bellini’s composition

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300 Pasatieri interview with the author.
style as a model for this song.\textsuperscript{301} The song is in a minor and follows a clear structure with reoccurring melodic and harmonic themes.

There is a considerable amount of apparent text-painting in this song. In the first two measures, the opening gesture in the piano seems to suggest to this author the image of water lapping on the bank as mentioned in the text of the first line (Figure 2). This sense of water flowing or lapping is also strengthened by the composer’s tempo and style indication of Lento fluido.

A possible weeping motive can be found in the vocal line in mm. 9-10, a modification of the limpid, yawn-like musical gesture used in m. 6 on the word “sleeping.” The second possible weep gesture, in m. 10, seems to this author to be a more traditional expression of this type of motive, in the form of a descending appoggiatura (Figure 3).

\begin{figure}
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig2.png}
\caption{“The Garden of Love,” Measures 1-2, showing the piano introduction}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{301} Ibid.
In mm. 11-13, the original water motive of the opening bars is modified to show the change of location in the text (Figure 4). Now this motive in the right hand of the piano part takes on a more active, syncopated form perhaps to suggest the heath and overgrowth of the grassy moor.
Mm. 15-17 build in intensity with increased chromaticism and ascending figures in the left hand of the piano line. The descending notes in the vocal line on the text “were beguiled” may illustrate the seedy character of the sentiment being expressed (Figure 5). In Mm. 17 and 18 large dissonant leaps in the vocal line and an *exclamatio* figure appear (Figure 5) that reinforce intense frustration found in the text. The piano part also contains cluster chords in m. 18 to enhance the emotion. This phrase ends a measure later in a half-cadence.

![Figure 5: “The Garden of Love,” Measures 14-18, showing expressive motives in the voice part and ascending eighth-note figures in the piano part](image)

M. 19 contains a figure in the left hand of the piano part of alternating notes, perhaps a variation of the “lapping water” motive in the opening bars of the song (Figure 6). Here the alternating figure, which may illustrate the change in location or travel to the Garden, serves as a connection to lead into the return to tonic and the original vocal melody, now ornamented by the composer, in m. 20 (Figure 6). The piano part in this next section recalls its Bellini-like arpeggios of the first stanza.
Starting in mm. 24-25, the right hand of the piano displays a series of descending thirds (Figure 7). With the text “A Chapel was built in the midst, Where I used to play on the green” the texture is later altered in mm. 26-27 to a more bell-like figure, perhaps to indicate the chapel.
In addition, Figure 7 shows the rolled chords in mm. 24-26 in the left hand which have a bell-like quality. The descending lines, especially the more subtle chromatic, syncopated line B-A#-A in the left hand of the piano part in mm. 26 and 27 (Figure 7), may suggest a sadness or foreboding of the negativity represented by the chapel in the poetry in contrast to the innocence of youth.

![Figure 8: “The Garden of Love,” Measures 28-31, showing alternating notes in piano and voice](image)

The alternating note figure returns in mm. 28-30, now intensified by its appearance in multiple lines and octaves. The figure seems to be a mockery of the ironic “Thou shalt not” text that appears here, the melody of which the piano echoes in m. 29 with the same alternating note figure (Figure 8).

At the *a tempo* in m. 32, the tonic and original theme return. In the vocal line, the original melodic material is again slightly altered with notated variations, not unlike performers might have used ornamentation during the *bel canto* period. In these measures, the original figure from the piano part is transposed into a very high register and becomes a possible weep-like appoggiatura motive, built with descending steps (Figure 9).
When the singer speaks of graves, this weeping figure is transformed into a chromatic, somewhat angular line in the vocal line (mm. 36-37, Figure 10). This texture seems to indicate the corruption of the once flowering garden, now filled with death and decay. It may also be a representation of the oddly jutting tombstones.

Pasatieri noted that Blake’s use of the word “gowns” in m. 40 (Figure 11) was sarcastic and intentionally insulting, so even though there is a return to fairly diatonic harmony here, the composer wanted it to sound ironic. The ascending sixteenth-notes in the vocal line in mm. 36-38 suggest a turn to a more somber mood.
40-41, especially the melisma on the word “walking,” seem to illustrate the sweep of long robes while walking (Figure 11).

The descending thirds texture in the voice and piano lines from mm. 24-25 are recalled in mm. 42-43. This figure suggesting hopelessness and frustration appears when the text speaks of binding joy and desire (Figure 12). The voice leaps up to a high note in dramatic fashion on the words “my joys,” another exclamation figure to show frustration. The ascending half-steps within the piano’s chords as well as in the vocal line on the last word seem to reinforce the longing and suppressed desire of Blake’s text. The song ends with a hollow-sounding openly spaced chord, contrasting with the close voicing in at least the pianist’s right hand that precedes it.
Performance Recommendations

This song should be sung with as much legato as possible with crisp diction, and vibrato should be consistent throughout every melodic line, as is required for a bel canto style approach. The pianist should use the pedal appropriately to support the melodic line and achieve seamless legato on this Bellini-like texture. The tempo and rubato may vary according to the performers’ wishes, but the line must maintain a smooth, flowing momentum, without extreme heaviness or sluggishness.

Accelerating the tempo through mm. 11-18 will allow for a slight, unwritten retard in m. 19, which will in turn set up the return of the theme in the next measure well. This, along with vocal color and diction, will help to make the first mention of the garden more special. Performers should clearly bring out the consonants on the words “shut” and the commandment “Thou shalt not” in mm. 28-29.

In the next stanza, the word “graves” is important and should be emphasized, perhaps also adding a rolled “r” to highlight. The “b” of the word “binding” should be doubled or otherwise delayed to allow the pianist time to roll the chord and to help set up the change in tempo in mm. 42. Note that while it is not indicated, the vocal line in m. 42 contains what should probably be a subito pianissimo for both performers. This surprising dynamic at the end supports the interpretation that the speaker in the poem has given up hope and has become complacent in his/her own repression.

“The Garden of Love” is one of the more technically accessible songs within the set and could serve as an introduction to bel canto style and singing technique. The vocal demands for this piece would be accessible to younger singers, and college undergraduates or even advanced high-school aged students might benefit from performing it in a studio setting. The piece is
somewhat limited in range, lying mostly mid-voice, and the song could be useful pedagogically to teach legato while exposing the student to limited chromaticism.

2. “Laughing Song”

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily,
With their sweet round mouths sing Ha, Ha, He.

When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread
Come live & be merry and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of Ha, Ha, He.

Text information

The poetry for this song, like that of “The Lamb,” is spoken or sung from a seemingly infantile perspective. The text is playful and even silly at times. The poem originally appeared in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*, which as an overall work explores childhood in both good and bad conditions, naivety, and purity. The Garden of Love, previously explored through the perspective of experience in the preceding song by the same title, appears again in this song, now seen through the eyes of innocence.303

In the poem, the echoes of the children laughing and their surrounding environment, here given the ability to laugh along, express their cumulative joy by laughing together. Note that

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Pasatieri repeats the figure “Ha, ha, he” each time it appears in the original poem, providing a further impression of echoing laughter.

According to Blake scholar Hazard Adams, the final stanza fully brings together the children and the natural world, here in the form of painted birds, which may in turn represent the children themselves, for a meal of “cherries and nuts” that might stand as “more naive communion than mystical bread and wine.” As he puts it, “Here all - birds and children - eat from nature’s [God’s] table.”

The rhyme scheme of the poem is three stanzas composed of two rhymed lines (AABB). In the first couplets of the first and last stanzas, “Joy” - “by” and “shade” - “spread,” are false rhymes, both based on spelling rather than sound. While no change in pronunciation should be made to correct this intentional device, the overall rhyme scheme should inform the singer’s pronunciation of the repeated “Ha, Ha, He.” Each time this laugh appears in the poem, it is rhymed with the vowel [i] in the previous line of the couplet, the words “Emily” and “me” respectively. Therefore, the pronunciation of the last syllable of these stanzas (“He”) should be pronounced, like the masculine pronoun it recalls, [hi], with a long-ee sound.

Note that the entire poem is one long run-on sentence, regardless of given punctuation. The syntax of the lines give the poem a sense of breathlessness, like that of an excited child. Even without a musical setting, the natural tempo of the poem seems quick and tripping. The rhythm of both the original poem and Pasatieri’s musical setting recall the rhythm of laughter.

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304 Ibid., 232.
305 Ibid., 229.
The original poem (or song, as it is titled) is built with anapestic [short-short-long] meter with iambic variation. In this way the natural rhythm of the text lends itself to a simple sing-song quality, which works well in this subject context of playing children.

Pasatieri resisted the pull to set this type of poetic meter in a triple-form such as 6/8 and instead set the text in 2/4. Note that this creates some conflict between the short or weak poetic beat and the strong musical beat at the beginning of several lines. What feels like an upbeat in the text alone often appears on a downbeat musically. Examples of this can be found throughout the song when the first two syllables of the line are set with two eighth-notes. Some subsequent pick-up figures within each line are treated as they are in the spoken text, set with sixteenth-notes (Figure 13).

Figure 13: “Laughing Song,” Measures 12-16, showing both downbeat and upbeat line entrances within Pasatieri’s setting

Musical Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>1-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-28</th>
<th>29-41</th>
<th>42-49</th>
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<td>C(I)-V</td>
<td>V-V/Bb</td>
<td>Bb(bII)-V/C-I</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 14: Musical structure of “Laughing Song”

Pasatieri commented that this song was a “show-off for the voice” and a “painting of joyfulness.” He modelled the vocal writing in this song on that of bel canto era composer

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306 Pasatieri interview with the author.
Gioachino Rossini, whom Pasatieri praised for his use of florid vocal lines in his lighter, comedic operas.\textsuperscript{307}

Throughout the piece, the piano part features dissonant tone clusters that often appear as an eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The right hand plays imitations of the voice part, as well as trills and other motives that support the meaning of the text.

The vocal line is somewhat florid with a combination of runs, arpeggios, and trills, and each line of text is mostly set as individual phrases separated by rests. As the text describes laughter from various places and creatures, the piano part paints those laughing sounds, each slightly different. While the harmonies shift with frequent accidentals, the piece is centered in \textit{C Major}. The tempo marking is \textit{Allegretto giocoso}, fitting the playful nature of the setting.

The song begins with a four measure introduction by the piano part in which the left hand plays the cluster-chord eighth-note “laugh” motive and the right hand plays a melody that is repeated by the voice when it enters (Figure 15). This opening melody motive of an upper neighbor followed by repeating notes, another possible laughing figure, returns multiple times in both the piano and vocal parts.

![Figure 15: “Laughing Song,” Measure 1, showing the opening motive and dissonant “laughing” clusters in the piano](image)

Throughout the song, a descending scale pattern can be found in the piano, alternating between diatonic and chromatic figurations (Figure 16). In a smaller, localized way, this pattern can be seen in the end of this eighth-note cluster motive in the left hand (Figure 15), but it is

\textsuperscript{307} Ibid.
sometimes present on a larger scale as well, as the harmonies develop throughout the piece, making much of the piano part based on a descending scale pattern, though sometimes obscured by other notes (Figure 16).

Similarly, the vocal melody is often built on an ascending scale pattern, sometimes chromatic, moving by half step on major downbeats and within the shaping of the line (Figure 16). The opposing scale patterns create a jovial harmonic development between the voice and piano, visiting unexpected chromatic harmonies, with playful dissonances in the form of clusters in the piano part.
Using text-painting in mm. 10, 14, and 15, on the words “laughing,” “laugh,” and “merry,” the vocal line contains sixteenth-notes (Figure 17). Note the use of the “upper neighbor laugh” theme on the downbeat of m. 13 that appears in the piano part in a high register in the right hand and a low register in the left, causing the pianist to spread their arm position in contrast to the close registration that directly proceeds and follows that figure (Figure 17). This seems to paint the air’s laughter from the text.

![Figure 17: “Laughing Song,” Measures 12-15, showing “air-laugh” figure in the piano](image)

The laughter of the hill seems to be painted in the piano part of mm. 17-19 with trills and tremolo. Both the vocal line and the right hand of the piano part contain a sequence of rolling hill-like figures in mm. 20-23, as the text describes the meadows laughing (Figure 18).

![Figure 18: “Laughing Song,” Measures 17-23, showing the “hill and meadow laughter” figures in the voice and piano](image)
A grasshopper’s chirp is clearly imitated in the vocal line on the words “grasshopper” and “laughs” in mm. 24-25, and the piano shows the grasshopper’s laugh in mm. 27-28 (Figure 19).

The “meadow laugh” figure is combined with a trill in the vocal line on the actual laughing text “Ha, ha, he.” Unlike in the original poem, Pasatieri repeats this laughter text each time it appears, here in mm. 33-39 and at the end of the song.

The widely-spaced “neighbor figure laugh” returns in m. 41, now with even more distance between the left and right hand and the addition of a glissando (Figure 20).
In response to the text about the painted birds laughing in the shade, a “bird call” figure can be found and heard in the right hand of the piano part (mm. 43, 45, 48, and 49). This short musical gesture is a combination of a sixteenth-note triplet leaping up to a pair of descending eighths (Figure 21).
In mm. 46-47, Pasatieri uses a speech-like rhythm that leads to syncopation in mm. 46-47. The first word of the next line also features a syncopated rhythm, this time coupled with a large, dramatic leap of an octave to a high Bb on the word “come.” This gesture suggests an inviting sweep or wave of an arm to someone in the distance (m. 50, Figure 21).

In the last lines of the musical setting, the piano texture changes to include trills and tremolo in the right hand, as well as an alternating pitch figure (perhaps a slow version of the main neighbor figure from the first measure) and cluster chords in the left hand. The vocal line, now in a higher register, features trills and melismatic runs on the “Ha, ha he” text.
The last measure of this song find the vocal line arriving at the highest note of the entire set of Bel Canto Songs, a C₆ (Figure 22).

Figure 22: “Laughing Song,” Measures 59-63, showing the final phrase of the song.

Performance Recommendations

This playful piece should be performed with exuberance. The melismas in the voice part should be sung with both clear accuracy and gestural smoothness to achieve bel canto style. Large vocal leaps, such as on the word “Come” in m. 50 should be sung with a well-support legato connection, and all trills should be crisp and accurate, starting on the lower note.

The pronunciation of “he,” which appears for the first time in m. 34, should be [hi] so the word rhymes with “Emily,” “merry,” and “me.” On the highest note in the last measure, this pronunciation could be modified to suit the singer. For instance, a female singer could modify the vowel to sing [hæ] or simply [æ] without an aspiration. This recommendation is based on the fact that, because of the properties of vowel formants in relation to the fundamental frequency of pitches being sung in such a high register, the vowel [i] is acoustically imperceptible on the last note of this song. Therefore, it is recommended that singers modify their mouth and tongue position to a comfortably open, relaxed placement. The height and forwardness of the tongue and wideness of the mouth in the [æ] position is ideal for C₆ in the opinion of this author.
Beyond correct execution of the given pitches and rhythms for both performers, care should be taken so that the overall articulation remains light with neither performer covering the other. The pianist should be especially careful not to play too loudly in m. 61, as the singer is trilling in a lower range against a tremolo in the pianist’s right hand. The glissando in m. 41 could pose a difficulty in timing. No explicit marking is given here, but performers could choose to either keep the tempo steady or to give a bit of extra time at the end of m. 41 for the piano glissando, placing the downbeat of the next measure (m. 42) clearly together and returning to tempo.

