

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:

THE ART SONGS OF CELIUS
DOUGHERTY (1902-1986)

Madeline Miskie, Doctor of Musical Arts,
2014

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The chief aim of this series of recital programs was to introduce art songs (published and unpublished) by the composer Celius Dougherty (1902-1986), and to provide brief analysis of individual songs in order to develop a more comprehensive insight to his compositional style. Each recital in this dissertation featured a group of Dougherty's unpublished songs (*Songs from the American Countryside*, *Seven Songs*, *Eglantine and Ivy*) in order to further the notion that more of his song output merits publication and recognition.

The first program, *Celius Dougherty, the Composer* consisted entirely of art songs and folk song arrangements by Dougherty. The second program, *Celius Dougherty, the American* thematically grouped Dougherty's songs alongside works by his famous contemporaries (Copland, Floyd, Argento, Bernstein and Ives). This arrangement of repertoire was intended to further the argument that Dougherty's songs can stand up to more widely recognized works within the rich canon of American Art Song. The final program *Dougherty and Copland*, presented two song cycles, *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Copland) and *Eglantine and Ivy*, Dougherty's unpublished cycle of sonnets by

Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The purpose of this final program was to test the artistic merit of *Eglantine and Ivy* by making a direct comparison between it and *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*, which is recognized as a cornerstone among the canon of American Art Song.

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By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2014

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Chapter 1: Celius Dougherty; the Composer

This recital “Celius Dougherty; the Composer,” is the first in a series of three programs that will feature the song repertoire of Celius Dougherty (1902-1986). The repertoire on this program spans Dougherty’s art songs, folksongs and sea chanties. The second recital, entitled “Celius Dougherty; the American” will present Dougherty’s song repertoire (a combination of published and unpublished songs) in context with his American Contemporaries: Copland, Ives, Barber, Duke and Argento.

Celius Dougherty spent his early years in Glenwood, MN. His mother, Louise Park Dougherty, had a major influence on his musical life. She was a singer, church organist, and music educator. Louise instructed Celius, the youngest of her eight children, to accompany her on the piano and he gave his first public performance with her at age ten. Dougherty attended the University of Minnesota and upon completion of his undergraduate degree in 1924, he received a scholarship to further his musical education at Juilliard, where he studied piano with Josef Lhévinne and composition with Rubin Goldmark. In New York, Dougherty was highly sought-after as a collaborative pianist. His total song output numbers around 200, although a large portion of this repertoire remains unpublished. Famous singers who introduced his songs include: Marian Anderson, Eleanor Steber, Maggie Teyte, Alexander Kipnis, Povla Frisch, Eva Gautier, William Warfield, Blanche Thebom, Bidu Sayao, and Eileen Farrell.

With the exception of the final four folk song duets on this program, all of the songs performed this evening are published works available in one of two anthologies; *Celius Dougherty; 30 Art Songs in Original Keys*, and *Celius Dougherty; Folksongs and Chanties* published by G. Schirmer. The purpose of tonight’s performance is to introduce

Dougherty's song repertoire to the musical community, to provide musical insight into his compositional style and to develop an appreciation for the breadth of his creativity.

The poem "Primavera" follows the experience of an enthusiastic individual who has seen signs of the spring before its scheduled arrival on March 21. It is both theatrical and operatic in nature, with its structure mimicking a recitative-aria. The title of the poem gave Dougherty a clue as to how to go about setting it musically, "I knew that Amy Lowell was greatly influenced by music in her writing...the fact that the title was in Italian led me to think of the poem in terms of Italian music, and naturally opera—and I found that the conversational character of the words fell easily into the recitative form, which in turn led into an aria...transplanted from Italy to Boston" [Lowell's hometown].ⁱ It is also no surprise then, that Amy Lowell had drama in mind when she wrote poems. She gave frequent performances of her own poetry and was coached by actress Ada Dryer Russel, who instructed her on variation of volume and timbre in her voice.ⁱⁱ

Dougherty's setting of "Weathers" (pub. 1925) is unusual because of the repetition of the entire first stanza of poetry; thus creating a very clear-cut ABA structure. In general, he did not like to repeat any text of a poem, unless it was the author's intention. It should be noted that Thomas Hardy was an English poet; so when the text mentions citizens dreaming '*...of the south and west,*' it is a geographic reference to England and not the United States. The sharp contrast between the A and B sections in major and minor, reflect the influence of the romantic German Lied. Dougherty's composition teacher at the University of Minnesota, Gertrude Hull introduced him to this genre.

“Song for Autumn” is exuberant, and lush with a persistently recurring motive evoking chiming bells; a rising fifth and a descending second (two sixteenth notes followed by either an eighth or quarter). The accompaniment directly mirrors the text, often literally. For example, for the line *‘You foolish, chattering birds,’* the piano right hand plays rapid figures in the upper register at a medium dynamic; alluding to the presence of birds. The accompaniment suddenly becomes thicker during the text *‘Thunder is on the fields and fear’*.

Dougherty was attracted to the poetry of e.e. cummings because the poet’s language “...stimulated me into new channels of thinking.”¹ He admired cummings’s penchant for reversing word order and his frequent insertion of parenthetical. This small group of four songs has been excerpted from his cycle *Seven Songs*, with texts by e.e. cummings. The selections performed today are published and the remaining three, which include “your little voice”, “I thank you god for most this amazing day”, and “O thou to whom the musical white spring” remain unpublished. These three unpublished songs will be featured on the next recital in this project.

The song, “little fourpaws”, is a child’s experience of the loss of a pet, presumably a little kitten. With a matter as serious as death, it seems only natural that something so unfamiliar to someone so young would prompt a string of inquiries. The poem’s text captures the constant curiosity of a child through a series of unresolved questions. This lack of resolution is also apparent in the final harmony. Rather than reaching a cadence in the home key of F-Minor, or even the relative A-Flat Major, the piano ends on the dominant (C-Major) of F-Minor. The narrow vocal range of the song

and low tessitura give it a speech-like quality and the simplicity of the melody lends itself well to the character of the child. Listen closely for the ‘fourpaws’ melodic motive in the piano that is later echoed in the vocal line. “*I tried to suggest the soft footsteps of some little four-footed animal...*”

In “thy fingers make early flowers,” one can almost hear wind chimes in the breeze or visualize sunbeams streaming through a window in the opening piano measures. Unexpected chromatic alterations in the vocal line mirror the uncertainties of new love. A lyrical, diatonic vocal line is offset by ethereal and tonally ambiguous piano interludes between stanzas of sensual poetry.

“Until and I heard” is an expansive, joyous celebration of one brief moment when the poet comes in contact with one person; one voice; that suddenly brings greater depth and meaning to life. In each stanza of poetry, the vocal range becomes wider and more lyrical and free. The obscured sense of meter of this song also contributes to a feeling of freedom. In a sense, that single moment of inspiration leads to the discovery of the poet’s own voice. Perhaps this is an insight to a potential over-arching metaphor that Dougherty intended, although he said: “...it [art] should make itself understood on its own terms.”

Like Mahler in *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* and Debussy in *Proses Lyriques*, Dougherty also attempted to set his own text to music in the song “Green Meadows” (1923). The song was composed while Dougherty was still a student at the University of Minnesota. The song was dedicated to Gertrude Hull, who was a member of the UM voice faculty at the time. Hull presented several of Dougherty’s songs to the publisher G. Schirmer and “Green Meadows” was selected for publication. The main melodic theme of the song was excerpted from a piano concerto.

Dougherty's most well known song, "The K'E" is hauntingly beautiful. This brief poem tells the story of a young girl's experience of meeting a stranger, falling in love, leaving home, and ultimately, heartbreak. Open fourths and fifths and pentatonic scales are not Dougherty's attempts to re-create authentic ancient Chinese music, but rather, to establish a backdrop for the text of spaciousness and simplicity; a quality found in many different folk idioms.

The soaring vocal lines and effervescent piano accompaniment in "Portrait" are similar in character to Rachmaninoff's popular song "Spring Waters" (op. 14 no. 11) or "Botschaft" (op. 47 no.1) by Brahms. Dougherty was very sensitive to the poetic crescendo that happens over the three brief stanzas of text. He commented, "The poem just asked for music. Browning's texts are so concentrated they seem to invite elaboration." To achieve a natural vocal crescendo, he set each of the stanzas to be progressively higher in tessitura; the first begins on A5, the second on C5 and the third on F5. These three pitches outline F major, the key of the song. Throughout the song, the vocal line is consistently marked forte, amidst a rather dense piano accompaniment, so the artistic challenge for the singer is to achieve contrast between poetic stanzas by varying timbre and coloration.