While other voice types might be able to sing this piece, especially in transposition, it is particularly well suited for an agile soprano with a secure top range. Compared to the other songs in the set, “Laughing Song” is one of the most technically demanding for both singer and pianist. A more advanced student singer of college-age might be able to perform this piece well. Pedagogically, this song could be used to apply technical lessons in trilling, florid passage-work, and singing in the upper range. Although it does require the singer to sustain notes within and above the \( (secco) \) passaggio, there is only very limited use of the extreme upper range in this piece. The highest note, a \( C_6 \), is not sustained and is approached in an idiomatic way, by a leap of a perfect fourth. With guidance on proper vocal placement and support, a young singer of appropriate voice type should be able to execute this leap with relative ease. The \( Bb_5 \) in m. 50 is sustained briefly and approached by a legato octave leap, making it technically more challenging. Perhaps the most demanding aspect of the song for the singer are the many trills. Any singer, regardless of age and level must be able to trill accurately to perform this piece. While it would pose a challenge for an undergraduate, “Laughing Song” could be used as a
repertoire bridge to prepare a student to be able to eventually tackle a florid opera aria, cabaletta, or similar coloratura-intense piece.

3. “To the Evening Star”

Thou fair-hair’d angel of the evening,
Now, while the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves; and, while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And the lion glares thro’ the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flocks are cover’d with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence.

Text information

This poem is quite different from the others in Bel Canto Songs in that it does not rhyme and the line breaks are not based on the natural punctuation. This last characteristic is caused by Blake’s heavy use of enjambment, the ending of a line without a pause before the next line, in an overall pattern of modified iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter, in which each line is made up of five two-syllable units (feet) with a short-long (weak-strong) pattern, was a traditional poetic meter, used extensively by Shakespeare and many other English poets. Ostriker notes that Blake was “careful in most places to limit himself to ten count-out-able syllables per line, [but] his rhythms hold to regular iambics only enough to establish them as the base beat, from which he freely diverges.”\textsuperscript{308} Ostriker continued, “The lyrics are very boldly enjambed, often with a weak

\textsuperscript{308} Ostriker, Vision, 36.
preposition or conjunction placed as the last syllable, the hazards of such boldness being at least partially averted by sensitive handling of stress and pause. “These qualities give this poem a sense of quasi-prose, despite the use of mostly ten-syllable lines.

The evening star is a reference to the planet Venus, personifying the love goddess by the same name. The goddess is being invoked to bless the bed of the lovers, and in so doing protect them and their lovemaking. In this poem, Venus, through her “star,” has power at night, during which she distributes her blessing in the form of dew, which may have additional sexual connotations. The west wind may refer to Zephyrus, who in classical mythology was the god of the west wind as well as the bringer of warm spring breezes. Zephyrus, who was made to serve Venus’ son Cupid, was also prone to jealous rage, in the case of his rebuke by Hyacinthus for Apollo. Thus the west wind in the poem may be a reference to jealousy or possessive love, which the poet asks to be made calm and inactive by the love goddess. The goddess’s light withdraws with the break of day, and unprotected by the cover of night, the lovers may be exposed. The reference to the wolf, lion, and sheep are repeated in other Blake poems, suggesting that the wolf is a dangerous creature that may eat the helpless sheep that are (perhaps strangely) protected by the lion, whom Blake often pairs with the wolf as its foe. Here the sheep stand for the lovers, the wolf may be society or the church’s disapproval, and the watchful lion, also an aggressive predator and perhaps even a symbol for Christ, here does not seem to

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309 Ibid., 36.

310 Ibid., 357.


offer help to the sheep. The Wolf may represent Rome, and therefore the church, while the lion may represent the English government, and therefore the official state and laws. The sheep, exposed to the elements, are covered in dew from being blessed by the goddess in the night. The poet invokes the goddess’s protection over them, and in turn all lovers.

Blake’s attitude toward sexuality and his spiritual eroticism were very permissive, especially for his time. He believed in sexual freedom and criticized the church’s disdain for what he considered a natural, even holy part of humanity that was created by God and therefore pure. This early poem explores a sense of disconnect between the blessedness of sexuality and the need to hide or protect this activity from the judgment of society.

Musical Analysis

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Figure 23: Musical structure of “To the Evening Star”

While retaining the vocal texture of the bel canto style, this song is reminiscent of improvised ancient Greek chant because of its modal sound, sparse and linear accompaniment, and melismatic vocal line. The piece begins in Lydian mode, achieved by raising the fourth scale degree, but the mode is mixed and shifts throughout the song. The mood created by the soft dynamic and chant-like vocal line fits with the pagan prayer to the love goddess. The modified strophic setting matches Blake’s two-stanza form. While the vocal melody moves primarily by step with the occasional small leap, there are several notable exceptions. The first of these can be found on the word “love” in m. 7, which is repeated in the second stanza on the word “silver” in m. 29 (Figures 24 and 25).
Dramatic leaps, here followed by descending scales, in the vocal line can be found in a sequence on the words “scatter thy silver dew” (mm. 16-18). This pattern, which does not appear again in the song, seems to paint the image of the dew, flung by the goddess, falling from the sky upon the sleeping world (Figure 26).
Figure 26: “To the Evening Star,” Measures 14-19, showing text-painting sequence in the voice

Figure 27: “To the Evening Star,” Measures 17-22, showing syncopated expression in the voice
Vocal leaps are found again in a syncopated sequence in the following measures on the words “On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes.” This descending pattern in mm. 20-22 creates the impression of someone yawning as they fall asleep (Figure 27).

The second stanza begins in m. 23 with a return of the original musical material. Rhythmic changes are made to accommodate the new text, but otherwise the setting is the same until the final three measures of the song. The vocal line again has a syncopated rhythm, perhaps to add emphasis to the plea of the poet. In the piano part, a series of parallel triads leads to the final dissonant poly-chord, which leaves the audience with a sense of anticipation of the goddess’ answer, even though the lowest notes sounded in these last measures outline what could otherwise have been an authentic cadence in E (Figure 28).

The piano line in this song is fairly subdued with a sparse texture, which works well for the soft dynamic. One musical gesture that stands out can be found in m. 8 and again in m. 30. This D#-E-F# pattern is the only time that the piano has sixteenth notes independent of the vocal line (Figures 29 and 30). While this flourish could be viewed as being a new idea to beginning
the next phrase, this author recommends that it be thought of as part of the previous phrase - a response to the text just stated.

![Figure 29: “To the Evening Star,” Measures 7-8, showing piano flourish motive](image)

For the m. 8 occurrence (Figure 29), the preceding text is “light thy bright torch of love,” which suggests that the piano gesture is the torch being lit. Similarly, this piano motive in m. 30 (Figure 30), following the text “wash the dusk with silver,” may be the goddess’s bright gleam coloring the darkening world.

![Figure 30: “To the Evening Star,” Measures 28-30, showing the same motive later in the song](image)

Performance Recommendations

Note that the loudest dynamic is piano. Pasatieri said, “That’s unusual, but intentional. To keep that amount of time in a soft place requires an extraordinary amount of concentration.
and color, and technique too, obviously... You have to mesmerize the audience with [this] song. ³³¹³

Beyond the technical challenges of sustaining an entire piece at a soft dynamic, a performer may be tempted to sing louder dynamics in an effort to express the text in various places (i.e. in mm. 32-33, when singing about the judgment of the wolf and the lion). In this instance, a soft dynamic can convey the sense of fright and nervous concern of the speaker, who is after all one of the persecuted lovers. Another phrase that may be especially tempting to perform dynamically louder than intended is the last phrase of the song, which even Blake ends with an exclamation point. The composer’s softer dynamic is more fitting for the sense of an elicit tryst in hushed darkness and the secretive plea of the poem’s speaker. Care should also be taken by the singer to keep relatively quiet on the large leaps and high notes, which should be floated gracefully.

As Pasatieri suggests, a variety of vocal and pianistic colors should be used to paint the inflection of the text and emotional content of this piece. Clear and careful diction can also aid the singer in making the words come alive without breaking the spell of the mystical mode by employing loudness.

Throughout the song, both singer and pianist should maintain a seamless legato on melismas. Clear, creative use of diction and vocal color will help sustain the soft, slow lines. The pianist should feel free to use the pedal as they see fit to accomplish this goal. ³³¹⁴ Singers should note that even with liberal use of pedal, the piano sound will decay on sustained notes, and they should move the tempo accordingly. Individual notes should not be bounced or articulated

³³¹³ Pasatieri interview with the author.

³³¹⁴ Ibid.
harshly within the many sung melismas. It is the opinion of this author that this legato should also be maintained carefully on the syncopated passages in mm. 20-22 and 38-40. The only exception to this may be when Pasatieri sets the text with dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythms, such as in mm. 11, 33, and 39, which can be more energetic. In traditional bel canto style, dotted rhythms are generally sung with forward momentum without breaking the line by stopping or decreasing the air pressure, so care should be taken not to pull off of the dot in these spots.

Because of the sustained soft, exposed singing throughout the piece, the need to float the highest notes, and the large leaps of the melodic line, this piece may be the most technically and artistically challenging of the entire work. While a very advanced undergraduate singer may be able to perform this piece in a satisfying way, it is not generally recommended for performance for most young student singers. However, this song may be used pedagogically in a studio setting to reinforce training in soft, sustained singing, the use of different vocal colors, and the singing of florid passages in the middle-voice.

4. “To the Muses”

Whether on Ida’s shady brow,
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the sun, that now
From antient melody have ceas’d;

Whether in Heav’n ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air,
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on chrystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea
Wand’ring in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry!
How have you left the antient love
That bards of old enjoy’d in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move!
The sound is forc’d, the notes are few!

Text information

This poem is an admonition of the nine muses of classical mythology, who were responsible for inspiring art and creativity of all kinds, for their abandonment of contemporary poets. A footnote given in Norton’s Critical Edition points out,

The Celtic and classical traditions of poetry are imagined once to have been united. Now the derivative neoclassical poets among Blake’s contemporaries, deserted by the muses, manage only a few feeble forced notes. Blake renews the bardic tradition in “The Voice of the Ancient Bard,” the “Introduction” to Songs of Experience [which appears as the sixth setting in Bel Canto Songs], and later works in which the ideal poet is the British bard rather than the Greek lyrist.\(^\text{315}\)

In his preface to the 2007 facsimile edition of Blake’s Poetical Sketches, Robin Hamlyn explains that Blake’s “ambition to establish his place in that ancient tradition is revealed [in this poem], where we find him very conscious of being in a modern world where those Muses no longer hold sway... It seems that in his mind Blake knew it fell to him to renew poetry in a way many other poets had failed to do.”\(^\text{316}\)

The first two stanzas provide a list of wondrous places those muses might be hiding as they disregard their inspirational duties to the poets. According to scholar S. Foster Damon, “The poet gives Greece and the Holy Lands as the sources of our poetry, and fails in his day to find the muses in the fire of heaven [the sun], the earth, the air, or the sea - the four elements.”\(^\text{317}\)

\(^{315}\) Johnson, 360.


\(^{317}\) Damon, 331.
shady brow” in the first line may refer to “either Mount Ida on Crete, where Saturn ruled and Zeus was reared, or another Mount Ida near Troy, where the Judgment of Paris took place and the gods watched the Trojan War.” Lines 3-4 stating that melodies no longer emanate from the sun may be commenting on the apparent absence of the mythological sun god Apollo, who was also the god of music. This may support the idea that Blake was commenting on the inspirational void left by the defunct classical mythological pantheon with this poem. With his many illuminated works Blake would later attempt to replace them with a new mythology.

Musical Analysis

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<th>Measures</th>
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There are many similarities between “To the Muses” and the previous song “To the Evening Star,” except in the dynamic level. Where the previous setting was *sempre piano*, much of this one, which also has more dynamic contrast, is *forte*. In this way, Pasatieri said that it provides “a balance for ‘To the Evening Star.’” Like “Star,” “Muses” has a chant-like vocal line in many sections. While even a few of the melismas are of a similar pattern as in the previous song, there are more repeated notes, often used as a pick-up at the beginning of phrases. These repeated notes act as a reoccurring reciting tone on what will eventually become the

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<sup>318</sup> Johnson, 359.

<sup>319</sup> Pasatieri interview with the author.
dominant of the key, somewhat obscuring the true tonic of $c \text{ minor}$. The piano part consists mostly of chords paired with a walking bass line in the left hand or melody line in the right hand.

There are several unifying motives in this song. The first can be found in the right hand of the piano part in the first four measures (Figure 32). This melody reappears in variation in mm. 10-13, 14-17, and 35-37. A walking line in the piano occurs throughout the song, also in variation. The first time it appears is in mm. 5-9 (Figure 32). This feature gives the impression of a ground bass, even though it is modified every time it appears and is interrupted briefly by other material. This quasi-ground bass seems to borrow from the Baroque lament form, which is fitting for this poem, as Blake is lamenting the loss of poetic inspiration in contemporary writing.

Figure 32: “To the Muses,” Measures 1-10, showing the piano introduction melody and the walking figure in the left hand of the piano part
In his setting of the second and third stanzas, Pasatieri’s vocal writing becomes decidedly more florid. This may be a reflection of the references to wandering and various scenic locations in the text. The words “wander” and “wandering” appear in mm. 19 and 30, and both feature melismas (Figures 33 and 34).

![Figure 33: “To the Muses,” Measures 16-19, showing text-painting in the voice and the walking figure in the piano](image)

Starting in m. 18 (Figure 33), the previously mentioned walking bass pattern can also be found in the piano part underneath that that text.

![Figure 34: “To the Muses,” Measures 30-32, showing text-painting in the voice](image)

A florid, descending sequence appears in mm. 20-22. In this section, Pasatieri used the sequence and syncopated onsets to match the two occurrences of the connecting word “Or” in this spot (Figure 35).
Dramatic leaps in the vocal line in mm. 33-34 bring out the exasperation of the poet on the words “forsaking Poetry” (Figure 36). Another leap, followed by a descending scale paint the word “languid” in m. 43 (Figure 37).
The stacking of dissonant poly-chords in the right hand of the piano part becomes more pronounced in the final eight measures. The piece ends strongly with a dynamic of *fortissimo*, with last chord (also dissonant) having a fairly wide range of C₁ to Eb₆.

**Performance Recommendations**

Like the previous song, “To the Muses” is a prayer-like poem, although with quite a different attitude. The mood in this piece is accusatory rather than pleading. The given tempo of *Allegro maestoso* and the louder dynamic also gives this song a stronger, more energetic character. Pasatieri encourages freedom of interpretation, so performers should find a crisp tempo that also allows for the clear articulation of all diction, especially in passages containing sixteenth-notes, such as mm. 20-22 (Figure 35). With its quick syllable changes, m. 21 may be a good gauge to set the quickness of this piece. Similarly, the long phrase “How have you left the ancient love That bards of old enjoy’d in you!” in mm. 37-42 may be another good indicator of tempo (Figure 38), especially if the singer chooses to perform this phrase in one breath.

![Figure 38: “To the Muses,” Measures 33-42, showing a particularly long phrase](image)
Note that with the exception of “enjoy’d” of line 14, Pasatieri’s setting modernizes the spelling throughout the poem. This change in spelling is coupled with two syllables that are sung in the song that would not have been pronounced in reading the original poem. These can be seen in the words “heaven” and “wandering,” for which the added syllable is given a high melisma. Care should be taken to avoid accenting these syllables, especially the latter in m. 30.

Punctuation is slightly different in the setting as well, although dynamics at the end suggest Blake’s missing exclamation points. This author recommends that “Ida” in m. 5 be pronounced [ˈaɪdə], anglicizing the name.

The vocalist should sing with forward momentum in mm. 20-21, being careful not to allow the phrase energy or dynamic to drop with the shape of the sequence between those two measures on the words “the green corners.” After the fuller volume of the first page and the quick and high melismas starting in m. 20, a subito piano in m. 22 is a surprise for the audience if well executed. There is a change of texture and color in m. 24, which would be effective if performed with energetic diction and a hushed tone. Another surprise dynamic change on a leap to A₅ in m. 30 (which includes one of Pasatieri’s added syllables) may present a technical challenge, but care should be taken to honor this instruction for a quiet approach. Diction articulation should especially accentuated in mm. 33-34 to bring out the arrival at the central idea of the poem.

Like the previous song, “To the Muses” contains large leaps and florid passages. The use of varied, and generally louder, dynamics make it both more accessible and yet more vocally dramatic than “To the Evening Star.” This song could be performed successfully by a somewhat advanced undergraduate singer, but care should be taken by the teacher that the singer not be
allowed to over-sing or strain in more emotionally aggressive moments, especially in mm. 33 and 48 to the end.

5. “The Lamb”

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave the life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice:
    Little Lamb who made thee
    Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee:
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
    Little Lamb God bless thee.
    Little Lamb God bless thee.

Text information

As in the “Laughing Song,” the poem for this song conveys innocence by having the voice of the poet be that of a child. The child poses questions to the lamb, and in the answer the child explains that the lamb’s creator is Christ, also personified by a lamb. The speaker in the poem uses simple language that highlights sincerity and purity. The source of the poem is Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*, many poems of which take on a similar childlike-perspective.
According to Blake scholar, Alicia Ostriker, Blake uses trochaic line to create the illusion of infantile speech in many of his early poems. She said, “This childlike effect comes from the fact that trochaic rhythms [long-short], since they start on the downbeat and are usually subject to less variation than iambs [short-long], give a more emphatic feeling. They have a quality of directness which lends itself well to Blake’s ‘infant’ style.” Blake uses this approach in “The Lamb.”

Ostriker claims that Blake’s use of alliteration of the consonant “L” is often used to convey sweetness or joy. This can be seen in the use of “Little Lamb,” which appears multiple times in this poem. The rhyme scheme of the poem consist of two stanzas that each make a chiastic design, aabbccbbbaa, even sometimes using identical words for each paired couplet.

Note that “name” and “lamb” are a false rhyme. Of this type of rhyme, Ostriker said, “It is an open question whether or not Blake misrhymed deliberately. In the early lyrics [poems] it would seem that he did, for he uses off-rhymes in patterns [as can be seen in this poem].” No attempt should be made to correct the false rhyme by altering pronunciation of these words.

Many Blake scholars have pointed out the paired contrary connection between “The Lamb” and its counterpart in Songs of Experience, “The Tyger.” While the latter poem, perhaps Blake’s best-known, does not appear among Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs, it may be of interest to explore this connection in order to better appreciate the poetry in “The Lamb.”

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320 Ostiker, Vision, 62.
321 Ibid., 84.
322 Ibid., 90-91.
The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when they heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water’d heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

According to Blake scholar S. Foster Damon, “The Lamb symbolizes the Loving God; the Tyger, the Angry God.” The lamb is for Blake “a symbol of Innocence..., and of God’s love, as contrasted with his wrath.” Of the poem “The Tyger,” Damon goes on to explain,

The poem describes the forging of the Tyger, which is glimpsed, as it were, in sudden flashes through the chaos; meanwhile Blake iterates the question “who” [echoed in “The

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323 Damon, 414.
324 Ibid., 232.
Lamb”] - or rather, “what” - is the creator. At last, when the Tyger’s form is completed, the stars throw down their spears in terror and water heaven with their pitying tears; then Blake reaches his climax [again recalling “The Lamb”] in the question “Did he who made the lamb make thee?”

Blake knew the answer, but he wanted to force his reader to find that answer himself. The whole poem [“The Tyger,” and perhaps the combination of both poems, taken as a pair] is an extended query. Could the all-loving Father be responsible for these horrors without Mercy or even Justice? Of course not. The Tyger is not the contrary of the Lamb but its negation.325

“The Lamb” is perhaps the most well known text in Pasatieri’s Bel Canto Songs. This famous poem has been set in various choral and solo vocal pieces by numerous other composers, including Lee Hoiby, Theodore Chanler, Ned Rorem, William Bolcom, and Ralph Vaughan Williams.326

**Musical Analysis**

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Figure 39: Musical structure of “The Lamb”

The piece begins with a hymn-like, four measure piano introduction (Figure 40), the material for which doesn’t clearly reappear elsewhere in the song. The introduction sets up the key of G major and the lilt of the 6/8 meter with the consistent use of a quarter-eighth rhythm. When the voice enters at m. 5, it introduces the main melodic theme of the song, which features a series of graceful leaps, notably to the sixth above and back (Figure 40).

325 Ibid., 414.

This pattern reappears in an ornamented form in mm. 13-15 (Figure 40). The initial leap up is done more quickly, and the descent is filled in with a scale. The arrows in Figure 40 outline the original melody within this ornamented incarnation.

Figure 40: “The Lamb,” Measures 1-8, showing the opening melodic theme in the voice part

Figure 41: “The Lamb,” Measures 13-15, showing an ornamented version of the opening vocal melody with the notes of the original melody outlined by arrows
The piano part picks up these playful sixteenth-note runs from the voice in m. 15 and begins a quasi-Alberti-bass pattern at the key change in m. 16. This sixteenth-note texture is kept in the piano part, especially in the left hand, for the entire middle section of the song. The note pattern varies between alternating two-pitch gestures, arpeggios, scales, or some combination of these. Examples of these patterns can be seen in mm. 16, 18, and 19 but this approach is used for the piano part from mm. 16-30 (Figure 42).

![Figure 42: “The Lamb,” Measures 16-20, showing various sixteenth note patterns in the piano](image)

Starting in m. 16, the excitement of the vocal line is increased by the use of syncopated entrances. Pasatieri gives a sense of breathlessness by breaking up the line in this syncopated fashion in mm. 18-20 (Figure 42). This off-beat entrance device is used throughout the middle
section of the piece, ending in m. 26. This rhythmic approach is used again in the final two phrases of the song. Syncopation gives the impression of an excited child asking multiple questions in quick succession.

Another musical feature of this song is multiple key changes, which coincide with changes the poet’s train of thought. Formal key changes occur at the beginning of mm. 16, 21, 25, 30, and 34. Especially in the middle section of the song, these rapid shifts add a sense of anticipation and childlike excitement.

After a key change and ritard on connecting musical material in m. 30, the main theme returns in a modified form in m. 31 (Figure 43).

Figure 43: “The Lamb,” Measures 28-38, showing the ritard and key change, leading to the return (modified) of the original melodic material
In the first stanza of this poem, the speaker is asking the lamb rhetorical questions. In the second stanza, which in the song begins at m. 31 (Figure 43), the speaker answers those questions and explains to the lamb that his maker is Christ. In the poet’s explanation, starting in m. 39, the vocal line consists of repeated notes (Figure 44). This repeated note pattern is echoed later in the right hand of the piano part in mm. 47 and 52. Of this, Pasatieri said,

One of the features of [“The Lamb”] is the change of color on a repeated note, ...which actually came into its highest form with Verdi, a little bit later. ...Verdi was really at the tail-end of the bel canto period... through into Rigoletto, it’s a bel canto opera certainly, but as Verdi went on [in composing] La Traviata,... Aida, and Otello, the use of shifting colors on a repeated note came into prominence. And one of the greatest examples is of course in the last act of Aida when Radames sings on that repeated B until he says her name, and then it’s just raised a half-a-step... [singing the passage] “Aida.” That’s fantastic. It sends shivers down your spine when you listen to it. So “The Lamb” features that, particularly at the end.\(^{327}\)

![Figure 44: “The Lamb,” Measures 39-44, showing the repeated note texture and half-step pattern in the voice](image)

In mm. 43-44 (Figure 44), there is some text-painting on the words “He is meek, and He is mild.” To illustrate this idea of humility, Pasatieri sets the vocal line, which is doubled in the piano part, with a (mostly) half-step pattern.

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\(^{327}\) Pasatieri interview with the author.
After the text, “We are called by His name” in mm. 50-51 (Figure 45), the piano part anticipates the melodic motive that is used two measures later on the text “Little lamb.” This may be an additional musical indication of Christ’s identity as the Lamb of God, as suggested in the poem. The piano part has a last flourish of playfulness with the bass pattern in mm. 56-57 (Figure 45), which could be interpreted literally as the lamb trotting away or perhaps more metaphorically as the blessing of all God’s children.

Performance Recommendations

This song should be performed tenderly with as much legato connection as possible. The tempo chosen for this piece should be slow enough that the text can be delivered clearly, while not allowing the song to get bogged down or heavy. One tricky section of text to deliver at a
quick speed that could help to suggest a suitable tempo, is “a tender voice” in mm. 21-22 because it is set syllabically on sixteenth notes. The chosen tempo for the beginning of the piece should allow for a relaxation of speed for the last page, beginning at the *Meno mosso* at m. 31.

“The Lamb” is a vocally accessible song of moderate difficulty. The large leaps in the melody line, limited syncopation, melismas, and quiet dynamic level throughout most of the song may be challenging for a student singer, but college undergraduates should eventually be able to execute it well. It might also be possible for a more advanced high school student singer to sing this piece, although it may pose more of a challenge.

Ideally, any singer who studies this song should have a very even tone at all dynamic levels and be able to sustain seamless legato. Good control of the upper register is necessary, and musical maturity is required to find the vocal coloring needed to perform the repeated notes expressively. The lilting quality of the meter and vocal texture should not tempt the singer to pull off the vocal line at any time. Vocal energy must be maintained at a constant, even level, regardless of dynamic or musical gesture.

6. “Hear the Voice”

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk’d among the ancient trees. (5)

Calling the lapsed Soul
And weeping in the evening dew:
That might controll,
The starry pole;
And fallen fallen light renew! (10)
O Earth O Earth return!
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass. (15)

Turn away no more:
Why wilt thou turn away
The starry floor
The watry shore
Is giv’n thee till the break of day. (20)

Text information

This last poem was chosen specifically to serve as exciting closure for the set.328 In its original source, it appears as the “Introduction” of Blake’s *Songs of Experience*. Therefore, this text returns us to the source of the first poem in *Bel Canto Songs* to complete the chiastic pattern of the text arrangement.

The second line of the poem, “Who Present, Past & Future, sees;” later appeared in Blake’s *Jerusalem*, and according to scholar Northrop Frye, this line “establishes at once the principle that the imagination unifies time by making the present moment real.”329 From the references in the lines “Calling the lapsed Soul, And weeping in the evening dew;” as well as the entire first stanza that recalls the Hebrew prophets of the Bible, Frye identifies the Bard as Christ calling mankind.330 In the opinion of this author, the Bard is likely a representation of Blake himself. In the first half of the poem, Blake seems to say that imperfect man, by the Word of God, could conquer nature, but later the Bard directly addresses Earth herself and not mankind.

328 Ibid.


330 Ibid., 59-62.
The word “That” in the eighth line of the poem is ambiguous, and could refer either to the Soul or to the Word, which may also represent Jesus.\textsuperscript{331} Scholar David Erdman interprets the Bard as “chid[ing] Earth’s ‘lapsed Soul’ for the tardiness of spring thaw.”\textsuperscript{332} Earth, who in the original source rejects the Bard in the subsequent poem “Earth’s Answer,” perhaps stands for all life in the world.

The Bard’s words, which are given in a quote that begins with the line “O Earth, O Earth, return!” are thick with Biblical references.\textsuperscript{333} (Note that in Blake’s original poem above, there are no quotation marks. These are added in Pasatieri’s setting. For the version of the text used in Bel Canto Songs, see Appendix A.) The Bard calls to the Earth to embrace the Word of God. As Frye puts it, “The prophet sees in every dawn the image of a resurrection that will lift the world into another state of being altogether. He is always prepared to say ‘the time is at hand.’ But every dawn in the world...declines into sunset, as the spinning earth turns away into darkness.”\textsuperscript{334} This explains the references to turning away and morning dawning in the Bard’s call. The Earth respond to the Bard in the next poem in Songs of Experience:

\begin{center}
\textbf{EARTH’s Answer}
\end{center}

\begin{verbatim}
Earth rais’d up her head,
From the darkness dread & drear.
Her light fled;
Stony dread!
And her locks cover’d with grey despair,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{331} Johnson, 28-29.


\textsuperscript{333} Frye, “Blake’s Introduction,” 62-64.

\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., 63.
Prison’d on watry shore
Starry Jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar
Weeping o’er
I hear the Father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men
Cruel jealous selfish fear
Can delight
Chain’d in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear,

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower?
Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.

According to scholar Hazard Adams, “The [Holy] Word as expressed by the Bard calls to nature or the world to awaken from a slumber, which...signifies a fallen condition. In reply Earth is unable to grasp the real import of the Bard’s words; the only god of which she can conceive is the remote god who has been responsible for chaining her down.” Frye takes a different view of Earth’s reasoning, as he puts it, “the Bard appeals to Earth, but Earth reminds him that man is responsible for his own evils, and that he should talk only to man if he is to do anything to help

335 Adams, 25.
her.” Erdman said that that by “Cruel jealous selfish fear” Earth is “chained...with winter frost; no one can plow or sow; the buds and blossoms are retarded - for Love is held in hostage.”

Musical Analysis

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<td>I - vi° - (V)</td>
<td>g: bII° - iV⁰(V) - i</td>
<td>(A)IJ/D</td>
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Figure 46: Musical structure of “Hear the Voice”

“Hear the Voice” is sectional, alternating between recitative-like fanfares and lyric melodic moments. Composed last to be a dramatic closer for the set, Pasatieri said of this song, “It’s really recitatives and cantabile, again, from the bel canto period. All of [that] big stuff in the beginning is quasi-recitative. Declamato, I would say. And then the big melody [follows], and of course, the big high note at the end. All of those things are characteristic of the bel canto period.” Pasatieri modeled his stylistic approach in this song after the writing of Gaetano Donizetti, whom he regards as “the most dramatic of the [19th century] bel canto composers.”

The declamato or recitative-like sections are found in mm. 1-9 and mm. 26-29. While they are textured like secco recitative in that the voice, free from any confining movement in the accompaniment, they are supported by sustained block chords in the piano that suggest polytonality. These sections contain both syllabic text setting and melismatic phrases in the vocal

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337 Erdman, “Infinite,” 49.
338 Pasatieri interview with the author.
339 Ibid.
line. The opening measures of each of these sections (Figures 47, 48, and 49) are reminiscent of a trumpet fanfare or horn call, which is used here to suggest reverie to match the meaning of the text. Examples of this brass-like call can be found in mm. 1-2, 5, and 26-27. Pasatieri mentioned that he based this piece on fourths and fifths, and this may be seen in the many leaps of the declamato sections, as well as perhaps the way he has stacked poly-chords to support the recitative.