The closest semblance of jazz among Dougherty's published repertoire lies within the song "Pianissimo", composed in the ragtime style popular in the 1920's. Dougherty intersperses jauntily syncopated rhythms that might call to mind piano pieces such as Joplin's "The Entertainer" or "Maple Leaf Rag" and smoother lyrical lines not unlike those in the songbook of George and Ira Gershwin.

Dougherty was a great admirer of Dickinson's poetry. He was challenged by the brief, direct nature of this poem "Beauty is not caused" which reflects on the elusive tendencies of art. The poem is excerpted from the collection *The Further Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Although the song is in C major, it briefly moves to E major as the text challenges the listener to do the impossible and, "overtake the creases in the meadows when the wind runs its long fingers through it." Immediately after this vocal phrase, the piano sweeps the tonal center back to C major.

Perhaps his most well-known song, "Love in the Dictionary" is a humorous setting of text excerpted directly from Funk & Wagnalls Students' Standard Dictionary. Dougherty wrote that, among many types of poetry, he felt compelled to set "...a curious kind of poem whose thought takes an unexpected turn, oftentimes as late as the very last line." This is certainly true of this song. The major compositional challenge in this particular case was "to mold ...rather loosely constructed words into a form that has musical validity."ⁱⁱⁱ The piano accompaniment subtly shifts in response to each successive definition of love. For example, the piano accompaniment surrounding "Cupid" consists of a brief, ascending A-flat major arpeggio followed by a sustained, trilled A-flat major chord in the upper register of the piano. The song was written for the mezzo-soprano Blanche Thebom. She premiered the song at her annual Town Hall recital in NYC in 1948.

The text of "The Bird and the Beast" first appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* in the column *Plain Words*. The piano accompaniment in the opening twelve measures has the clarity and simplicity of Mozart in the middle to upper register of the piano as the child presents his opening topic: the owl. When uncertainty arises (brought about by a

lack of knowledge on the subject of the owl), subtle chromatic alterations throw off the stability established by the clear-cut F-Major tonalities. As soon as the child decides to discuss the subject of ‘the cow’ at length, a low ‘moo’ can be heard in the left hand piano part. Naturally, the piano tessitura migrates to the lower register as the ‘cow’ plods along with steady eighth-notes throughout the remainder of the song.

“The Children’s Letter to the United Nations” was first published in the New York Times. The text was composed by kindergarten students at Public School No. 90 in Queens, NY and copied down by their teacher, Alma M. Haring. The letter was addressed to UN Ambassador Warren Austin. In their letter, this class of five and six year olds boldly addressed issues of war and gun violence and in turn offered potential solutions that would promote a more prosperous society. The music is divided into two sections; the first section, during which the text criticizes the atrocities of war and gun violence, is in C-Minor. The second section, in which the children offer suggestions for a better world, is in C-Major.

By definition, a chanty (also ‘shanty’) is a work song in call and response form. Sea-chanties were most popular during the mid-nineteenth century, from about 1830-1870. During this time period, clipper ships were the major vessels for transport by sea. These ships required large crews of men. On board a clipper ship, one man would improvise verses and the crew would chime in with a short refrain.^{iv} The text of “Blow ye Winds” specifically references the town of New Bedford, Massachusetts. At one time, New Bedford was the world’s largest whaling port, and whaling crews were very diversely populated with men of Native American, African and European descent serving on the same crew. Some were sailors by trade, however men from agricultural and labor

backgrounds often joined these crews for the opportunity to escape their occupations and have an adventure at sea. Be sure to listen for the hornpipe figure in the right hand of the piano accompaniment towards the very end of the song. The light, buoyant piano accompaniment utilizes the high tessitura of the piano and evokes images of the sparkling ocean and rippling sails. Dougherty himself was inspired to write sea-chanties because of his own brother Ralph, who served in the US Navy (USS Arizona) and who also loved to sing.

In Dougherty's version of "O Waly, Waly", the simple, traditional and highly familiar vocal melody remains unaltered. In order to create variety and add depth of meaning for each of the five verses, Dougherty utilizes the piano for text painting purposes. For example, in verse one "The water is wide, I cannot get o'er" there is a great deal of ascending and descending parallel motion over a very wide range in the right and left hand piano parts. This undulating effect evokes the image reflected in the text of waves on the water. Similarly, in verse three when the text declaims; "I laid my breast up against an oak...first he bended and then he broke..." the accompaniment becomes thicker, heavier and more chordal, with unexpected chromaticism, especially during the text, "...and so did my false love to me." which gradually descends to the lower register of the piano. Immediately following this, in verse four, the lyrics refer to a "ship loaded deep, but not so deep as the love I'm in." In perfect symmetry with the text, the piano accompaniment returns to the undulating parallel sweeping gestures of the opening verse, however this time, the harmonies are thicker; loaded 'more deeply' than before and the undulating waves remain in a low piano register. This song particularly

showcases Dougherty's skills as an arranger. Through careful attention to text Dougherty successfully elevates this simple folk song to a higher level of sophistication.

"Red River Valley" is an extremely well known folk song throughout the US and Canada. The familiar tune has many titles, which include "The Dear Little Valley", "The Bright Sherman Valley", "The Cowboy's Love Song", and consequently many variations in the lyrics. The song originated in New York State as "The Bright Mohawk Valley" in 1896 and as it migrated south and west, the title was changed to suit the local geography.^v There are two locations of the Red River Valley: the Red River that serves as a border between Texas and Oklahoma and another Red River between North Dakota and Minnesota. This song has been recorded by many artists, including: Marty Robbins, Woodie Guthrie, Jo Stafford, Mitch Miller, Stevie Nicks, George Strait and many others. Dougherty invented an aesthetically sound piano accompaniment for a song that is almost exclusively performed with guitar. One outstanding rhythmic aspect of this song is the dotted eighth-sixteenth note figure that appears consistently on beat two; this is a common feature that is prominent in guitar playing throughout the cowboy song repertoire. Dougherty includes this figure in the piano accompaniment. Overall, he maintains the simple harmonies of the song, however he achieves some harmonic nuance, specifically in verse three. Dougherty provides subtle tempo and dynamic indications for the singer to create variety between verses; verse two "will you think of the valley you're leaving" is marked *poco più mosso* and the most popular verse three "Come and sit by my side if you love me," is marked *più piano* however, the real nuance is in the piano accompaniment. During verse three both the right and left hand are in the upper tessitura

of the piano as the right hand doubles, and occasionally echoes the vocal line. This delicate texture perfectly matches the intimate atmosphere of this song.

“Come all you Fair and Tender Maidens” is a folksong from Kentucky. This minor / modal song features prominent open intervals which complement the bittersweet text which describes love and loss. Despite the heavy mood of the text, the piano part remains graceful, with a smooth interplay of melodic material between the right and left hand.

Other more traditional renditions of “Shady Grove”, a courting song from Kentucky, rely heavily on the percussive strumming of the guitar, plucky twang of the banjo and the spirited interjections of the fiddle. Dougherty’s arrangement attempts to capture all of those elements. During the first two repetitions of the “Shady Grove” refrain, there are accented staccato chords that serve as a substitution for the strumming of a guitar. The ‘fingerpicking’ element of the guitar or banjo is apparent in the sixteenth note figures in the left hand of the piano during the refrain. Together, these elements provide a strong rhythmic framework for the vocal line. To add contrast to the texture on the verses, Dougherty includes a single counter-melody, calling to mind a fiddle. During the final repetition of the “Shady Grove” refrain, the piano plays staccato sixteenth note arpeggios with pedal; again evoking the resonant plucking of the banjo.

The following four folk songs are part of a group of six folk-song duets commissioned by Evelyn Lear, soprano and her husband Tom Stewart, bass-baritone. The two songs not included in this evening’s program are “Wayfaring Stranger” and “The Ballad of Edward”. A personal note: Since I had the pleasure and privilege of coaching with Ms. Lear on several occasions before her recent passing, I would like to

dedicate the performance of these duets to her memory. Although we have chosen to connect all four of these duets with staging, they do not necessarily follow a linear plot line.

Dougherty's sparkling wit shines through in "The Gambling Suitor"; a 'tete-a-tete' between two people who, although they may find each other attractive, do not see eye to eye. Although the melody is the same for both voices, the piano provides a humorous contrast between masculine and feminine. The accompaniment during the soprano verses is light, and utilizes the upper tessitura of the piano. These sections are often marked piano or pianissimo and are peppered with staccato articulations. Conversely, the accompaniment rapidly shifts to louder dynamics, thicker chordal texture and a lower tessitura to match the baritone voice and to suit the spirit of the Suitor. His is an attitude of direct pursuit and hers is one of cool dismissal.

"Mary Ann" is a hauntingly beautiful duet with sweet harmonies between the two voices, which often move in parallel thirds and sixths. In each of the three verses, the piano has a different repeated rhythmic motive separate from the vocal line for the first six measures. This subtle variation provides some insight as to Dougherty's interpretation of the text. In the final six measures of the verses, the piano doubles the soprano melody in the right hand.

"Goodbye, Fare You Well" is an adaptation of a sea chanty excerpted from Joanna Colcord's collection, *Songs of American Sailormen*. Structurally, the song is in ABA form. The B-section shifts harmonically from E-flat major to B-flat minor, which is somewhat unusual for a traditional folk-song. There is dynamic contrast in the B-section as well. As the text shifts focus from a sad farewell to a description of a ship

preparing to set sail, the dynamic shifts from piano to mezzo-forte. At the same time, the accompaniment becomes heavier, with more chromaticism and unconventional harmonies. These changes correspond with the couple's emotionally charged reactions to the image of the ship; a visual reminder of the reality that they must part.

Dougherty's setting of "Uncle Joe's Reel" is simply remarkable. Although much more complex in structure than the previous song "The Gambling Suitor", the contrasts between masculine and feminine are clearly present in this song. Between each verse, there is a short two-bar 'do-si-do' interlude for the piano. The interplay between both voices is also varied. Sometimes the soprano line echoes or accompanies the baritone and sometimes there is call and response between the voices. Dougherty also utilizes the device of the quodlibet; where two different melodies occur simultaneously. The reel is a dance form that originated in Scotland and flourished in Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries. As thousands of immigrants from the British Isles settled in the United States, it had a widespread influence on American musical culture. In American music, the term 'reel' is often substituted with 'hoedown' or 'breakdown'. In the most basic sense, a reel consists of the following dance elements: a step danced in place and a traveling step. This form is the basis for square dancing.^{vi} Other titles for "Uncle Joe's Reel" include: "Hop High, Ladies", "Have you ever seen the devil, Uncle Joe", and "Miss McCleod's Reel".

ⁱ Dougherty, Celius. Essay for NATS Convention. (unpublished) Section III p. 1, 6, 22

ⁱⁱ Bradshaw, Melissa. *Amy Lowell*, Diva Poet. Ashgate Publishing Co., Burlington. 2011 p.50

ⁱⁱⁱ Dougherty, Celius. Essay for NATS Convention. (unpublished) p. 23

^{iv} Gammond, Peter and Peter Wilton. "shanty." *The Oxford Companion to Music*. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, accessed April 22, 2013, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e6137>.

^v Fowke, Edith. "The Red River Valley" Re-Examined. *Western Folklore*, Vol. 23, No. 3. Western States Folklore Society, Jul., 1964, (pp. 163-171). Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1498900>

^{vi} Collinson, Francis. "Reel." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, (accessed 22 April, 2013) Stable URL:
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23050>.

Chapter 2: Celius Dougherty; the American

This program is the second of three recitals that showcase the song repertoire of Celius Dougherty (1902-1986). In this recital, Dougherty's songs have been programmed alongside thematically related works by his contemporaries; Aaron Copland (1900-1990), Carlisle Floyd (b. 1926), Charles Ives (1874-1954), Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) and Dominick Argento (b. 1927) in order to further the notion that this repertoire deserves a more prominent place among the rich canon of American art song.

Folk songs are characterized by simple melodies (diatonic or modal) and strophic lyrical structure. Because of the characteristic simplicity of these songs, the challenge for performers is to create variety, musicality and beauty within a very basic lyrical, melodic and harmonic framework. The key to excellence in performance of this repertoire is to constantly strive for authenticity in relationship to the text by developing a genuine understanding of the historical and cultural context of a song's origins.

Traditional renditions of "Shady Grove", a courting song from Kentucky, rely heavily on the percussive strumming of the guitar, plucky twang of the banjo and the spirited interjections of the fiddle. Dougherty's arrangement attempts to capture all of those elements. During the first two repetitions of the "Shady Grove" refrain, there are accented staccato chords that serve as a substitution for the strumming of a guitar. The 'fingerpicking' element of the guitar or banjo is apparent in the sixteenth note figures in the left hand of the piano during the refrain. Together, these elements provide a strong rhythmic framework for the vocal line. To add contrast to the texture on the verses, Dougherty includes a single counter-melody, calling to mind a fiddle. During the final

repetition of the “Shady Grove” refrain, the piano plays staccato sixteenth note arpeggios with pedal; again evoking the resonant plucking of the banjo.

“The Boatmen’s Dance” was among the first group of Aaron Copland’s (1900-1990) *Old American Songs*, which was premiered in 1950 by Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears at the Music and Arts festival in Aldeburgh, England. The songs were given their American premiere in 1951 by William Warfield, bass with Aaron Copland at the piano. In 1954 the songs were arranged for voice and orchestra. Copland adjusted the original lyrics of “The Boatmen’s Dance”, which contained Negro dialect, to remove racial connotations. The echo effect achieved by the repeated melodic sections which serve as a refrain were intended to reflect the natural landscape of the Ohio River itself. The melody was originally a banjo tune composed by Dan D. Emmett, the composer of the popular song “Dixie”. Emmett, was also a fiddler, singer and comedian whose music appeared in minstrel shows throughout the mid-late 19th century.

Amidst many versions of the familiar song “Shenandoah” it is unclear whether the lyrics refer to the Native American Indian Chief Shenandoah, the Shenandoah Valley or the Shenandoah River itself. American folklorist and song collector Alan Lomax suggested that the tune originated as a sea-chanty; a tune used by sailors as they performed tasks such as drawing in an anchor or hoisting sails. Unique to this setting is the four-syllable setting of the word ‘Shenandoah’. Although the vocal melody remains the same for all three verses of the song, the piano part shifts dramatically from one verse to another in order to evoke specific musical colors, which extends the depth of the overall meaning beyond the direct implications of the text. In the second verse the piano echoes the vocal line with prominent octaves in the right hand, creating a canon effect.

Unexpected harmonies emerge throughout the third verse (i.e. B-flat minor, C-sharp diminished, E-flat major) which contains the text, “Farewell my dearest, I’m bound to leave you.” Perhaps Dougherty’s departure from using strictly diatonic harmonies was an aesthetic attempt to capture the uncertainty brought about by parting and separation. Another unique pianistic feature of this third and final verse is the descending eighth note figure (C6-A6) in the right hand of the piano. These two pitches are repeated eight times throughout the verse. One could imagine a ship’s bell (or riverboat, for that matter) ringing in the distance as two lovers say goodbye.

Carlisle Floyd (b. 1926) spent most of his youth and early adulthood in the Carolinas. His father was a Methodist preacher whose ministry involved traveling among several small rural towns in South Carolina. Floyd’s nostalgic ‘Americana’ style was partially influenced by “the populist social realism of the 1930’s and 40’s of which Bacon [Floyd’s teacher] was a characteristic exponent.”^{vii} In Floyd’s folk opera *Susannah* (1955), we find the characters Susannah and Sam Polk, brother and sister, living peacefully on the outskirts of the community of New Hope, TN. Both of their parents are deceased and they have very little money. At specific moments in the opera, Susannah recalls both her mother and father with music that she associates with their memory. In the aria “Ain’t it a Pretty Night”, Susannah discovers her own voice rather than recalling songs she has heard from her parents or echoing dance tunes melodies. As a result, the folksong element is less apparent.

In “The Jaybird” scene, Susannah begs Sam to sing “The Jaybird”, a tune that their ‘Pa’ would sing to her every night before bed. The “Jaybird” tune (repeated twice in the duet) calls to mind the traditional bluegrass fiddle tune “Turkey in the Straw”.