Figure 47: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 1-2, showing the brass-like fanfare in the voice

Figure 48: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 5-6, showing the brass-like fanfare in the voice

Figure 49: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 26-27, showing the brass-like fanfare in the voice

Ibid.
Prominent low parallel octaves, found in the piano part, provide gravitas to the piece in connecting musical material in mm. 4-5, 8-10 (Figure 50), 33-35 (Figure 51), and at the end of the piece in mm. 43-46 (Figure 52).

Other instances of octaves in the piano part add stability and depth to the cantabile sections, such as in mm. 10-12 (Figure 50). The depth of the range for the piano in this piece gives the instrument a more orchestral color and weight for this closing song. Note that in m. 4,
the future tonic chord of *D major* is played in the right hand of the piano, perhaps a way to represent the Bard’s ability to foresee what is to come (Figure 50).

![Image of musical notation](image1)

Figure 51: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 33-35, showing octave figures in the piano

Octaves can also be found prominently in the right hand of the piano in mm. 22-25 (Figure 53), 41-42 (Figure 54), as well in the chords of the recitative-like sections and at the end of the piece.

![Image of musical notation](image2)

Figure 52: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 43-46, showing octave figures in the piano

![Image of musical notation](image3)

Figure 53: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 22-25, showing octave figures in the piano
Additionally, extreme register shifts with motion to low doubled octaves in the left hand of the piano can be found in mm. 18-19 and 42-43. In both instances, the changes are found in the left hand staff from treble to bass clef.

Besides these octave doublings, there is a significant amount of parallel motion in the piano part throughout the song. Pasatieri uses parallel thirds and sixths often in the cantabile sections, and he includes more contemporary-sounding parallel triads in mm. 38-39 (Figure 55).

Figure 54: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 40-42, showing octave figures in the piano

Figure 55: “Hear the Voice,” Measures 37-39, showing parallel triads
Possible text-painting can be found in several places in this song. “Calling” is expressed with an *exclamatio* octave leap in m. 13 (Figure 56). The word “weeping” is treated with a melisma that seems to imitate a human moan or sobbing wail in mm. 15-16 (Figure 56).

“Fallen” seems to be illustrated in both the vocal melody and the piano part (Figure 57). The vocal line features a descending line on that word in mm. 22-23. The piano part in mm. 22-25 descends by half-step in the lowest note in the left hand at the beginning of each measure (Figure 57), a musical gesture which may refer to both the fallen state of mankind and spiritual death.
The highest note of the song can be found in m. 28 on the word “Arise,” which descends by melisma into a serpentine turn motive on the words “from the dewy grass” (Figure 58).
Syncopated entrances and the high tessitura in the vocal line at the end of the piece, from mm. 40-44 (Figure 59), give a sense of breathlessness and excitement, as the bard urges the earth to hurry and accept the word of God.

It is of interest that while Pasatieri chose to set this poem in two distinct musical styles, he did not pair the different styles or sections of music with the narrator’s voice that begins the poem and the voice of the bard himself. The first cantabile section begins in m. 10 with the text “That walked among the ancient trees,” still in the voice of the person announcing that the bard’s word is to come. This aria-like section gives the rich melodic texture to the description of the word (or perhaps of the bard). The voice of the bard himself begins in m. 26, with the beginning...
of the second recitative-like section. Pasatieri could have used the declamatory style to set the herald’s call and the cantabile style to set the quote of the bard, but, instead, he takes a different musical path.

**Performance Recommendations**

The tempo of *Allegro maestoso* suggests a feeling of dignified excitement. The singer should keep the line moving forward in both *declamato* sections, but both performers should also feel free to take time, especially for the clear delivery of text and the low doubled octaves in the left hand, when they are present. All melismas and the entirety of the *cantabile* sections should be sung legato. While Pasatieri includes some gestural slur markings in the piano part in this piece, the pianist should use their own judgment for pedaling choices. It is recommended that the pianist push the tempo in mm. 24-25 to drive the energy forward into the second *declamato* section’s downbeat. In the last section of the piece, the long crescendo to the end should help create a sense of excitement and forward momentum.

“Hear the Voice” is the most dramatically and stylistically varied song in the set. While still a moderately accessible song, it requires a singer with the ability to sing well in all of the styles, vocal textures, and dynamics indicated. An advanced undergraduate singer with good control and a larger voice should be able to navigate this piece.
CONCLUSION

After writing the first of the pieces that would eventually be the *Bel Canto Songs*, Pasatieri realized that it happened to be very well modeled on the *bel canto* vocal style, a style he holds in high regard for its ideal treatment of the singing voice.\(^{341}\) This realization inspired him to continue composing additional songs in the same style for what would become the eventual set of songs. That first song composed was “To the Evening Star,” the third of the published edition.

In the summer of 2009, Pasatieri traveled with his friend, baritone Christopher Temporelli, to the Seagle Music Colony opera festival at Schroon Lake in upstate New York, where Pasatieri’s opera *The Hotel Casablanca* was being performed.\(^{342}\) After the performance, they returned to the composer’s home in Connecticut where Pasatieri got the idea to write a song for Temporelli. The Blake poem was chosen for that purpose, and the song “To the Evening Star” resulted.\(^{343}\) After that first song was completed, Pasatieri quickly composed five additional *bel canto* style-inspired settings of other Blake poems to be performed and published together. Each song was composed to stand alone if desired, and beyond the first and final songs written, the composer couldn’t recall the exact compositional order.\(^{344}\) The last song to be composed was “Hear the Voice,” and it was written as a stately close for the set. In the summer of 2009, after all songs had been completed, the final published order of the songs was decided.\(^{345}\)

\(^{341}\) Thomas Pasatieri, phone interview by the author, July 12, 2013.

\(^{342}\) Ibid.

\(^{343}\) Ibid.

\(^{344}\) Ibid.

\(^{345}\) Ibid.
While Pasatieri published the songs as a set, they are not a true song cycle in the strictest sense. They share many qualities of compositional style, they may have similar motives from piece to piece, and they were composed with the idea in mind that they would be a set of songs inspired by bel canto era vocal writing. However, Pasatieri stated that each song was composed to work as a separate entity. He did not intentionally plan to unify musical themes to tie the songs together, and he does not mind if a song is performed, as is commonly done, on its own, separate from the set.

**Compositional Style**

In the first chapter of this paper, several compositional qualities of Pasatieri’s general work were mentioned. These characteristics are also present in *Bel Canto Songs*. Pasatieri’s writing features soaring melodic lines, and he has said that the melody is a primary factor of his work. While not necessarily easy, his writing style is idiomatic for the voice as well as for the piano, as he understands those instruments well and has written for them extensively. He generally places rests around each phrase in the vocal line, to accommodate the singer’s breathing. Accompaniments often double the vocal line, and while his music contains lush chromaticism, the music is harmonically tonal, if non-traditionally so. He uses stacked poly-chord clusters and rolled chords in his accompaniment. Motives are used to paint the text as well as to unify each song. His writing is concise and unified, and his songs have a clear, sectionalized structure. Two of his general characteristics, word repetition and frequent meter changes to fit the text, are present in *Bel Canto Songs*, but to a lesser extent than the other general characteristics mentioned.

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346 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
As the title of the work suggests, Pasatieri intentionally composed this set of songs using the historic Italian 17\textsuperscript{th}, 18\textsuperscript{th}, and especially 19\textsuperscript{th} century vocal style as a model. The composition is a fusion of a modern harmonic approach within a tonal framework and the textural and lyric style of \textit{bel canto}. In the program notes for the premiere, Pasatieri shared,

I have always been attracted to the music of the Italian \textit{bel canto} composers. They expressed different emotions with the vocal ornamentation and poignant melodic shaping of this style. In my songs and operas, I always incorporated these principles along with the dramatic thrust of the verismo school. For some time I had been thinking of writing a group of songs which employed a pure \textit{bel canto} aspect in the vocal line but which also featured a contemporary harmonic palette in the piano part. It was interesting to me to set texts in English in this way since all the \textit{bel canto} composers wrote in Italian. Last year, reading the poetry of William Blake, the image of six songs became clear to me, his poetry perfect for this kind of vocal shading. I call the cycle \textit{Bel Canto Songs}, separated by over a hundred and fifty years from their models but sharing the same muse.\textsuperscript{348}

The Italian \textit{bel canto} style characteristics included in the work are lyric vocal lines that contain stepwise motion as well as florid passages (Figure 60), arpeggios, trills (Figure 61), and ornamentation on repeating music material (Figures 62 and 63).

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig60}
\caption{“To the Evening Star,” Measures 1-3, an example of florid, stepwise motion in the voice over sustained chords in the piano}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{348} Thomas Pasatieri, \textit{Bel Canto Songs}, Program notes, George London Foundation Recital, Morgan Library, New York, October 16, 2011.
Figure 61: “Laughing Song,” Measures 32-36, an example of florid arpeggios and trills in the vocal line

Figure 62: “The Garden of Love,” Measures 1-5, showing the opening vocal melody, which is ornamented in the next figure

Figure 63: “The Garden of Love,” Measures 18-21, showing the melody from Figure 3 in ornamented form on a repetition of that musical material - Note that the accompaniment for this section is unchanged

Texturally simple accompaniments that unobtrusively support or double the melodic line of the voice are common. To avoid heavy, dramatic singing, large leaps are often followed by step-wise
motion (Figures 64 and 65), more declamatory-style sections are often limited in range and tessitura, and a legato articulation is the most commonly required.

Figure 64: “To the Evening Star,” Measures 17-19, an example of large leaps followed by step-wise motion - The dynamic level for the entire piece is piano

Figure 65: “To the Muses,” Measures 30-32, showing a similar floating leap to a high note, followed by a descent of stepwise motion

The upper register for the soprano voice is featured by the range of the set (D₄ to C₆), but the tessitura centers on the middle register. Extremes of range are generally approached in a lyric manner. Pasatieri pointed out that the floating, sometimes subito soft dynamics on high notes in the work (Figures 64 and 65) were inspired by the use of that vocal effect by composers of the bel canto period. While the natural speech rhythm is important, melismas and soaring melodic lines are common.

The texture of the piano part is often sparse to give the voice prominence, and the piano part rarely has truly independent melodic material of its own. The songs feature a walking bass (Figure 66), arpeggiated countermelodies (Figure 67), Alberti-bass (Figure 68), and other
accompaniments reminiscent of the writing of Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, and other bel canto composers; several songs contain a moving vocal line over sustained piano chords (Figure 69).

Figure 66: “To the Muses,” Measures 6-10, showing a walking-bass pattern in the piano part

Figure 67: “The Garden of Love,” Measures 6-9, showing an example of an arpeggiated counter-melody accompaniment pattern

Figure 68: “The Lamb,” Measures 16-18, and example of Alberti-bass inspired patterns in the piano part
The piano usually doubles at least the outline of the vocal melody, and while the piano part occasionally contains primary thematic material, throughout the work, it mostly plays a subordinate role to the voice.

Pasatieri explained,

Because I'm alive and in the twenty-first century it has to be modern, because it comes through me, so it would not be the same harmonic language as the composers of the *bel canto* ...Bellini, Donizetti, or Rossini, of course. So it's going to be different harmonies and even different intervals, in some cases, in the voice. It's more [about] what the style of the *bel canto* meant. What it really means. And that has to do with florid singing, I mean certainly melismas abound. It has to do with vocal effects, as in high *pianissimi* or *subito pianissimi*. It certainly has to do with scale-like passages. Those are all characteristic of *bel canto* singing, and also melody. I mean the kind of melody that you find... For example, a melody like “The Garden of Love” is the same kind of melody as “Ah! non credea.” It's even the same key! Now I can't claim to have the melodic genius of Bellini... The melod[ies] of “Ah non credea” [and] “Qui la [voce]” are some of the greatest melodies ever written! I can't claim that, but I can say that it is the style of melody that he was able to personify and illuminate in those magnificent lines of his. I consider him the greatest melodist of the three...of the *bel canto* composers. I consider Donizetti the most dramatic of the *bel canto* composers. And Rossini, the most florid, particularly in lighter fare... Some of the things that he did were incredible. Even the same as “Largo al factotum” [sings “Figaro, Figaro, Figaro” patter line]...all that stuff is fantastic...and the ensembles...what he was able to do...just great. So there's some of that, some of all three of them...in other words, if I were to say which composer was a model for “Garden of Love,” I would say Bellini. “Hear the Voice,” I would say Donizetti. “Laughing Song,” I would say Rossini. Model for...not imitation of, but model for.  

\[\text{349 Pasatieri interview with the author.}\]
As Pasatieri stated, even though he was writing in an older style, his compositions would always be modern because he is a contemporary composer and as such writes with an expanded harmonic palette. Pasatieri’s overall style is tonal, lush, and melodic, and this set is typical. The songs are each clearly based on a tonal or modal center; although there is a significant amount of chromaticism, cluster chords, and other dissonances. Many of the historical style characteristics in this set are common to much of Pasatieri’s vocal music. In comparison to his other vocal writing, the composer said that the most significant difference might be that this set is more florid.\textsuperscript{350}

Musical markings and other score instructions are only sparsely provided in \textit{Bel Canto Songs}, and Pasatieri confirmed that he prefers performers to take liberty and have the freedom to express the music and poetry within his music as they see fit. He does not provide specific tempo markings for this reason. He also noted that “each pianist should decide for themselves how they want to pedal” the songs. Pasatieri gives the following performance advice for performers of this work:

\ldots I would want them to keep in mind right from the very first note that what they want to project is beauty. I would want them, even the most dramatic of the songs, to avoid any harshness. \ldots [When I give] a masterclass and someone sing[s] Mozart, [I talk] to them about a string of pearls. Every one round and beautiful and perfectly matched. And it's that way with the \textit{Bel Canto Songs}. Every note should be as beautiful as you can make it. And you should project that. And you should try to create beauty.\textsuperscript{351}

What initially drew me to Thomas Pasatieri’s \textit{Bel Canto Songs} was the fact that these pieces were intended as a fusion of modern harmonic language with \textit{bel canto} textures, idiomatic for the voice. I knew that I wanted my final doctoral project to focus on a work that I believed

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
would be not only intellectually and musically interesting, but also vocally accessible and therefore more useful to me as a teacher of university voice students. My interest in Pasatieri as a composer is strengthened by his ability to write beautiful, melodically driven vocal music that is emotionally effective for both audiences and performers, his thoughtful treatment of the poetry, and his technical approach to writing for the voice in a way that is both challenging and ideal for the instrument. Beyond my study of *Bel Canto Songs* for this project, I will continue exploring, performing, and teaching other works by this important American composer.

Many years ago, I had the privilege to see a special exhibit of poet and engraver William Blake’s original prints and other artwork at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. His muscular human figures recalled the work of Renaissance masters, and his seemingly esoteric religious mythology made his images and written word both impressive and difficult to grasp. I knew only a few of his more famous poems when I began this project, so delving into the complex work and life of this titan of the English written word was a major undertaking. The poetry in *Bel Canto Songs*, and of Blake in general, is deep in meaning even while it is often deceptively simple in language. Understanding Blake can pose a challenge for any performer or scholar, so I knew it was important to provide some historical and thematic context for the poetry in these six songs.

It is my hope that *Bel Canto Songs* will be widely performed and that this document may provide some insight into the interpretation and programming choices for this work. While certainly a very advanced, professional singer would better serve both the music and the poetry, it is my opinion that these songs can be used to teach bel canto vocal style to younger singers, especially at the undergraduate university level, who demonstrate the foundations of the technical ability to sing the demands of this work. These songs provide an opportunity for
collaborative performers to express Blake’s intellectual poetry within a challenging musical medium that is emotionally relatable to both audience and musicians. Much like Blake’s use of simple language to convey complex, often obscure ideas, Pasatieri’s writing in *Bel Canto Songs* holds a depth of interpretive and expressive possibilities beyond what might be expected from a simple glance at the music. As is often said of great art, there is more than meets the eye in this musical work and in these poems.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


[Note that the text given below is as it appears in Pasatieri’s setting, differing from the original Blake poetry in punctuation and spelling. Generally, Pasatieri’s setting modernizes these elements. More significant differences, such as publishing mistakes that add additional text or change the wording exist between these two versions. For comparison and study, the original Blake poetry format can be found in Chapter 3 of this document.]

1. The Garden of Love

I laid me down upon a bank,
Where Love lay sleeping;
I heard among the rushes dank
Weeping, weeping.

Then I went to the heath and the wild,
To the thistles and thorns of the waste;
And they told me how they were beguiled,
Driven out, and compelled to the chaste.

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen;
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut
And “Thou shalt not” writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love,
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

2. Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;
[W]hen the meadows laugh with the lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing, “Ha, ha, he!”

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread:
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of “Ha, ha, he!”

3. To [t]he Evening Star

Thou fair-hair’d angel of the ev’ning
Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
Thy bright torch of love; thy radiant crown
Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
Smile on our loves, and while thou drawest the
Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
On ev’ry flower that shuts its sweet eyes
In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon,
Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
And then the lion glares through the dun forest:
The fleeces of our flocks are cover’d with
Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence!

4. To [t]he Muses

Whether on Ida’s shady brow
Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the Sun, that now
From ancient melody have ceased;

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,
Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air
Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
Beneath the bosom of the sea,
Wandering in many a coral grove,
Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry;
How have you left the ancient love
That bards of old enjoy’d in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move,
The sound is forced, the notes are few.

5. The Lamb

Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
Gave the life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o’er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing woolly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee?
Little lamb, I’ll tell thee;
Little lamb, I’ll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For he calls Himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are called by His name.
Little lamb, God bless thee!
Little lamb, God bless thee!

6. Hear the Voice

Hear the voice of the Bard,
Who present, past, and future, sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word
That walk’d among the ancient trees;

Calling the lapsed soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,
And fallen, fallen light renew!
‘O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass!
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

‘Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,
The watery shore,
Is given thee till the break of day.’
APPENDIX B: BLAKE’S ILLUMINATION OF POEMS AND RELATED MATERIAL

Figure 70: “The Garden of Love” from Blake’s *Songs of Experience*\textsuperscript{352}

Figure 71: “Laughing Song” from Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*\textsuperscript{353}

\textsuperscript{352} Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress. Copyright © 2016 William Blake Archive. Used with permission. This project is supported in part by a William Blake Archive Reproduction Grant for Graduate Students.

\textsuperscript{353} Ibid.
Figure 72: “The Lamb” from Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*\(^{354}\)

Figure 73: “Introduction” (“Hear the Voice”) from Blake’s *Songs of Experience*\(^{355}\)

\(^{354}\) Ibid.

\(^{355}\) Ibid.
Figure 74: “The Tyger” (opposing pair with “The Lamb”) from Blake’s Songs of Experience\textsuperscript{356}

Figure 75: “EARTH’S Answer” (follows and pairs with “Hear the Voice”) from Blake’s Songs of Experience\textsuperscript{357}

\textsuperscript{356} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{357} Ibid.
Figure 76: “The Voice of the Ancient Bard” (shows the Bard and serves as bookend to “Hear the Voice”) from Blake’s Songs of Experience\textsuperscript{358}

Figure 77: Title page of combined publication of Blake’s Songs of Innocence and of Experience\textsuperscript{359}

\textsuperscript{358} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{359} Ibid.
Figure 78: Front-piece to Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*\(^{360}\)

Figure 79: Title page of Blake’s *Songs of Innocence*\(^{361}\)

\(^{360}\) Ibid.

\(^{361}\) Ibid.

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Figure 80: Front-piece to Blake’s *Songs of Experience*362

Figure 81: Title page of Blake’s *Songs of Experience*363

362 Ibid.
363 Ibid.
Figure 82: Page from Blake’s Notebook that shows handwritten poems “I Laid Me Down” and “The Garden of Love,” separated by a line.

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Phone interview with the author, July 12, 2013:

Amy Porter: When did you compose the songs?

Thomas Pasatieri: I think it was 2009.

Amy Porter: Okay, and did you initially envision them as a set that you were composing, or were they individual pieces?

Thomas Pasatieri: Well no, they were individual pieces, but they're very often performed as a set. They were not written in the order that they are published. The first one written was “To the Evening Star,” and I don't know whether that's the third or the fourth in the book. Then I went on to other ones. I guess I arranged them in an order between slow and fast and dramatic so that they could be performed as a cycle...as a set, really.

Amy Porter: So for you it's probably no problem for a student performance, for instance, for a student to pick one or two or to perform them out of order?

Thomas Pasatieri: That happens all the time.

Amy Porter: I noticed that your dedications are mostly to singers. How did that come about? Were these these young professionals that you worked with?

Thomas Pasatieri: Now I'm trying to think in that book...Danny...Daniel Coolidge, the last one...and yes, Danny sang in the world premiere of my opera *Frau Margot*. Is Andrew Garland in there?

Amy Porter: Yes, he's for “Garden of Love.”

Thomas Pasatieri: “Garden of Love” okay. So Andrew gave a recital...was it of all my songs or a big group or something?... I was in the audience. It was part of the festival where they were doing *Frau Margot*, and I guess it was the Marilyn Horne Foundation that had sponsored this recital. It was maybe a day or two before the opera premiere in Fort Worth. And Andrew sang, I don't know, maybe six or eight songs or something like that and I believe that Donna Loewy played as his pianist.

Amy Porter: Ah right, I saw that she's the only pianist. So she played in that recital.

Thomas Pasatieri: Okay Christopher Temporelli is a bass baritone and a friend of mine, and let's see I don't remember who the other singers are.

Amy Porter: And Martha...
Thomas Pasatieri: Oh, Martha Guth, sure! Martha Guth is a singer, and she sang a lot of my music, and as a matter of fact she premiered *The Daughter of Capulet* [one of Pasatieri’s concert monodramas].

Amy Porter: When I saw that she was a soprano I thought, “that makes sense because you gave her the most florid, kind of fun things…”

Thomas Pasatieri: Was she the “Laughing Song?”

Amy Porter: Yes, the “Laughing Song.” Did you mention Morgan Smith?

Thomas Pasatieri: Oh Morgan, yeah... Morgan is a baritone, and he was also in *Frau Margot*. He was the leading baritone part.

Amy Porter: Seeing as you have a diverse array of musicians that you have dedicated the works to.... Do you envision them all being sung by a particular voice type? Obviously they have a certain range...

Thomas Pasatieri: Although, they're performed also not in the original key. I heard a concert in Chicago, and it was a mezzo singing “The Garden of Love,” and she sang it, I think, down a step. She might've sung it in G minor. I remember that, but I remember that there were many singers on that program who were singing different songs in different keys, you know, lower keys. So they do them like that whenever, whatever is comfortable for a particular singer - [that] is what I like.

Amy Porter: How did the idea for the songs or the set come about?

Thomas Pasatieri: Well I have long wanted to, for many, many years wanted to write *bel canto* songs. I think I may have the year wrong, but I'm thinking it was the summer of 2009, and Christopher Temporelli came with me up to the Schroon Lake Festival. They were doing *Hotel Casablanca* there, so we went to the performance of *Hotel Casablanca*. When we got back to my home (I was in Connecticut at that time), and Christopher was singing, and I thought that I would write a song for him. Then he left, and I decided that I would write a song. That poem [Blake’s “To the Evening Star”] seemed to be right, so I wrote it. And as I was writing it, I realized that it was a *bel canto* song. And I thought, “well oh! Well this is good! Now I'll do what I've always wanted to do and write more *bel canto* songs.” There are six of them. So I would say in the summer of 2009, they were all written.

Amy Porter: The poet William Blake is an interesting choice. Was that your first time setting William Blake?

Thomas Pasatieri: Hmmmm... I'm not sure, because you know I've been writing songs for let’s say fifty-five years, and there are hundreds of them...so I can't remember if
I ever did before. It's likely that I did and just don't remember. I can only actually remember maybe a hundred of those.

Amy Porter: You said that you started with “To the Evening Star.” What drew you to that poem?

Thomas Pasatieri: I guess it was the quiet opportunity in the poem that allows for a kind of musicality or musical-ization that would pinpoint specific lyricism, particularly melismas.

Amy Porter: I noticed in my initial looking over of the pieces that it seems almost chant-like...

Thomas Pasatieri: Chant-like, yes.

Amy Porter: ...almost like you're creating this ancient Greek troubadour or something, reciting and kind of improvising. And it seems like some of that is carried over into the next piece, too. “To the Muses.” Was that a choice that you made?

Thomas Pasatieri: No, because they were written separately. I don't know in which order they were written. I do know that the first one was definitely “To the Evening Star” and the last one was definitely “Hear the Voice” because I know I was looking for something to close them...for a poem that would be more majestic and be a good close for the pieces. So I know that was written last, but as far as the others [are concerned], I don't know in which order the other four [were written].

Amy Porter: How did you find these poems? It's interesting - The poems themselves, obviously they're all the same poet, but they're from slightly different collections. I was just wondering if you have one...

Thomas Pasatieri: I must have a volume of collected poems. I have so many in my library...there's so many poets. I have even a collected volume of Shakespeare [laughing]...this enormous volume of everything that he wrote. Everything is here that I need to find a poem. ...There must be some collected volume of Blake that I used.

Amy Porter: Generally how do you go about finding poetry to set?

Thomas Pasatieri: It's tough to give you a definitive answer because... I mean, the glib answer that I've always said before is that the poem finds me, I don't find the poem. And in a sense that's true, which means if I'm getting ready to write something...like right now, that's exactly what I'm doing, and I will go to my library and look at titles of books, and then something will hit me - saying, “well look at this book...” So I'll take it out, and I'll start to read it, and it will be a book of poems. So that happens a lot. Sometimes there are specific things, like with the Oscar Wilde songs [Three Poems of
Oscar Wilde. Those were specifically commissioned... No, they didn't ask for Oscar Wilde; they were commissioned for Thomas Hampton. [The] George London Foundation commissioned them as a vehicle for Thomas Hampson. And I remember...Oh I know what it was, thinking about him [Thomas Hampson]! He and I had already done a recording together in...I forget what year [1991], but anyway...of Christmas carols, a Christmas album [Christmas with Thomas Hampson, on which he sang Pasatieri’s “Alleluia”]. And so I remember looking at him at that time, which was...I'm going to say the ‘80s, and thinking he looked like Oscar Wilde. And then when they offered me the commission (I was still in California at the time, and then I'd come to New York)... I thought about him, and it reminded me that he looked like Oscar Wilde. And then I went and looked for some poems of Oscar Wilde. That's how that happened.

Amy Porter: Well you mentioned the George London Foundation. I noticed that the premiere for the Bel Canto Songs was a George London Foundation recital. Can you tell me about how that came about?

Thomas Pasatieri: Yes, I certainly can. There is a story behind that. So what happened was Nora London, who runs the foundation, is a friend of mine, and they had done music of mine throughout the years. [The] first time I think was Sheri Greenawald singing a bunch of my songs on a program. They've done lots of things over the years, and so of course I know Nora. In fact, I knew Nora years ago when George London was very ill. We needed to raise money for his expenses, and so Mathew Epstein produced a concert at the Kennedy Center with, you know, big [stars of the classical music world]...with Joan Sutherland and Marilyn Horne and [Mistislav] Rostopovich playing piano. And I too played [piano] on that concert. I played for Catherine Malfitano - We were doing Gershwin. And they also filmed that on television, so they sold the whole thing and made a lot of money. I knew Nora and George anyway because when George was the head of the Washington Opera, he produced The Seagull. And so I knew them even at that time.

Anyway, after I'd finished the Bel Canto Songs, I thought, “well where do I want to premiere them?” So I thought...“hmm...well I'd like to premiere them in New York.” So I called Nora and said, “Would you like to premiere them on your series?”...and she said “yes!” And so the very first time they were scheduled.... (You see the way those concerts are is, there are two singers for each concert. One is an established artist, and the other one is a young, starting-out person that's usually won their London competition.) So she told me that Ailyn Pérez was scheduled, probably at that time (this was a few years ago) she was probably the young singer rather than the established artist, which she is now. But anyway, so it was Ailyn. So I checked her out on YouTube, and I said, “well, that's fine.” So she sent the music to Ailyn, who was in Europe, and Ailyn said “good;” she wanted to do them. So it was all set for the December [2009] concert,
and then what happened was Ailyn cancelled because she was offered a series of Paminas at either Munich or Berlin, and she decided she wanted to do those, so she cancelled. Nora was, you know, upset (this was at the last minute), but they had to substitute another singer...so of course, there was no Bel Canto Songs [on that substitute performance].

So for the next year, [Nora] said, “We would like to do them, and we would like to have Julianna Di Giacomo sing them.” I also love her voice, so I said “okay.” Then Julianna learned them. She was ready to premiere them [in December 2010], and she got sick! So she didn't sing the concert. Then a few months later, maybe six months later, Ailyn was coming back to do a concert for the London Foundation, this time with her [then] husband Steven Costello. They were going to be the two singers, so it was no more star and rising singer. They were both established by this time. And she did [the premiere]. So it was back to Ailyn doing them. She [premiered] them then [in October 2011].

Amy Porter: That's really funny. Well I'm glad that they were finally premiered.

Thomas Pasatieri: Yes! In fact, they were even published before the premiere because the plans [fell through]...They were scheduled to be premiered maybe a year or two before they actually were, and so we went ahead with the publication. So they were published before the premiere. I’m sure people sang them, but not, I think, as a group until the [official] premiere.

Amy Porter: Well, also it's a matter of the official [event] that you would know about, too. As part of your composition process, I read, in previous interviews that you've done, that you compose by hand. Do you compose at the piano?

Thomas Pasatieri: [dogs barking] (...Someone is ringing the bell, and all the dogs are barking...This will go on for a while!) Yes, I do.

Amy Porter: I know you're a pianist, do you have a singer guinea pig that you use to sing through your pieces for you as you're in the process?

Thomas Pasatieri: No. I sing them myself. I sing everything that I write, I sing myself. I have to feel it in the physical body.

Amy Porter: We talked about the premiere. Were you able to attend the premiere?

Thomas Pasatieri: Yes, I was there.

Amy Porter: Ok. Did you enjoy it? ...I've been in touch with them. I don't know what materials they can give me.
Thomas Pasatieri: Oh yes! Well, they recorded it. People do have the recording...I haven't heard it yet. But people keep saying they are going to send me a CD of it, but nobody ever did.

Amy Porter: But [did] the Foundation itself record it for archival purposes?