Since the tune itself is only repeated once (for a total of only eight measures) there is little room for variation in the accompaniment. The tune is accompanied by staccato eighth note chords marked quasi pizzicato in the piano score, obviously implying plucked fiddle strings. “The Jaybird” scene evokes a sense of simplicity and nostalgia in the midst of a tragic and chaotic plot, which ultimately strips Susannah of her innocence.

“She’s Like the Swallow” is a traditional folk song from Newfoundland and is thought to have its origins in England. Originally, the song was transcribed by Maud Karpeles in 1930. The thin texture created in Dougherty’s setting of “She’s like the Swallow” for voice and guitar adds a haunting and ethereal quality complementary to the text. The arrangement begins with a two-measure ostinato that establishes the key area of D minor and extends for twelve measures through the opening lines of the first verse. The prevalent themes of the song’s lyrics: nature, death and unrequited / lost love coincide with the romantic literary ideals of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The woman presented in the first verse is compared to a songbird, sunlight and a rushing river. These images, which describe a presumably vivacious, effervescent and happy young woman provide stark contrast to the misfortune which unfolds in verse three. The plucked primroses in verse two symbolize the woman’s loss of virginity and the full apron alludes to pregnancy. Finally, the ‘stony pillow’ mentioned in verse three is a symbol of death, heartbreak and loss. “She’s like the Swallow” was first published in England in 1934 in the anthology *Folk Songs from Newfoundland*. That same year, Vaughan Williams created a choral arrangement of the song. Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) also arranged the song for voice and piano. This arrangement can be found in his

Folk Song Arrangements (8) for high voice and harp (1976). In literature, the swallow's northern migration is often associated with spring.

“Wayfaring Stranger” is a traditional American folksong / spiritual with its roots in the southern Appalachian Mountains. The song was first published in 1816 by Bishop Richard Allen (a freed slave who founded the A.M.E. Church) and it has appeared in numerous hymnals and shape-note song collections since then. Despite Celius Dougherty's sophisticated and highly nuanced piano writing, his setting of this song retains its essential simplicity. Piano and voice begin simultaneously, with the first statement of the familiar melody underpinned with a chordal accompaniment that does not double the vocal line. Throughout the song Dougherty makes liberal use of octaves and fifths, which gives the song a feeling of openness and spaciousness. During the verse “I know dark clouds will gather round me, I know my way is rough and steep,” Dougherty uses chromaticism to deviate from the major key area of F-minor. In this way he literally clouds the otherwise stable tonality. During the final statement of the opening melody, marked *assai forte*, the piano texture thickens and the underlying harmonies become clearer.

“At the River” belongs to Copland's second set of *Old American Songs*, which was completed in 1953. William Warfield premiered the songs with Copland in Ipswich, Massachusetts at the Castle Hill Festival in the summer of 1953. Copland's adaptation of the beloved hymn tune by the Rev. Robert Lowry (1865) is widely recognized as standard sacred vocal repertoire. Between composing the first and second set of *Old American Songs*, Copland composed the cycle *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*. There is also an arrangement of “At the River” by Charles Ives.

Celius Dougherty's cycle of e.e. cummings poetry *Seven Songs* was composed between 1959 and 1964. Two of the seven poems are presented on this program, with the addition of "in time of daffodils", another e.e. cummings text not included in the cycle. Cummings' poetry appealed to Dougherty because his unconventional use of language, "stimulated me into new channels of thinking."^{viii} When considering repertoire to present alongside of these songs for a comparison, Dominick Argento's cycle *Songs about Spring* (1950-55) immediately came to mind. It seems an uncanny coincidence that all four poems set by Dougherty also share the same theme of 'Spring' as the Argento cycle. At the core of both Argento and Dougherty's compositions lies highly sophisticated piano writing, sensitivity to text in both the vocal line and accompaniment, and an extensive knowledge of the vocal instrument.

The thin texture of the opening piano accompaniment in "O Thou to whom the musical white spring" contains shifting harmonies that seem to wander aimlessly with no apparent tonal center. This creates a smoky, ethereal atmosphere for the vocal line, which also is tonally ambiguous in the opening four measures. The speaker proclaims verses of adoration and admiration to Love itself and ultimately offers her / his own soul to Love. As the poetry intensifies with the line that begins, "O Love, upon thy dim shrine of intangible commemoration," the accompaniment thickens and briefly increases to a forte dynamic (the only forte indication in the entire score). Dougherty's reasoning behind his choice to incorporate so much chromaticism throughout the entire song could perhaps be explained by the final line of text "I spill my bright incalculable soul." The many tonalities and textures explored in this song could easily serve as a musical metaphor for the many incalculable aspects of one human soul. The opening vocal

melody (“O Thou to whom the musical white spring”) is repeated in the piano accompaniment as the voice declaims the text “I spill my right incalculable soul.” This compositional choice musically and textually unifies the opening melodic statement with the closing line. About halfway through the song, there is a line of text “reincarnate song... mounts inimitably to lose herself” that is echoed immediately by the piano, which suggests that the song, once echoed, loses itself within the musical fabric.

“In time of daffodils” easily fits into this group of spring-themed poems, although by nature it is much more ethereal and introverted than the others. Unlike his other settings of e.e. cummings poetry, Dougherty sets this text much in the same strophic fashion as his folk songs: The vocal melody is repeated five times with very little variation in rhythm while the piano accompaniment contains variety and subtle nuance. The vocal line is chromatic and the range remains within the octave Eb4-Eb5. The unsettling chromaticism within the piano part combined with the eerie overall dynamic (marked between pianissimo and mezzo piano for nearly the entire song) color this poignant text with a chilly undertone. The poetry alludes to one who is reflecting on their life with an acute sense of its beauty and brevity and who has a strong desire to be remembered after their life is over. Three varieties of flowers, daffodils, lilacs and roses are all mentioned as a metaphor to a human life span. Although flowers ‘know’ how to bloom, grow and exude fragrance, they seem to be ‘forgetful’ or unaware of these processes. In the final stanza of the poem, the implied question ‘What happens when the self-aware human being is ‘set free’ from time on earth?’ prompts reflection.

The jingling 32nd note figures (usually major or minor thirds) found throughout the texture of the piano accompaniment of “your little voice” call to mind the ringing of a telephone. The rapidity of these figures energizes the song and adds a sense of urgency and titillating anticipation. The chromaticism employed in the vocal melodies of this song seems to have been added in order to provide insight to the personality of the girl being described by the text and the poet’s highly charged emotional reactions to her voice. The vastness of the “time and tide and death” that separates the two lovers is depicted melodically by an ascending vocal melody that spans an octave, from G4-G5. This text and also the historical context of the poem itself suggest that the poem is about someone serving overseas in the armed forces receiving a call or wire from their beloved. Finally, the sweeping staccato triplet figures in the piano mimic the girl’s playful laughter between the lines “leaping sweetly” and “your voice”.

Although Dominick Argento (b. 1927) composed several works during his undergraduate at The Peabody Conservatory, he considers his song cycle *Songs About Spring* to be his opus I. *Songs about Spring* was originally a three-song cycle composed in 1950 and premiered in 1951 at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore by Carolyn Bailey, soprano and with the composer at the piano. The final two songs (“in spring comes” and “when faces called flowers float out of the ground”) were added in 1955 and an orchestrated version of the complete cycle was premiered at the Eastman School of Music in 1960.

“Who knows if the moon’s a balloon” stands out among others in the set for melismatic vocal writing and sweeping, lyrical phrases. In this song, all of the melismas effectively depict some kind of flight, whether it is “sailing away”, the balloon’s flight

out of the “keen city in the sky” or a gradual ascent “high, higher with all the pretty people”. The constant motoric propulsion of eighth notes and sixteenths combined with continuously shifting harmonies and soaring lyrical vocal melodies truly give this song a sense of flight. This forward motion is briefly suspended towards the end when a more expansive vocal line emerges with the text “where always it’s spring and everyone’s in love” (perhaps calling to mind the image of a balloon drifting peacefully through the sky above the imagined city). Previous piano themes are echoed here in the upper register of the piano, adding a music box effect before the original tempo resumes.