Thomas Pasatieri: It must have been because they record everything. And I know that they did send me a recording of Thomas Hampson doing the Oscar Wilde songs, that premiere. So I'm sure they record everything. Have you asked them and they...

Amy Porter: I left a message for them, but they may be out of the office. I've worked for a non-profit before, so I know how that goes.

Thomas Pasatieri: Well the gal, who's named Maria who's the assistant to Nora...and she does all that stuff. At least she was... When were they premiered? Was it last year or the year before?

Amy Porter: I believe it was 2011, so it was the year before.

Thomas Pasatieri: OK, so Maria had been there for years, and she was still there in 2011, but of course, here we are almost two years later so I don't know if she's still there.

Amy Porter: You've said that you envisioned the Bel Canto Songs as a blending of musical styles....a merging of modern approach with the bel canto vocal techniques. Can you talk about that?

Thomas Pasatieri: Yes. Because I'm alive and in the twenty-first century it has to be modern, because it comes through me, so it would not be the same harmonic language as the composers of the bel canto....Bellini, Donizetti, or Rossini, of course. So it's going to be different harmonies and even different intervals, in some cases, in the voice. It's more [about] what the style of the bel canto meant. What it really means. And that has to do with florid singing, I mean certainly melismas abound. It has to do with vocal effects, as in high pianissimi or subito pianissimi. It certainly has to do with scale-like passages. Those are all characteristic of bel canto singing, and also melody. I mean the kind of melody that you find...For example, a melody like “The Garden of Love” is the same kind of melody as “Ah! non credea.” It's even the same key! Now I can't claim to have the melodic genius of Bellini... The melod[ies] of “Ah non credea” [and] “Qui la [voce]” are some of the greatest melodies ever written! I can't claim that, but I can say that it is the style of melody that he was able to personify and illuminate in those magnificent lines of his. I consider him the greatest melodist of the three...of the [major 19th century] bel canto composers. I consider Donizetti the most dramatic of the bel canto composers. And Rossini, the most florid, particularly in lighter fare.
Amy Porter: Like comedic?

Thomas Pasatieri: Yeah, some of the things that he did were incredible. Even the same as “Largo al factotum” [sings “Figaro, Figaro, Figaro” patter line]...all that stuff is fantastic...and the ensembles...what he was able to do...just great. So there's some of that, some of all three of them...in other words, if I were to say which composer was a model for “Garden of Love,” I would say Bellini. “Hear the Voice,” I would say Donizetti. “Laughing Song,” I would say Rossini. Model for...not imitation of, but model for.

Amy Porter: I think you've answered one of my other questions...Let's see. You’ve talked about the style for the vocal line. What about the piano part?

Thomas Pasatieri: Well, I wouldn't say that the piano part is (except in some cases) indicative of the bel canto period. Certainly not harmonically, because they didn't have the means that we now have....polytonality and all kinds of things. For example, “Hear the Voice” is based on fourths and fifths, which of course, they wouldn't do in that period. It would be thirds and sixths...and octaves. But if you look at, let's say “Garden of Love,” you can see the influence of the type of [sings arpeggiated Bellini-like accompaniment] in the piano....al arpeggione.

Amy Porter: ...Similar to Bellini. I noticed (these are also reflections throughout all of Western music history)...elements of word-painting and a little bit of maybe rhetorical expression like you find in Italian music, especially. Were those things that you intentionally tried to incorporate, that you wanted to bring in?

Thomas Pasatieri: Well if I did, it was sub-conscious. It was not conscious. I mean consciously....unless I'm doing a quote from something for comedic effect, which I’ve certainly done in the operas. But aside from that, then I'm not really thinking about any other music when I'm writing. It's focused in on itself. I think it's inevitable that there has to be influences from everything that a composer has heard, of course. But those influences would be sub-conscious influences.

Amy Porter: You're generally considered a melodist and singers love to sing your music. How do you see this set as being... Is it very different from your other writing?

Thomas Pasatieri: It's more florid (I would say on some level more florid) because that's the idea of the bel canto. But I've had florid music my whole career. Even in the twelve songs called The Rustling of Angels, and the idea of those were to write so it would be easier for a young singer to learn, so they don't feature big intervals or very difficult poetry or florid, etc....except one of them, which is called “At the Moated Grange.” And in that (It's a Shakespeare poem) I put ossia with lots of florid notes. And interestingly
enough (I've heard that sung many times too) everybody takes the florid [option]....everybody takes the ossia.

Amy Porter: Well singers love to show off. [laughs]

Thomas Pasatieri: They do...yeah.

Amy Porter: At least in the Bel Canto Songs, you do have some markings, but compared to maybe some other composers, it seems [that] you're kind of letting the singer use their own artistry. You're not Puccini-esque in that every measure is marked somehow.

Thomas Pasatieri: Well, yeah. That goes also for the instrumental music. ...Like all of my music. I specifically don't put in metronome marks, because I want everyone to interpret the music individually. There's no right or wrong with that. They have to feel it for themselves and make it their own. Rather than anything prescribed. And also, it can work in many different ways, for example...The song “Vocal Modesty.” We don't know how many thousands of times that's been sung, but certainly I can tell you about some of the great singers that performed it. In fact, years ago I was in New York buying music at Patelson’s, which is no longer there...but they were the big music store, and the cashier...(I was checking out) was a singer. She saw my credit card and my name, and so she said, “I would like to ask you at what tempo I should sing ‘Vocal Modesty.’” I said, “well, Janet Baker sings it very slowly. She savors everything. Elizabeth Söderström sings it very fast. And they’re both great in it, so sing it at any tempo that you like!”

Amy Porter: I think it's great...I'm a singer as well, and it's nice to have that level of trust from the composer, that we have that freedom. And speaking of freedom, considering that these are bel canto songs, do you care how much liberty performers should take?

Thomas Pasatieri: They should take liberty. Absolutely.

Amy Porter: And you don't have any pedal markings for the piano.

Thomas Pasatieri: No. Same thing. Each pianist should decide for themselves how they want to pedal it.

Amy Porter: What advice...general advice...would you give for, let's say, a singer who was going to perform this as a set. What would you like to say to them as far as their approach musically is concerned? Any performance notes or anything that you would want a singer to think about?

Thomas Pasatieri: Well I would want them to keep in mind right from the very first note that what they want to project is beauty. I would want them, even the most dramatic of the songs, to avoid any harshness. I would want them to....It's
always when I'm...if I'm giving a masterclass and someone's singing Mozart, I've talked to them about a string of pearls. Every one round and beautiful and perfectly matched. And it's that way with the *Bel Canto Songs*. Every note should be as beautiful as you can make it. And you should project that. And you should try to create beauty.

Amy Porter: We could talk about each individual song. Just briefly, if there's anything you want to say about any of the songs. Why don't we start with “Garden of Love.”

Thomas Pasatieri: OK I can tell you that recently I was giving a masterclass in Chicago, and one of the singers was singing “Garden of Love,” and she did not realize what the last lines meant. In fact, I think nobody in the audience seemed to until I went over it with them. The pejorative word when [Blake] talks about "priests in their gowns," that's a put down because priests don't wear gowns, they wear robes! And calling them “gowns”...women wear gowns...so it's a sarcastic remark. And that whole thing about “destroying my joy”...so I was explaining that and she was just amazed. Now she had sung it many times in practicing, and she’d certainly read the poem many, many times, but she didn't get it. Now if you analyze the piano part at that point, and you see that there are thornier harmonic and even melodic textures reflecting what the poem is saying. In fact, that one downward passage of thirds, I can't tell you how many times I rewrote and changed it from G - B natural to G - B flat, now back to G - B natural. I kept going back and forth to get the exact amount of sarcasm. So there's all kinds of things like that throughout the whole cycle. Now if you tell me the title of each one, I'll tell you what my thought is. It starts with “Garden of Love.” What's the next one?

Amy Porter: “Laughing Song” is the next.

Thomas Pasatieri: “Laughing Song” is second in the book?

Amy Porter: It's second, at least in this edition.

Thomas Pasatieri: I thought it was third. How'd you like that! “Laughing Song”... Well “Laughing Song” is pretty straight forward. It's just a show-off for the voice. Coloratura show-off. There's nothing of great profundity in the piano part or the vocal line. It's just exactly a painting of that kind of joyousness. What's third?

Amy Porter: Third is “To the Evening Star.”

Thomas Pasatieri: OK. I believe that it never rises above piano. Is that true?

Amy Porter: It says *sempre piano* at the beginning. I believe that is true, yes. That's actually the only dynamic marking.
Thomas Pasatieri: Right. That's unusual, but it's intentional. To keep that amount of time in a soft place requires an extraordinary amount of concentration and color, and technique too, obviously, and requires the audience to be...you have to mesmerize the audience with that song.

Amy Porter: That's great.

Thomas Pasatieri: Are there five Bel Canto Songs or six?

Amy Porter: There are six.

Thomas Pasatieri: Six. OK, so that's the third. The forth is what?

Amy Porter: “To the Muses.”

Thomas Pasatieri: OK, tell me how that goes.

Amy Porter: "Whether on Ida's shadowy brow...or in the chambers of the east..."

Thomas Pasatieri: Oh yeah, I remember that. That's really straight-forward too.

Amy Porter: It reminds me a little bit of your opening melodic stuff for the voice. It is fortissimo, it's almost like the antithesis, but it seems out of the same realm as “To the Evening Star.”

Thomas Pasatieri: Yeah, there are definitely similarities, except it's the forte version.

Amy Porter: Right, it's the forte version.

Thomas Pasatieri: That's a balance for “To the Evening Star.”

Amy Porter: I love the poetry of “The Lamb.”

Thomas Pasatieri: Oh well, yeah. I mean, that's such a great poem. One of the features of that is the change of color on a repeated note, which actually came into its highest form with Verdi...a little bit later. I mean because Verdi really was at the tail-end of the bel canto period. And through into Rigoletto, it's a bel canto opera certainly, but as Verdi went on certainly [in] La Traviata and Aida and Otello, the use of shifting colors on a repeated note came into prominence. And one of the greatest examples is, of course, in the last act of Aida when Radames sings on that repeated B until he says her name, and then it's just raised half-a-step. [Singing the passage]...."Aida." That's fantastic. It sends shivers down your spine when you listen to it. So “The Lamb” features that, particularly at the end.

Amy Porter: ...at the end. When the poet is answering the question..."he is called by thy name," that's where you have...or that's where the repeated [note] section begins it seems. And the last piece is “Hear the Voice.”
Thomas Pasatieri: Right.

Amy Porter: And you said you did compose that one last.

Thomas Pasatieri: That's right. And it's really recitatives and cantabile. Again, from the bel canto period. All of [that] big stuff in the beginning is quasi-recitative. Declamato, I would say. And then the big melody. And of course, the big high note at the end. All of those things are characteristic of the bel canto period.

Amy Porter: Is there anything that we've left out about the Bel Canto Songs that you'd like to say? I'm sure I'll have follow-up questions...

Thomas Pasatieri: I'll tell you what they've spurred me on to do, and I may do it. I haven't had a chance yet. I'm thinking of devoting the next few years of masterclasses purely to bel canto singing, particularly with young singers, because I would like to work with them on preserving the tradition of bel canto singing. So I could use...of course, there are no songs, but....well, no there are...there are Donizetti songs, concerti di camera, and there's also Bellini songs...I could use those too, but I would also use the arias from the operas and my own Bel Canto Songs. And I would really like to sort of immerse the vocal world in bel canto singing because it's so healthy and so beautiful for the voice. So the Bel Canto Songs have kind of given me that idea to go on. The masterclasses that I give now are always mixed-bags. You know, they sing a lot of my music, but they also sing other American and British...I mean in English...arias and songs. There's a lot of standard stuff, too. You know, French and Italian operas, even German operas, although much less so. My specialty is much more in Italian and French, but there's some German. But mostly, I would say they do Italian, and it's mostly arias. Some songs, but I would say if a masterclass had six singers, four of them would be doing arias.

Amy Porter: Right sure, because they want to show off.

Thomas Pasatieri: Yeah, and you know I can understand that. But I'll tell you a story of three sopranos. It was the premiere of Hotel Casablanca in San Francisco. And in the audience were Sheri Greenawald, Catherine Malfitano, and Lauren Flanigan. So one the reviewers interviewed them all at the...I guess it had to be the intermission. So he went up to them, and he asked the same question. And the question was "Why do singers like to sing Pasatieri so much?" And Catherine said, "because the music is so emotional, and because we singers are emotional people, and we want to express those emotions." Sheri said, "well...you always get a lot of applause when you sing." [laughing] But then Lauren said, "because when you sing Pasatieri, you are fully a singer. It's written specifically for singing, for singers. So when you sing this music, you feel completely like a singer. The identity
of being the singer." And I thought, well all three of those were interesting responses. All three of them, I think, are correct.

I mean, I think that singers certainly are emotional, and you know, do love applause, particularly a lot of applause, and also I think that they feel like singers, which is very different from anything else. It's different from being a violinist or a pianist or anything else. Singers will even refer to their voice as "the voice," as a separate entity. And there's a reason for that. Because being a singer and housing a voice is unique. Unique situation. It's also completely different from any other artistic expression because you are your instrument. If you have a pianist and the piano gets knocked over, breaks...that's not the person. Same thing with all other instrumentalists. But with a singer, if you get a cold or if you get sick, it harms your instrument. You are your instrument. That's a unique situation in the world.

Amy Porter: Well I definitely understand that... Thank you so much for talking with me today!

Thomas Pasatieri: Sure!
APPENDIX D: VOCAL WORKS BY THE COMPOSER

This list of vocal works is a compilation, reorganization, and update of previously published scholarship on Thomas Pasatieri’s compositions. Sources for this list include emails from the composer, his current publisher Theodore Presser, and material found and cross-referenced in several dissertations, including those of Jayne Claire Middleton (1983), Beth Bauer (1996), Edmound Lee Fitzpatrick, Jr. (1998), Sarah Elizabeth Snydacker (2011), and Joy L. Burdette (2013). These works are cited in full in the bibliography.

Operas

- *The Trysting Place* - 1964
  - Opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on a play by Booth Tarkington, unpublished

- *Flowers of Ice* - 1964
  - Opera in one act, libretto by Ronald Rogers, unpublished

- *The Women* - 1965
  - Opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on an original story

- *La Divina* - 1965
  - Opera buffa in one act, libretto by the composer
  - premiered March 16, 1966 at The Julliard School in New York City, published by Theodore Presser in 1967

- *Padrevia* - 1966
  - Opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on a story from the Decameron of Giovanni Boccaccio
  - premiered November 18, 1967 at Brooklyn College in New York, published by Theodore Presser in 1967

- *Calvary* - 1967
  - Chamber opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on the play by William Butler Yeats
  - premiered April 7, 1971 at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Seattle, published by Belwin-Mills - 1971
- **The Penitentes** - 1967
  - Opera in three acts, libretto by Anne H. Bailey

- **Black Widow** - 1969
  - Opera in three acts with epilogue, libretto by the composer after M. De Unamuno’s Dos Madres

- **The Trial of Mary Lincoln** - 1970
  - Television opera in one act, libretto by Anne H. Bailey

- **The Seagull** - 1972, rev. 2002
  - Opera in three acts, libretto by Kenward Elmsie, after Anton Chekhov
  - premiered March 5, 1974 in Houston, published by Belwin-Mills in 1974

- **Signor Deluso** - 1973
  - Opera buffa in one act, libretto by the composer after Molière’s Sganarelle

- **Ines de Castro** - 1975
  - Opera in three acts, libretto by Bernard Stambler
  - premiered April 1, 1976 in Baltimore, published by Belwin-Mills in 1976

- **Washington Square** - 1975
  - Opera in three acts, libretto by Kenward Elmsie, after Henry James
  - premiered October 1, 1976 in Detroit, published by Belwin-Mills in 1977

- **Three Sisters** - 1979
  - Opera in two acts, libretto by Kenward Elmsie, after Anton Chekhov
  - premiered March 13, 1986 in Columbus, OH, published by Theodore Presser in 1979

- **Before Breakfast** - 1980
  - Monodrama for soprano, libretto by Frank Corsaro, after Eugene O’Neill
  - premiered February 15, 1981 in Fort Worth, published by G. Shirmer in 1982

- **The Goose Girl** - 1980
  - Children’s opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on a story by J.L. Grimm and W.C. Grimm
  - premiered February 15, 1981 in Fort Worth, published by G. Schirmer in 1982
• **Maria Elena** - 1982
  o Opera in one act, libretto by the composer, based on a true story
  o premiered April 8, 1983 in Tucson (English and Spanish), published by Theodore Presser in 1982

• **Frau Margot** - 2005
  o Opera in three acts, libretto by Frank Corsaro, based on his original play *Lyric Suite*
  o premiered June 2, 2007 in Fort Worth, published by Theodore Presser

• **The Hotel Casablanca** - 2007
  o Opera in two acts, libretto by the composer, based on George Feydeau’s play, *A Flea in Her Ear*
  o premiered August 3, 2007 in San Francisco, published by Theodore Presser

• **The Heir Apparent** - 2008
  o Libretto by Frank Corsaro
  o premiered 2008 at Seagle Music Colony Workshop and Fort Worth Opera, unpublished

• **The Family Room** - 2009
  o Opera in one act, libretto by Daphne Malfitano

• **God Bless Us Everyone** - 2010
  o Christmas opera, libretto by Bill van Horn and Michael Capasso
  o premiered December 2010 by DiCapo Opera Theatre in New York

• **The Martyrs** - 2012
  o two paired monodramas (Marianne and Percy), libretto by Daphne Malfitano
  o premiered in 2012 by DiCapo Opera Theatre in New York, published by Theodore Presser

• **The Vaudevillian** - 2015
  o Opera in two acts, libretto by the composer

**Art Songs**

• 1956-1967, 103 songs, none published, including:
  o Oh, Captain (Walt Whitman)
  o Five Songs of Edward DePasquale
  o Du Matin, seven songs in French (Prévert)
  o 16 Elizabethan Songs
  o Four Songs for Mezzo and String Quartet
  o Four Bible Songs
- Fragments from Sappho, three songs
- Midsummer Nights, nine songs for soprano and instruments (Sara Teasdale)
- The Race of Man, six songs (Edna Millay)
- Seven Songs of Cavafy
- Sehnsucht, five German songs
- Four Tennyson Songs
- Seven Songs from When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d (Walt Whitman)
- 25 individual songs to various poets

- Un sogno, in Italian, unpublished

- Selected Songs - 1971
  - *Three American Songs* (Louis Phillips)
    - Boundaries
    - Haiku, commissioned by Elelyn Mandac
    - Critic’s Privilege
  - *Two Shakespeare Songs*
    - Parting
    - That Time of Year, commissioned by Jennie Tourel
  - *Three Coloratura Songs*
    - Miranda-Miranda (Louis Phillips)
    - Lear and His Daughters (Louis Phillips)
    - Love’s Emblem, commissioned by Sheri Greenawald (John Fletcher)

  - How Many Little Children Sleep
  - A Lullaby
  - Sonnet

- Songs, Volume 1 - 1977
  - These Are the Days (Emily Dickinson)
  - Reflection (Emily Dickinson)
  - Instead of Words (Gerald Walker)
  - Vocal Modesty (Gerald Walker)
  - Winter’s Child (Martin Dulman)
  - The Kiss (Martin Dulman)
  - Lullaby for a Lost Child (Josephine Schillig)
  - Agnes, commissioned by Marc Howard (Paul Enos, age 9)
  - Dirge for Two Veterans (Walt Whitman)
  - Discovery (Anne Howard Bailey)
  - The Harp that Once through Tara’s Halls (Thomas Moore)
  - Ophelia’s Lament, commissioned by Joan Patenaude (William Shakespeare)

- Songs, Volume 2 - 1980
  - Beautiful the Days (Kirstin van Cleave)
  - To Music Bent Is My Retired Mind (Thomas Campion)
- There Came a Day (Emily Dickinson)
- As in a Theatre (William Shakespeare)
- The Verandahs (Kenward Elmslie)
- Overweight, Overwrought, Over You (Sheila Nadler)
- *Three Poems by Kirsten van Cleave*, commissioned by Sheila Nadler
  - A Night of Love
  - You Know
  - Give Me Then Your Hand
- *Three Married Songs*, for voice and cello, commissioned by Elaine Bonazzi
  - Break of Day (John Donne)
  - The First Fight; Out of Sight, Out of Mind (Barnabe Googe)
  - Dear, If You Change (Anonymous)

- *Day of Love*, a song cycle of five poems formed into a continuous piece, commissioned by Frederica von Stade (Kirstin van Cleave) - 1983

- *Three Sonnets from the Portuguese* (Elizabeth Barrett Browning) - 1984
  - Go from Me
  - I See Thine Image through My Tears Tonight
  - I Thank All Who Have Loved Me

- Windsongs - 1989
  - *Three Poems of Theodore Ramsay*
    - Love
    - Remembering
    - On Parting
  - Vocalise
  - *Three California Songs* (Robert H. Deutsch)
    - Brother
    - Song
    - The Middle-Aged Shepherd
  - Windsong, for soprano, viola, and piano (Richard Nickson)
    - Antiphon
    - All Music, All Delight
    - Farewell

- *Sieben Lehmannlieder*, in German (Lotte Lehmann) - 1991
  - Ich bin allein auf Bergesgipfeln
  - Wie lieb’ ich diese klare Stunde
  - So hört’ ich wieder deiner Stimme
  - In Flammen starb dein Bild
  - Wie schön ist dieser tiefe Schlummer
  - Narzissus
  - Die Welt scheint ganz aus Glut gesponnen
• Three Poems of Oscar Wilde, commissioned by Thomas Hampson - 1998
  o Helas
  o The Harlot’s House
  o Requiescat

• A Rustling of Angels - 2003
  o How Sweet the Answer (Thomas Moore)
  o I Saw (Anonymous)
  o What Would I Give (Christina Rossetti)
  o Gather Ye Rosebuds (Robert Herrick)
  o At the Moated Grange (William Shakespeare)
  o Love’s Philosophy (Percy Bysshe Shelley)
  o Green Grow the Rushes (Robert Burns)
  o Art (Herman Melville)
  o The Revelation (Coventry Patmore)
  o Echo (Christina Rossetti)
  o The Old Stoic (Emily Brontë)
  o Beneath the Cypress Shade (Thomas Love Peacock)

• Song Album - 2006
  o The Last Invocation (Walt Whitman)
  o Orpheus (William Shakespeare)
  o Dream Land (Christina Rossetti)
  o Three Poems of James Agee
    ▪ How Many Little Children Sleep
    ▪ A Lullaby
    ▪ Sonnet
  o Ophelia’s Lament (William Shakespeare)
  o I Just Love My Voice (Gerald Walker)
  o Overweight, Overwrought, Over You (Sheila Nader)
  o Divas of a Certain Age, a duet (Thomas Pasatieri)

• Bel Canto Songs, six songs in English (William Blake) - 2010
  o The Garden of Love
  o Laughing Song
  o To the Evening Star
  o To the Muses
  o The Lamb
  o Hear the Voice

• Duets, for two voices and piano - 2010
  o The Silver Swan
  o The Fountain
  o Remember
  o The Little Stone
  o Ave Maria
• The Thread of Life
• Divas of a Certain Age

• I Hear America Singing, for voice and piano, available in *The Opera America Songbook*, Scott Wollschleger - 2012

• Album Leaves, Volume 1, for voice and piano - 2012 (*new)
  o Orpheus (William Shakespeare)
  o The Last Invocation (Walt Whitman)
  o Dream Land (Christina Rossetti)
  o Flow My Tears* (Anonymous)
  o These Are the Days (Emily Dickinson)
  o Ophelia’s Lament (William Shakespeare)
  o Overweight, Overwrought, Over You (Sheila Nader)
  o The Magdalene* (John 20: 11-15)
  o In the Lions’ Den* (Daniel 6:19-22)
  o Alleluia (Medieval Latin Chant)
  o *Due Sonetti del Petrarca* (Francesco Petrarca)
    ▪ Solo e pensoso
    ▪ Voi ch’ascoltate

• Album Leaves, Volume 2, for voice and piano - 2013 (*new)
  o The Sorrows of Werther* (W.M. Thackeray)
  o The Little Stone* (Emily Dickinson)
  o Vocal Modesty (Gerald Walker)
  o Instead of Words (Gerald Walker)
  o *Trois Chansons de la Lune* *
    ▪ À la claire fontaine (French Folk Song)
    ▪ Pierrot (French Folk Song)
    ▪ Votre âme (Paul Verlaine)
  o Wie schön ist dieser tiefe Schlummer (Lotte Lehmann)
  o Narzissus (Lotte Lehmann)
  o Through Tara’s Halls (Thomas Moore)
  o The Lusty Spring (John Fletcher)
  o Come Slowly, Eden!* (Emily Dickinson)

• Album Leaves, Volume 3, for voice and piano - 2015 (*new)
  o If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking* (Emily Dickinson)
  o Let My Voice Ring Out* (James Thomson)
  o Those We Love the Best* (Ella Wheeler Wilcox)
  o Speak Softly with You* (August Carini)
  o The Answer* (August Carini)
  o I Hear America Singing* (What Whitman)
  o Glory Be* (Catholic Prayer)
  o Kaddish (Jewish Prayer)
  o When I Heard* (Walt Whitman)
• Remember Me* (Christina Rossetti)
• The Lamb (William Blake)
• A Joyful Noise* (Psalm 100)

• Album Leaves, Volume 4 - (*new) additional songs will be included, not yet published
  • Sweet Dreams*
  • Empty Hands*
  • To a Summer's Day*
  • Listen Sweet Dove*
  • Distance*

Other Vocal Works

• Heloise and Abelard, cantata for soprano and baritone, commissioned by Evelyn Lear and Thomas Steward - 1973
• Rites de Passage, medium voice and chamber orchestra or string quartet, commissioned by Elaine Bonazzi (Louis Phillips) - 1974
• Permit Me Voyage - soprano, mixed chorus, and orchestra - 1974
• Far From Love, six poems for soprano, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (Emily Dickinson) - 1976
• Mass, SATB soloists, SATB chorus, and orchestra, commissioned by Choral Guild of Atlanta - 1982
• Canciones de barrio, six Spanish songs for mezzo, piano, and string quartet (based on José Montoya) - 1983
• Alleluia, for voice and piano, voice and harp, voice and orchestra, or SATB and piano, commissioned by Thomas Hampson - 1991
• Letter to Warsaw, commissioned for Jane Eaglen, soprano and orchestra (Pola Braun) - 2003
  • Jew
  • Tsurik a Heym
  • Mother
  • Letter to Warsaw
  • An Ordinary Day - Moving Day - Kaddish
• The Daughter of Capulet, concert monodrama (adapted from William Shakespeare) - 2007
• Lady Macbeth, concert monodrama (adapted from William Shakespeare) - 2007
• *The Bride of the Moor*, for voice, cello, and piano (adapted from Sir Walter Scott) - 2011

• *In the Light of the Angels*, cantata for soprano, mezzo-soprano, children’s chorus, and baroque orchestra - 2013

• *Symphony No. 2* - soprano, children’s chorus, and orchestra, text from “Credo” of the Latin mass - premiered 2014
APPENDIX E: WORKS BY THE POET

In an appendix of his 2001 biography of William Blake, *The Stranger from Paradise*, author G. E. Bentley gave a detailed, annotated chronology of William Blake’s written and engraved works. The following listing is a summary of Bentley’s information, reorganized into categories:

**Non-Illuminated Works (Poetry and Prose)**\(^{365}\)

- *Poetical Sketches*, privately published poems and songs - 1783
- *An Island in the Moon*, unpublished manuscript - 1784?
- *Tiriel*, unpublished manuscript and 12 watercolors - 1789?
- *The French Revolution*, epic poem in seven books only the first of which survived, unpublished proof - 1791
- “Notebook,” unpublished manuscript - 1793?-1818?,
  - “Visions of the Last Judgement” - 1810?
  - “Public Address” - 1811
  - “The Everlasting Gospel” - 1818?
- *Vala* or *The Four Zoas*, unpublished manuscript - 1796?-1807
- *The Ballads* or *Pickering Manuscript* - 1807?
- *Descriptive Catalogue* - 1809

**Illuminated Works (Poetry and Prose Engraved with Illustrations)**\(^{366}\)

- *All Religions are One*, 10 plates - 1788?
- *There is No Natural Religion*, 21 plates - 1788?
- *Songs of Innocence*, 27 plates - 1789
- *The Book of Thel*, 8 plates - 1789

\(^{365}\) Bentley, 452-463.

\(^{366}\) Ibid.
- *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 27 plates - 1790?
- *America*, 19 plates - 1793
- *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*, 18 plates, revised with 3 additional plates as *For the Sexes* - 1793, 1826?
- *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 11 plates - 1793
- *Europe*, 18 plates - 1794
- *The First Book of Urizen*, 28 plates - 1794
- *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, 54 plates - 1794
- *The Book of Ahania*, 6 plates - 1795
- *The Book of Los*, 5 plates - 1795
- *The Song of Los*, 8 plates - 1795
- *Milton A Poem*, 51 plates - 1804-1811?
- *Jerusalem*, 100 plates - 1804-1820?
- *On Homer’s Poetry [&] On Virgil*, 1 plate - 1821?
- *The Ghost of Abel*, 2 plates - 1822
- *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise*, revision of *For Children*, 21 plates - 1826?
- “Laocoon,” 1 plate - 1826?