“Spring is like a perhaps hand” has a transparent texture. The vocal melody is generally through-composed, however there is one instance of repeated melodic material which occurs on the repetition of the opening line, “spring is like a perhaps hand” halfway through the song. Towards the end of the song, Argento’s use of the Lydian mode creates a crystalline delicacy simultaneously mirrored in the phrases “carefully moving a perhaps fraction of flower here” and “without breaking anything.” Clearly this marriage of text and music present Spring as a powerful yet subtle, invisible life-giving force that so perfectly and so gradually transforms the natural world.

“In just-spring” depicts Spring as exuberant, rather obnoxious, always playful and sometimes unpredictable. The poem juxtaposes a “queer, old, goat-footed balloon man” (mentioned three times) with two young boys “running from marbles and piracies” and two young girls “dancing from hopscotch and jump-rope”. One could easily get the impression that this song was not meant to be simply beautiful but rather intended to elicit a more visceral response to its “mud-luscious, puddle-wonderful” imagery that is

rhythmically driven by constant eighth notes and a tempo marked *Leggero e gioioso* [light and joyous].

Alongside Bernstein's "I Hate Music" and "I'm a person too", Dougherty's settings of children's texts "Sonatina" and "Declaration of Independence" are a perfect match. Each of these four songs portrays the spirit of self-discovery, individuality and imagination that thrives in all children and sparks their curiosity. Although Bernstein's vocal writing is arguably more adventurous in terms of vocal range while Dougherty generally remains within an octave for both "Sonatina" and "Declaration of Independence", all four songs are unified in that they contain repeated melodic and rhythmic material, which serves the ideals of simplicity and candor sought by both composers.

The text of Dougherty's "Sonatina" is excerpted from Rose Fyleman's (1877-1957) anthology of children's poetry *Fairies and Chimneys*. Fyleman's original career aspiration was to become a schoolteacher, but because she failed the intermediate level at University College in Nottingham, she was unable to continue this pursuit. Instead, she decided to study singing and with the financial assistance of her aunt, she was educated in Germany, Paris and London. This helped her develop an increased knowledge of lyric poetry. Although Fyleman did not become an opera singer, she taught voice lessons in London after finishing her education. In addition, she began composing poetry for a women's paper where she was paid sixpence per line. Her writing career gained momentum after she began assisting her sister in an elementary school. She was dissatisfied with the poems that were available for children at the time and therefore became motivated to developing her own style. She took a colleague's suggestion to

submit the poem “Fairies at the bottom of Our Garden” for publication. *Fairies and Chimneys* soon followed in 1918 and was widely acclaimed in both England and the US. Ultimately, Fyleman took great pride in writing for children. She spoke to her audience with great care and without a tone of condescension, “[if] the work appeals to the mind and heart of a child I am content, for that in itself is surely the most satisfying reward we writers for children can know.”^{ix}

The assertive and at times ‘naughty’ text is set up with a rather lengthy piano exposition that includes an alberti bass and several scalar passages that call to mind the familiar sonatinas of Clementi that are so widely taught to young piano students. At the beginning of the musical score, the piano part is marked ‘*laboriously*’ with the parenthetical indication below: (Susie is practicing). The entire poem is a little girl’s rant of all things she does not like. Dougherty takes supreme advantage of this laundry list (which includes beetles, spiders, porridge, etc.) with his incredible text-painting skills. For example, in the two measures that contain the line “I don’t like tigers, not even in a book,” Dougherty assigns quarter note octave figures to the left hand which alternate between G and G#, with marcato accents on beats one and three, perhaps suggesting a roaring tiger. Towards the end, the universally recognizable ‘children’s taunt’ is stated twice in the right hand piano part as the left hand plays an accelerando descending chromatic scale before the taunt is repeated in the vocal line on the text “And I know it’s very naughty”.

Leonard Bernstein’s (1918-1990) first song cycle *I Hate Music* was composed in 1943 and dedicated to Edys Merrill, a friend of the composer. At one time, Bernstein and Merrill shared an apartment and Merrill was known to shout, “I hate music!” at home

while Bernstein was working with singers or entertaining friends. The song texts are simple and candid and Bernstein's ability to create vocal lines that are effortlessly speech-like in both their rhythm and inflection make the child's discoveries and assertions seem spontaneous in performance.

Author, editor, critic and playwright Wolcott Gibbs (1902-1958) stated, "The average writer is ornate to no purpose, full of elegant variations, and can be relied upon to use three sentences where a word would do."^x During his career as an editor at *The New Yorker* where he worked for three decades (1927-1958), Gibbs created 31 precepts of writing, which advocated clarity, brevity and simplicity. The words of "The Declaration of Independence" were copied down by Gibbs, and can be credited to his four-year old son. Gibbs wrote: "My four-year old son has made up a song, or a chant, or a poem, or something that he sings every night in his bathtub. It goes on practically forever, like the Old Testament, and I have been able to copy down only a part of it, but even this fragment seems to me to be one of the handsomest literary efforts of the year, as well as proof that children are the really pure artists with complete access to their thoughts...."^{xi} Throughout the entire song, the little boy in question refers to himself in the third person. This boy is not particularly fond of doing things that are expected of him such as taking a nap, eating his vegetables and going out in the fresh air. Vocally, the song is very simple. On his setting of the poem, Dougherty comments, "I have wished to give the vocal line a certain resemblance to the monotony and repetitiveness of any small child's singing. And then I have let the piano comment on the child's rebellious ideas."

“He is There!” is the second song in the group *Three Songs of the War* by Charles Ives (1874-1954). The group also includes the songs “Tom Sails Away” and “In Flanders Fields”. “He is There!” contains snippets of melodies excerpted from numerous songs including “The Battle-Cry of Freedom” (George Root), “Columbia, Gem of the Ocean” (David Shaw), “Tenting Tonight” (Walter Kittredge) and “Marching through Georgia” (Henry Clay Work). This cutting and pasting typical of Ives’s musical style serves a unique purpose for this specific song. The four major excerpted songs that are found in “He is There!” were all composed around the American Civil War (1861-65). Ives’s war songs were composed in 1917, obviously surrounding the events of WWI (1914-1918). The strangely familiar tune of “He is There!” contains disguised melodies from Civil War tunes. Perhaps Ives intended to subconsciously recall the past in order to justify the present by weaving these short melodic quotations into the musical fabric of the song. “He is There!” is an amalgam of musical patriotism that sparkles with the same vigorous call to arms as George M. Cohan’s popular song “Over There”, which was also composed in 1917. The most unique use of quotation in this song is the excerpted melody from “Columbia, Gem of the Ocean”. (During the 19th century Columbia was a popular poetic nickname for America.) Ives excerpts the melodic line from ‘*Columbia*’ with the text “Thy banners make tyranny tremble” and replaces it with “shout the Battle cry of Freedom” thereby combining the popular melody of one song with the well-known title of another.

The poem “Everyone Sang”, is from the collection *Picture Show* (1919) by Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967). It was written in commemoration of Armistice Day (November 11, 1918), which marked the end of WWI. Dougherty’s setting of this text is

overflowing with triumph and joy at the end of conflict and the anticipation of peace. Sassoon was a British poet and soldier who served on the Western Front during World War I. Sassoon's early writings were heavily influenced by the authors Thomas Hardy and Charles Algernon Swinburne, however his experiences of war atrocities in the trenches during World War II brought an added element of realism to his writing. Sassoon's most well-known poetry was written between 1917 and 1918. His anti-war sentiment is expressed in his letter of protest to the British War Department which was read at Parliament, 'I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it...I believe that this War, on which I entered as a war of defense and liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest.'^{xii} Although Dougherty recognized that this poem marked a specific moment in history he commented that the text "seemed...timeless; it need not be limited to 1918; it could express the joy of all mankind at the cessation of all war."^{xiii} The song was premiered in 1956 by soprano Eileen Farrell.

^{vii} Stiller, Andrew. "Floyd, Carlisle." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 17 Dec. 2013.

^{viii} Dougherty, Celi. Essay for NATS Convention p. 11.

^{ix} Hettinga, Donald R. Rose Fyleman (6 March 1877-1 August 1957) *British Children's Writers, 1914-1960*. Ed. Donald R. Hettinga and Gary D. Schmidt. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 160*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1996. (p. 107)

^x Nordquist, Richard. "Wolcott Gibbs's Theory and Practice of Editing." About.com <http://grammar.about.com/od/writersonwriting/a/gibbsediting.htm> accessed 1 Jan. 2014.

^{xi} Dougherty, Celi. Essay for NATS Convention p. 24.

^{xii} McDowell, Margaret B. "Siegfried Sassoon (8 September 1886-3 September 1967)" *British Poets, 1914-1945*. Ed. Donald E. Stanford. *Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 20*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1983. p. 327.

^{xiii} Dougherty, Celi. Essay for NATS Convention p. 20.

Chapter 3: Celius Dougherty and Aaron Copland

This is the third and final recital featuring the song repertoire of the composer Celius Dougherty (1902-1986). The first recital program, entitled “Celius Dougherty; the Composer” featured Dougherty’s art songs and folk song arrangements. I sought to elevate his stature by presenting a second program, “Celius Dougherty; the American” in which I thematically grouped Dougherty’s songs with songs by other great American song composers of the twentieth century (Copland, Floyd, Ives, Bernstein and Argento). This final program presents Copland and Dougherty in the context of the art song cycle.

Both Aaron Copland and Celius Dougherty have contributed significantly to American Art Song. Copland’s *Old American Songs* (a total of ten folksong arrangements) has become a cornerstone of American vocal repertoire for singers of all voice types and skill levels. In addition, his cycle *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1950) is considered to be his greatest contribution to the standard repertoire. Dougherty’s song output numbers around two hundred and most of his songs remain unpublished. Most of Dougherty’s published material exists in two volumes: *Celius Dougherty: 30 Art Songs* and *Folksongs and Chanties*.

Aaron Copland had already achieved great success as a composer of orchestral works by the time he wrote the cycle *Twelve poems of Emily Dickinson* in 1949-50. Copland’s great works from the 1930’s and 40’s include *Fanfare for the Common Man*, *Rodeo*, *Appalachian Spring*, and *Lincoln Portrait*. All of these embody a spirit of openness, economy of musical texture and an overall sense of clarity and directness, which became a hallmark of Copland’s populist style. Despite his two major contributions to solo vocal literature (*Old American Songs* and *Twelve American Songs*)

Copland did not consider himself to be a vocal composer because “his music...developed from essentially instrumental techniques.”^{xiv}

Copland was nearly fifty years old when he began composing his Dickinson song cycle. At this point he had the financial freedom (like Charles Ives) to pursue his own compositional interests. *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* was not a commissioned work. Copland first discovered the poem “The Chariot” (which became no. 12 in the cycle) and was overwhelmed at its poignancy. “I fell in love with...’The Chariot’... After I set that poem, I continued reading Emily Dickinson. The more I read, the more her vulnerability and loneliness touched me...I found another poem to set, then one more, and yet another.”^{xv} Chronologically, the Dickinson poems were set between Copland’s first and second sets of *Old American Songs*. They were composed in Sneden’s Landing, NY (now Palisades), a small, quiet town on the Hudson River. The quiet, serene atmosphere provided Copland with ample inspiration for setting Dickinson, who herself lived a private and secluded life.

Twelve poems of Emily Dickinson was premiered on May 18, 1950 in the McMillin Theater at Columbia University in New York City by soprano Alice Howland with the composer at the piano. Soprano Phyllis Curtin performed the cycle with Copland on numerous occasions. The cycle has been performed and recorded by sopranos and mezzo-sopranos alike, including Catherine Ciesinski, Jan DeGaetani, Martha Lipton (mezzo-sopranos), Adele Addison, Phyllis Curtin and Barbara Hendricks (sopranos). There are various vocal and psychological demands associated with this cycle. Any singer who wishes to take on the challenge of these songs must have strong, clear low notes. In addition, the range of many of the songs seems to linger in the passaggio (the

transitory vocal range between low and high registers), which can be difficult to maneuver. Emotionally, the cycle is exhausting. The spectrum of subject matter includes themes of lost love, nature, death and eternity. Each individual poem is a self-contained musical-poetic universe of great depth and meaning. The seriousness of the subject matter demands an extreme level of energized focus on the part of the singer. Even songs like no. 6 “Dear March, come in” or no. 8 “When They Come back”, which have lighter-themed texts, depend on the musical dialogue between the piano and the singer to bring them to life. In Copland’s economy of texture he achieves a poignant level of specificity for each song, however it is up to the singer-pianist team to translate those subtle variations into their own personal palate of expression. Another unique feature of this cycle is the introduction of recitative-like text declamation in various songs (e.g. no.’s 2, 3, 6, 8, 11). When Copland was composing this cycle, plans for his opera *The Tender Land* were underway (the opera was composed between 1952 and 1954). In retrospect, one could speculate that these passages of ‘recit’ in *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* were experimental in nature.

Copland intended for all twelve poems to be performed together, because of their weighty, cumulative psychological effect. Musically, only the 7th and 12th songs are related and the cycle does not follow any specific linear plot line. Each of the twelve songs was dedicated to a specific composer. Some of the dedicatees include: Elliot Carter, Lukas Foss and Alberto Ginastera.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was the middle child of three by Edward and Emily Dickinson. Her education began at Amherst Academy in Amherst, MA and continued at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. In the context of this recital program it is worthy to

mention that Emily Dickinson was influenced and inspired by the works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, particularly her sonnets and the novel *Aurora Leigh*. Dickinson identified with the character of Aurora (and with Elizabeth herself) who made a “painful escape from the confinement of a woman’s socially mandated role as helpmate to the comparative freedom of a self-defined artistic identity.”^{xvi} Dickinson also admired the poems of Robert Browning, particularly those found in the collection *Men and Women*.

Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson begins with two songs that show contrasting perspectives on the natural world. In no. 1, “Nature, the gentlest mother”, Nature is depicted as a goddess, a benevolent, all-embracing woman who indiscriminately and infinitely cares for each one of her children. This blissful scene of serenity is interrupted with the lightning and chaos of no. 2 “There came a wind like a bugle”. Here, nature shows her teeth as a thunderstorm turns the world upside down. There is also a setting of this text by Lee Hoiby in the song cycle *The Shining Place*. In no. 3 “Why do they shut me out of heaven?” Copland explores the use of recitative-like declamation with a relatively sparse piano accompaniment. When no answer is given to the poet’s urgent interrogation, she responds by repeating her question, only this time a little louder. In no. 4 “The world feels dusty”, the text is delivered by one who is close to the experience of death although it is not clear whether the poet is speaking of their own death or of someone else’s. Strangely, the poem can bring one to reflect more on the preciousness of the small moments of gratitude in life than on death itself. “Heart, we will forget him” (no. 5) demonstrates the inner conflict of one who wavers between letting go of a past love and clinging to fond memories. In no. 6, “Dear March, come in”, the poet holds a conversation with the personified month of March. Their chatter (largely one-sided)

closely resembles afternoon small talk splashed with a tinge of gossip. The dotted eighth / sixteenth-note figures in both the vocal line and the piano accompaniment give no. 7 “Sleep is supposed to be” a regal (although somewhat rigid) atmosphere. Larry Starr comments in *The Dickinson Songs of Aaron Copland*, “There is nothing in ‘Sleep is supposed to be’ directly comparable to the inescapable...sense of traveling that is created by the steady dotted rhythms of ‘The Chariot’.”^{xvii} Rather than attaining eternity, Copland creates a sense of suspended space and time by slowing down the harmonic motion in the piano. For most of the song, the accompaniment is mostly chordal and the focus is the declamation of the text. In no. 8 “When They come back”, the poet is acutely aware of the utter beauty of the springtime (particularly the month of May). How might one show appreciation for flowers blooming today if the beauty of next spring was not guaranteed? Heaviness and chaos set the mood for no. 9 “I felt a funeral in my brain”. Throughout the song, the poet seems to fight the funeral in her brain by blending in with the various musical textures, but to no avail. “The strength of this poem lies in its consistent funeral imagery. Dickinson...takes a rational set of images and expands...to describe mental states that are irrational.”^{xviii} The poet’s only relief from the heavily accented eighth note octaves of the right hand and the continuously buzzing chromatic sixteenth note runs comes toward the end in the last line “I and silence...wrecked solitary here.” Copland omitted Dickinson’s final stanza of text in which the poet meets a more dismal end: “And then a Plank in Reason, broke, And I dropped down, and down – And hit a World, at every plunge, And Finished knowing – Then.”^{xix} The broad chordal accompaniment of no. 10 “I’ve heard an organ talk sometimes” provides a majestic backdrop for the poet’s description of the transformative power of music. The sparse accompaniment (staccato