**Exhibited Works (Paintings, Prints, and Other Visual Art)**

- “Death of Earl Goodwin,” Royal Academy - 1780
- “A breach in a city, the morning after a battle,” Royal Academy - 1784
- “War unchained by an angel, Fire, Pestilence, and Famine following,” Royal Academy - 1784
- “Joseph making himself known to his brethren,” Royal Academy - 1785

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367 Ibid.
• “Joseph’s brethren bowing before him,” Royal Academy - 1785
• “Joseph ordering Simeon to be bound,” Royal Academy - 1785
• “The Bard, from Gray,” Royal Academy - 1785
• “The Last Supper,” Royal Academy - 1799
• “Jacob’s Dream,” Royal Academy - 1808
• “Christ in the Sepulchre, guarded by Angels,” Royal Academy - 1808
• “The Spiritual Form of Nelson,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Spiritual Form of Pitt,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “Sir Jeffrey Chaucer and the nine and twenty pilgrims in their journey to Canterbury,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Bard, from Gray,” repeat exhibition, Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Ancient Britons,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “A spirit vaulting from a cloud to turn and wind a fiery Pegasus,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The spiritual Preceptor,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “Satan calling up his Legions,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Bramins,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The body of Abel, found by Adam and Eve,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Soldiers casting lots for Christ’s Garments,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “Jacob’s Ladder,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Angels hovering over the Body of Jesus in the Sepulchre,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “Ruth,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “The Penance of Jane Shore,” Blake’s Broad Street Exhibition - 1809-1810
• “Sir Jeoffrey Chaucer and the Twenty-seven Pilgrims,” repeat exhibition under altered title, The Associated Painters in Watercolours - 1812

• “The Spiritual Form of Pitt,” repeat exhibition, The Associated Painters in Watercolours - 1812

• “The Spiritual Form of Nelson,” repeat exhibition, The Associated Painters in Watercolours - 1812

• “Detached Specimens of...Jerusalem...,” The Associated Painters in Watercolours - 1812

**Other Original Works**

• “Joseph of Arimathea Among the Rocks of Albion,” design adapted from Michelangelo, 1 plate - 1773?

• “To the Public,” 1? plate, no surviving copies - 1793

• “The Accusers,” 1 plate - 1793

• “Albion Rose,” 1 plate - 1793

• “Edward & Elinor,” 1 plate - 1793

• “Job,” 1 plate - 1793

• “Joseph of Arimathea Preaching,” 1 plate - 1793

• “Ezekiel,” 1 plate - 1794

• “Christ Appearing to the Apostles,” large color print - 1795

• “Elohim Creating Adam,” large color print - 1795

• “God Judging Adam,” large color print - 1795

• “The Good and Evil Angels,” large color print - 1795

• “Hecate,” large color print - 1795

• “The House of Death,” large color print - 1795

• “Lamech and his Two Wives,” large color print - 1795

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• “Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah to Return to the Land of Moab,” large color print - 1795
• “Nebuchadnezzar,” large color print - 1795
• “Newton,” large color print - 1795
• “Pity,” large color print - 1795
• “Satan Exulting over Eve,” large color print - 1795
• Large book of designs, 8 plates from other works - 1796
• Small book of designs, 23 plates from other works - 1796
• “Enoch,” lithograph - 1807?
• “The Canterbury Pilgrims,” 1 plate - 1810
• Smaller Blake-Varley sketchbook, 34 leaves with Visionary Heads - 1818-1819
• Larger Blake-Varley sketchbook, 90 leaves, 52 leaves with Visionary Heads - 1818-1819
• Enoch, 5 drawings - 1824?
• Illuminated Genesis, manuscript for John Linnell - 1826-1827?

**Commercial Engravings and Artwork**369

• Jacob Bryant, *A New System...of Ancient Mythology*, plates signed by Basire but some may have been engraved by Blake - 1777-1779?
• Sir Joseph Ayloffe, *An Account of Some Ancient Monuments in Westminster Abbey*, plates signed by Basire but some may have been designed and engraved by Blake - 1777-1779?
• [Richard Gough], *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, plates signed by Basire, designs by Blake - 1777-1779?
• *The Protestants Family Bible*, designs adapted from Raphael - 1780
• William Enfield, *The Speaker*, design by Stothard - 1780
• J. Olivier, *Fencing Familiarized; L’Art des Armes Simplifié*, design by J. Roberts - 1780

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369 Ibid.

189
• *The Royal Universal Family Bible*, designs anonymous - 1780-1782

• Henry Emlyn, *A Proposition for a New Order in Architecture*, design by Earle - 1781

• John Bonnycastle, *An Introduction to Mensuration*, design by Stothard - 1782


• *The Ladies New and Polite Pocket Memorandum-Book*, designs by Stothard - 1782

• “Morning Amusement” and “Evening Amusement,” designs by Watteau - 1782

• William Nicholson, *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, design anonymous - 1782

• *Novelist’s Magazine* VIII, designs by Stothard - 1782

• *Novelist’s Magazine* IX, designs by Stothard - 1782-1783

• John Seally and Israel Lyons, *Complete Geographical Dictionary*, designs anonymous - 1782

• *A Select Collection of English Songs*, designs by Stothard - 1782

• John Scott, *Poetical Works*, designs by Stothard - 1782

• *Novelist’s Magazine* X-XI, designs by Stothard - 1782-1783

• Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, translated by John Hoole, design by Stothard - 1783

• Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Poetical Works*, design by Stothard - 1783

• Thomas Henry, *Memoir of Albert de Haller*, design adapted from Dunker - 1783

• “The Fall of Rosamund,” design by Stothard - 1783

• “Robin Hood & Clorinda,” design adapted from J. Meheux - 1783

• *The Wit’s Magazine* I, designs by Stothard and Samuel Collings - 1784

• “Zephyrus and Flora” and “Clalisto,” designs by Stothard - 1784

• D. Fenning and J. Collyer, *A New System of Geography*, designs by Stothard - 1784-1785

• Elizabeth Blower, *Maria: A Novel*, design by Stothard - 1785

• Thomas Commins, *An Elegy Set to Music*, design by Blake - 1786

• “Venus Dissuades Adonis,” design by R. Cosway - 1787
• “Rev. John Caspar Lavater,” design anonymous - 1787

• William Hogarth, design for John Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera* and later Hogarth’s *Works*, design by Hogarth - 1788, 1790

• “The Idle Laundress” and “The Industrious Cottager,” designs by Morland - 1788

• J.C. Lavater, *Aphorisms on Man*, translated by Henry Fuseli, design by Fuseli - 1788

• J.C. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, translated by Fuseli, designs adapted from Rubens and Anonymous - 1788

• C.G. Salzmann, *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children*, translated by Mary Wollstonecraft, designs by D.N. Chodowieki, engravings may have been by Blake - 1790-1791

• Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, later reprinted in his *Poetical Works*, designs by Fuseli and Blake’s copies of Wedgewood vases - 1791, 1795

• David Hartley, *Observations on Man*, design by Shackleton - 1791

• James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *Antiquities of Athens*, designs by Stuart and Revett - 1791

• Mary Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories from Real Life*, designs by Blake - 1791

• John Hunter, *Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island*, design by Governor King - 1792

• John Gabriele Stedman, *Narrative of a five year’s expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam*, designs by Stedman - 1792-1794

• *Bellamy’s Picturesque Magazine*, design by C.R. Ryley - 1793

• James Earle, *Practical Observations on the Operation for the Stone*, designs anonymous - 1793

• John Gay, *Fables*, designs by W. Kent, J. Wootton, and H. Gravelot - 1793

• George Cumberland, *Thoughts on Outline*, designs by Cumberland - 1794-1795

• Edward Young, *The Complaint and The Consolation, or Night Thoughts*, 537 folio watercolors, 43 plates, designs by Blake - 1794-1797

• John Brown, *The Elements of Medicine*, design by Donaldson - 1795

• Caius Valerius Catullus, *Poems*, translated by John Knott, designs by Xavier Della Rosa - 1795
• Gottfried Augustus Bürger, *Leonora*, translated by J.T. Stanley, designs by Blake - 1796

• George Cumberland, *An Attempt to Describe Hafod*, 1 plate may have be engraved by Blake - 1796

• Carpet advertisement, design by Blake - 1797

• Charles Allen, *A New and Improved History of England*, designs by Fuseli - 1797

• Charles Allen, *A New and Improved Roman History*, designs by Fuseli - 1797

• Leonard Euler, *Elements of Algebra*, translated by Francis Horner, design after Ruchotte’s medallion - 1797

• *Monthly Magazine* IV, design anonymous - 1797

• Thomas Gray, *Poems*, 116 folio watercolors by Blake - 1797-1798

• John Flaxman, *A Letter to the Committee for Raising the Naval Pillar or Monument*, designs by Flaxman - 1799

• William Shakespeare, *Dramatic Works*, edited by George Stevens, design by John Opie - 1799

• Bible, 135 folio tempuras and watercolors for Thomas Butts - 1799-1805


• William Hayley, *Little Tom the Sailor*, designs by Blake - 1800

• Henry Fuseli, *Lectures on Painting*, design after Michelangelo - 1801

• John Milton, *Comus*, 8 watercolors - 1801?, repeated 1815?

• William Hayley, *Designs to a Series of Ballads*, designs by Blake - 1802

• William Hayley, *Life...of William Cowper*, designs by George Romney, D. Heins, Thomas Lawrence, Francis Stone, John Flaxman, and Blake - 1802, 1804

• William Hayley, *Triumphs of Temper*, designs by Maria Flaxman - 1803

• Prince Hoare, *Academic Correspondence*, design by Flaxman - 1804

• William Shakespeare, *Plays*, edited by Alexander Chalmers, designs by Fuseli - 1804

• Robert Blair, *The Grave*, designs by Blake engraved by Schiavonetti, mostly lost - 1805, 1808
• John Flaxman, *The Iliad of Homer*, designs by Flaxman - 1805

• William Hayley, *Ballads...Relating to Animals*, designs by Blake - 1805

• William Hayley, *Life of George Romney*, design by Romney - 1805

• *Job*, 19 watercolors for Thomas Butts - 1805

• Prince Hoare, *Inquiry into the...Arts of Design in England*, design by Sir Joshua Reynolds - 1806

• Benj. Heath Malkin, *A Father’s Memoirs of His Child*, design by Blake, re-engraved by R. H. Cromek - 1806

• William Shakespeare, Second Folio, 6 watercolors - 1806-1809


• Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Prologue and Characters of Chaucer’s Canterbury Pilgrims*, designs by Blake - 1811

• John Flaxman, *Compositions from...Hesiod*, designs by Flaxman - 1814-1817

• Wedgewood’s Catalogue of Earthenware, designs after Blake’s copies of Wedgewood earthenware - 1815-1816

• Abraham Rees, *Cyclopaedia*, designs by Farey and Anonymous - 1815-1819

• John Milton, *L’Allegro*, 8 watercolors - 1816?

• John Milton, *Il Penseroso*, 8 watercolors - 1816?

• John Milton, *Paradise Regained*, 12 watercolors - 1816?

• “The Child of Nature” and “The Child of Art,” designs by C. Borckhardt - 1818

• “Rev’d Robert Hawker,” design by Ponsford - 1820

• “Mrs. Q,” design by H. Villiers - 1820

• *Job*, Linnell’s set, 21 watercolors - 1821

• Virgil, *Pastorals*, edited by Robert John Thornton, designs by Blake, 27 woodcuts by Blake, 1 design engraved by Byfield - 1821
• John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, 29 watercolors, perhaps with finishing by Catherine or Tatham - 1824-1827

• *Remember Me!*, design by Blake - 1824

• Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 103 folio watercolors - 1824-1827

• “Wilson Lowry,” design by Linnell - 1825

• *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, designs by Blake - 1825

• *Blake’s Illustrations of Dante*, designs by Blake - 1826-1827
APPENDIX F: LETTERS OF PERMISSION

**Thomas Pasatieri (Composer):**

[Facebook message reply, April 17, 2012]

Dear Amy,

It is wonderful hearing from you. I have known Ruth [Falcon] for some time as I am great friends with Sheila Nadler who is one of Ruth's best friends. I love the idea of *The Bel Canto Songs* as a dissertation topic because the songs represent the fusion of nineteenth century vocal writing with contemporary harmonic approaches.

Recently, my publishers have sent me notification of several performances of my comedies *Signor Deluso* and *La Divina* in Louisiana but I am not sure if LSU was on the list.

It is fantastic that you are a singer and a conductor. This must be a unique combination which has to enrich your approach to singing. There are a few others that I can think of, Placido Domingo being the most prominent.

I would very much enjoy hearing you sing and if you would send me cds, my address is [private].

I have just completed a cantata commissioned by The Mostly Baroque Players...*In the Light of Angels*. It is for Soprano, Mezzo Soprano, Children's chorus and small ensemble. I would like to send it to you for your church. It can be performed with organ.

Best wishes,

Thomas Pasatieri

———

Thomas Pasatieri [private email]
To: amy42porter@yahoo.com
07/03/13 at 4:03 PM

Dear Amy,

Your CD and letter arrived today. ...This year there have been two dissertations written about my songs. One on *Letter to Warsaw* and the other on *A Rustling of Angels* but never before on *Bel Canto Songs*, so I welcome this opportunity.

My number here in Sarasota is [private]. I can speak with you next week if you would like. Any day @ noon my time would be good, please let me know what works for you.

All the best,

Thomas Pasatieri
February 29, 2016

Ms. Amy Porter
705 W. Bellwood Dr., Apt. 13
Spokane, WA 99218

Re: Dissertation Permission

Dear Amy:

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Today at 2:55 AM

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Amy Porter <amy42porter@yahoo.com>
To permissions@bl.uk
Today at 1:34 AM

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request permission to use an image from your online gallery in my doctoral dissertation document and a public lecture that I will be presenting as part of that project. My dissertation (for a Doctor of Musical Arts degree through Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge) is about recent American classical art song settings of several William Blake poems, including "The Garden of Love," which is present on the image. My document will be uploaded to LSU's online dissertation database.

The image in question is a page from William Blake's Notebook, folio N115: http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/blake/accessible/images/page23full.jpg

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any questions or need more information from me, please let me know.

Sincerely,
Amy Porter
Amy Porter, a Louisiana native, has appeared in many standard operatic roles, including Königin der Nacht (Die Zauberflöte), Violetta (La Traviata), Lucia (Lucia di Lammermoor), Mimi (La Bohème), Marguerite (Faust), Contessa (Le Nozze di Figaro), and Alice (Falstaff). She has performed more contemporary operatic works, including Poulenc’s one woman monodrama La Voix Humaine (Femme), Dinos Constantinides’s psychological one-act opera Rosanna (Angelina), and a partially-televised production of David Amram’s Twelfth Night (Olivia), as well as early music productions, including Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas (Dido) and the New York City premiere of Hildegard von Bingen’s medieval morality play Ordo Virtutum (Victory). An ardent solo performer of pre-classical repertoire, she was a founding member of the Baton Rouge Early Vocal Ensemble (BREVE). She has performed recitals, concerts, and oratorio repertory throughout the United States.

A student of Dr. Lori Bade, Amy Porter has attended Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge for her BM and DMA degrees. Her doctoral minor concentration in choral conducting has been under the tutelage of Dr. Kenneth Fulton. In her capacity as a conductor, she has served as the music director of numerous churches, and while in Baton Rouge was the Chorus Master for Opera Louisiane. She earned her MM and a professional studies diploma at Mannes College of Music in Manhattan, where she studied with Ruth Falcon. She also studied privately for several years with Leyna Gabriele in New York City. In addition to language study in the US, Amy Porter attended the Dante Alighieri school in Siena, Italy. She has sung in LSU, Mannes, and Marilyn Home Foundation masterclasses with singers Renata Scotto, Regina Resnick, Martina Arroyo, and with collaborative pianists Warren Jones and Ted Taylor. Named as an LSU Pressor Scholar for academic achievement, Amy Porter is a member of numerous collegiate honor societies, including the prestigious music honor society Pi Kappa Lambda. She is also an alumna member of Sigma Alpha Iota and an active member of the National Association for the Teachers of Singing (NATS). She has won several vocal competitions and awards, including the Richard F. Gold career grant.

Amy Porter currently teaches applied voice and related courses at Whitworth and Gonzaga Universities in Spokane, Washington.