eighth note triplets) that dominates the piano texture of no. 11 “Going to Heaven!” is as light and unburdened as the vocal line. The poet feels joy in the fact that others believe in Heaven, “I am glad they did believe it,” but towards the end she admits her own unbelief, “I’m glad I don’t believe it...and I’d like to look a little more at such a curious earth.” The singer repeatedly tries over and over again to make the ascent with the opening line “Going to heaven.” This musical motive is revisited twice after its opening statement but the melody never evolves. The vocal line never ‘ascends’ past an F5. Although Emily Dickinson’s spirituality was a major part of her life, she tended to shy away from formalized religion. Her poem “My Sabbath” expresses the following sentiment in the opening verses, “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church – I keep it, staying at Home – With a Bobolink for a Chorister – And an Orchard, for a Dome.”^{xx} No. 12 “The Chariot” is the most contemplative of the songs. The poem’s unearthly message is delivered by the voice of someone who has already passed into the next life. The regular meter of the poem is Common Meter Double with lines alternating between 8 and 6 syllables. Copland omitted the third stanza (of five) in his musical setting which reads, “Or rather He [Death] passed us- The dews drew quivering and chill- For only Gossamer my Gown – My Tippet – only Tulle”.^{xxi} The poem personifies Death as one who is kind and considerate rather than frightening and morbid. It depicts the experience of death as a simple transition from one place to another. On this final journey, the experience of simple, everyday places and events becomes much more vivid. The beauty of a sunset is suddenly precious when one realizes that every experience is as transient as life itself. Dickinson expressed her thoughts on Eternity in a letter to Mr.s J. G. Holland:

“How unspeakably sweet and solemn – that whatever await us of Doom or Home, we are mentally permanent...The mind of the Heart must live, if it’s clerical part do not.”^{xxii}

Eglantine and Ivy, Celius Dougherty’s unpublished song cycle for soprano and piano, was commissioned by The Park Foundation in 1968. Park Dougherty, Sr. was Celius Dougherty’s brother. Before his death in 1968, Park Sr. helped support Celius financially. To ensure future financial assistance, members of the family established The Park Foundation. The commission was to be a project of Celius’s choosing. That same year, Celius began working to set eight sonnets of Elizabeth Barrett Browning excerpted from the collection *Sonnets from the Portugese*. Since Celius was a notorious perfectionist, he took great care in the composition and refinement of each individual song. As a result, the cycle was not completed until 1976.^{xxiii} Although the cycle was originally intended for the soprano Phyllis Curtin, she never performed the songs, because by the time they were completed, she had retired from regular public performances. *Eglantine and Ivy* was finally given its world premiere on June 15, 2005 at the St. Paul Summer Song Festival in St. Paul, MN by the soprano Maria Jette with Esther Wang at the piano. At that performance, the cycle was broken into two halves with the two Dougherty songs “The Bird and the Beast” and “Come All you Fair and Tender Maidens” in between.^{xxiv} This evening’s performance will mark the first time the cycle has been performed without interruption. I have transferred the complete cycle from their original handwritten manuscript form to electronic files with the software program FINALE, thereby creating the first sheet music version.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) is considered to be the first established female poet / author in the English tradition. Elizabeth was the eldest of twelve children and the daughter of Edward Barrett, a wealthy plantation owner who held numerous properties in Jamaica. Her father did not want any of his children to marry, and Elizabeth was no exception. After she married the author / poet Robert Browning in 1846, Elizabeth never spoke to her father again. The couple settled in Florence, Italy. The 44 poems that make up Elizabeth Barrett Browning's collection *Sonnets from the Portuguese* were composed during her courtship with Robert, who was six years her junior. Various factors which included the six year age difference between Elizabeth and Robert, Edward Barrett's opposition to their courtship and Elizabeth's frail health (she suffered from a chronic cough) likely contributed to the intense passion and sincere gratitude that fill each line of text. Elizabeth did not reveal the sonnets to Robert until after they were married. She considered them to be too personal for public consumption, but with Robert's encouragement, she agreed to publication.

Before Elizabeth Barrett Browning, all well-established English poets were male. She expressed some frustration in the lack of female predecessors with the sentiment, "I look everywhere for grandmothers, but see none."^{xxv} Furthermore, the sonnet form (originated by Petrarch in 14th century Italy) was a convention of courtly love. Poets were men writing on the subject of love for a woman. The idealized woman was often unattainable due to her social class, marital status or simply because she did not return his affections. A traditional sonnet consists of 14 lines of verse in iambic pentameter. In a Petrarchan (Italian form) sonnet, the first eight lines make up the 'octave' and the final six are commonly referred to as the 'sestet'.^{xxvi} The sestet is typically contrasting in

mood and tone to the octave and is often viewed as the solution to the problem posed in the opening 8 lines.^{xxvii} Elizabeth Barrett Browning boldly assumed the male role as the poet in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

The opening sonnet of *Eglantine and Ivy* follows the poet's experience of the transformative power of love. "In The Face of all the World", Dougherty captures the newness of the poet's experience of meeting her beloved and then being swept away by emotion ("...caught up into love...") by creating two distinct contrasting sections and by subtly evolving one into the other. In the opening measures (m. 1-19), the melodic material seems to wander aimlessly, twisting over and around itself without any clear harmonic resolution until the line, "caught up into love and taught the whole of life in a new rhythm." At this point, the vocal melody outlines a C7 (dominant of F major) and then an F minor before the key and time signature change from 4/4 to 6/4 (felt in a lilting 2) from Bb minor to F major. After the shift of key, meter and tempo (complete by m. 28), the piano accompaniment continues to wander chromatically, albeit with more direction than previously. Despite this chromaticism, the accompaniment includes parallel sixths, which creates a more harmonically settled feeling overall. The vocal melody also evolves in this section to include wider leaps as the piano subtly explores new harmonies (G minor, G7, A7, D major, C# dim, etc.). Here, Dougherty subliminally indicates the depth of change experienced by the poet as her world is now permeated with new experiences and fresh perspective. Another element that adds forward propulsion and breadth to the vocal phrases throughout the second half of the song is the rhythmic juxtaposition of triplet figures against duple figures, particularly during the line "...for when thou art or shall be..." The harmonies finally move towards a cadence in F major as

the vocal melody ends with the text “this lute and song...are only dear because thy name moves right in what they say.” This moment of resolution is only justified by the poet’s realization that her music is now (and presumably for all eternity) inspired by the presence of the Beloved.

The poet’s desire for repeated verbal affirmations of love is the central focus of the sonnet “Say Over Again”. She argues that there cannot be enough declarations of love, just as there cannot be too many stars in the heavens or too many flowers in the spring. The poet’s urgency is apparent from the beginning of the song. The second declamation of the very first words, “Say over again...over again” is up a whole step. The opening measures (m.1-14) have a bright, chirping texture, with both the piano right and left hands in treble clef. When the poet admits that in the darkness (or perhaps referring to the absence of spoken truth) she is haunted by doubt (m. 17-21), Dougherty shifts the piano accompaniment to a lower register. The most obvious example of text painting centers around the line, “though the word repeated should seem a cuckoo song as thou dost treat it,” in which the Beloved’s repeated ‘I love you’s’ are analogous to a repeated birdcall. Dougherty’s ‘cuckoo-song’ is a descending major third and it emerges throughout the song during the brief piano interludes (m. 4, 15, 23, 51). The voice itself becomes the cuckoo song with the urgent entreaty, “Say thou dost love me, love me, love me...” although on a minor third rather than a major third (m. 34-35). Subsequently the piano responds by echoing the voice in m. 38-39. At m.40 the tempo and rhythmic subdivisions suddenly slow down and the mood grows quiet. In this section, harmonies become blurred, and the former chatty declamation of text is replaced by a slow, sensuous vocal melody (m. 40-49) on the line “Only minding, Dear to love me also in

silence with thy soul.” As soon as the vocal melody concludes, the song’s opening melody is repeated in the piano right hand. The final harmony is also unexpected; a D major chord within the key of F.

“Beloved, Thou Hast Brought me Many Flowers” is more evocative of Dougherty’s folk song arrangements than any of the other songs in this cycle. In his arrangements of folk tunes, Dougherty characteristically frames simple melodic material with exquisitely embellished piano accompaniments. Dougherty achieves a similar effect with this whimsical text. In the sonnet, the poet makes a sincere apology to her Beloved, “take back these thoughts which here unfolded too” and offers amends in the form of Eglantine and Ivy. The piano echoes the voice after the declamations, “Here’s Eglantine,” and “here’s ivy”. The key of E-flat major is clearly established at the beginning of the song and maintained for the entire song. Dougherty’s decision to begin and end the song ‘firmly rooted’ in the key of E-flat major is most likely related to the last line of the poem “and tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.” The vocal melody is simple and remains within a narrow range only slightly exceeding an octave (D4-Eb5). The accompaniment has a lush, expansive, chordal texture with a delicately interwoven countermelody that echoes the vocal line rhythmically and melodically. Perhaps Dougherty intended this repeated melodic motive to subliminally illustrate the winding vines of ivy that the poet bestows on her Beloved or even the intertwining souls of the lovers. The reconciliation between the two lovers is well suited to the delicate warmth of Dougherty’s musical setting.

At first glance, the sonnet “Thou Hast Thy Calling” is somewhat off-putting to a twenty-first century reader. Although the poet highly praises her Beloved, who takes on the role of a “gracious singer of high poems,” in this context, she is consistently self-deprecating. In modern society where women are largely perceived and encouraged as equals it seems strange to hear the voice of a nineteenth century female poet expressing her own perceived unworthiness and disbelief. The most obvious examples include: “and canst thou lift this house’s latch too poor for hand of thine?”, “And canst thou... bear to let thy music drop here...at my door?”, and finally “My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.” The reader may be somewhat relieved to know that both Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning thought the other was more skilled as an author / poet and that self-deprecation went both ways in their marriage. The rhythmic motive stated in the opening line “Thou hast thy calling” is repeated in the piano accompaniment throughout the entire song. Dougherty creates a noisy racket with heavily accented eighth notes in the high piano tessitura as the poet describes the bats, owls and crickets in the roof of her house. Towards the end of the song, the text slows down and becomes more transparent (“There’s a voice within that weeps as thou must sing,”). Finally the elegant, arching phrases of the gracious singer’s song emerge in the piano right hand.

The most astonishing aspect of the fifth sonnet in this song cycle can be found in the opening line, “When Our Two Souls Stand Up, erect and strong, face to face.” Here, the poet claims equality (rather than subordination) to her lover, a position that was not widely accepted for a woman of the 19th century. Another audacious statement occurs later in the poem, “Think, in mounting higher the angels would press on us...Let us stay, rather on earth, Beloved...” Although the poet claims that she and her Beloved are “pure

spirits”, she ultimately chooses earthly pleasures over heavenly ones. The chromaticism in the vocal line of this song seems very deliberately related to the perceived sensual inflection of the text. For example, in m. 45-47 the words “Let us stay” descend chromatically from A natural to A-flat and the words “rather, on earth” resolve similarly from C-flat to B-flat. The cascading triplet figures which remain constant in the piano accompaniment throughout the song add forward propulsion to the rich, warm texture and provide excellent support and contrast for the broad, lyrical vocal phrases. The key area shifts briefly to E-major (m. 57-64) during the line “and permit a place to stand and love in for a day.” Here, the “pure spirits” are in fact briefly isolated before returning to E-flat major.

In general, Celius Dougherty was compelled to set poems that explicitly referenced music. He wrote in an essay he delivered at a NATS conference, “Of course the most obviously adaptable poem to set to music is the one which makes a direct reference to music or singing.” The song “The First Time That the Sun Rose” is no exception. Here, the Beloved takes on the role of master musician, while the poet refers to herself as an “out of tune, worn viol” and even worse, as a defaced instrument. It would seem that the poet is fearful that she will be put down or discarded by her lover “at the first ill-sounding note.” Only at the end of the poem is there a change in the poet’s self-image. The final lines seem to open up the possibility for such a “great soul” to accept and even cherish such an instrument. The key of G-minor dominates most of the song, however G-major appears briefly in measures 46-49 in association with the Beloved (“I placed a wrong on thee.”). It would seem that Dougherty wished to obliterate the poet’s poor self-image here by slowing the text down and lowering the

vocal melody, which seems to have tired itself out from lamenting its own existence. The voice sustains a D4 for the final four measures of G-major. Dougherty's most obvious (and in this case, humorous) text painting is in reference to music. On the word '*ill*' in the line "put down at the first ill sounding note" (m. 35-36) there is a D-flat. This pitch is a tri-tone away from G, the tonic note of the song's main key area. On the words "instruments defaced" there is intense dissonance between the vocal melody and the accompaniment.

It would seem that Dougherty strategically placed the triumphant text of "And Yet, Because Thou Overcomest So" after the most blatantly self-deprecating sonnet to offer the poet the opportunity to overcome her own self-judgement and graciously surrender to the unconditional and kingly love of her conqueror. This song is the most vocally demanding of the entire cycle because of its long, soaring phrases that remain primarily in the upper middle register. There are several instances of text painting in this. The vocal line ascends by stepwise motion on the words "lifting upward" and descends by leap on the contrasting phrase "as in crushing low." The vocal line mirrors the text for the phrase "and as a vanquished soldier yields his sword" by descending chromatically. Even after admitting defeat, the poet seems hesitant to yield.

Rhythmically, the song is in constant motion with ceaseless eighth notes and eighth note triplets in the fabric of the accompaniment. This forward momentum comes to an abrupt halt as the harmony changes to A major (m. 55-57) when poet declaims, "here ends my strife." The rhythmic propulsion resumes and intensifies (*più moto*) in m. 58. After this point, chromaticism ceases in the vocal line as the poet remains within the home key of D-flat major with the words, "If thou invite me forth, I rise above abasement at thy

word.” In the final line of text “Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth,” the poet is transformed to become an equal of the Beloved (a sentiment previously expressed in no. 5 “When our two souls stand up”) by virtue of her own surrender. Here, Dougherty stretches the vocal melody outside of the limitations of the key signature with a B-double flat.

Sonnet XX, “Beloved my Beloved” stands out among the other songs because of its reflective mood of quiet gratitude. There is a sense of wonder that remains constant throughout the song as the poet marvels at her life before meeting her Beloved. In the opening measures (1-18) the poet compares this previous existence to a wintry landscape. Both the vocal melody and piano accompaniment are settled in the key of A-flat minor. This empty, bleak texture is a perfect musical analogy to the matching text, “when I think that thou was in the world a year ago, what time I sat alone here in the snow.” The musical backdrop shifts in m. 19-28 with the text “but link by link went counting all my chains”. Here, Dougherty literally creates ‘chains’ of chromatically descending eighth notes. The poet overcomes these limitations as the vocal line ascends and gains momentum until the chains are broken (literally, “struck” by the “possible hands”) of the Beloved. The piano then echoes the triplet figure of “possible hands” three times in progressively lower octaves of the left hand accompaniment.

Although the reasons behind Dougherty’s decision to set the sonnets of Elizabeth Barrett Browning are unclear, it is apparent that Dougherty sought to exceed the limitations of her amorous verses through lush musical textures, soaring lyrical melodies, colorful harmonies, extensive text painting, and strategically placed rhythmic motives.

This cycle is a masterpiece worthy of recognition among its peers. It encapsulates the compositional style of the mature Celius Dougherty at his finest.

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- xiv Vivian Perlis, *Copland: Volume 1. 1900-1942* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984) p. 249
- xv Vivian Perlis, *Copland: Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 158.
- xvi Jane Donahue Eberwein, *Dickinson; Strategies of Limitation*. (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts, 1985) p. 90
- xvii Larry Starr. *The Dickinson Songs of Aaron Copland*. (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2002) p. 76
- xviii Carolyn Lindley Cooley. *The Music of Emily Dickinson's Poems and Letters*. (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2003) p. 151
- xix Ibid. p. 151
- xx Ibid. p. 141
- xxi Ibid. p. 104-105
- xxii Ibid. p. 106-107
- xxiii Phone interview with Park Dougherty, Jr.: April 29, 2014
- xxiv Dougherty, Celius. "Folk Duets, Solos & the World Premieres of *Eglantine and Ivy* & *The Ballad of William Sycamore*" : CD Liner Notes
- xxv (LEBB 1:232) Dorothy Mermin. *Elizabeth Barrett Browning; The Origins of a New Poetry* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) p. 1
- xxvi <http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/glossaryItem.do?id=8084>
- xxvii <http://www.sonnetwriters.com/definition-of-sonnet/>
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