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A historical time rich with change, the turn of the twentieth century was not without its hardships as well as its accomplishments. Musically speaking, it was a celebrated and popular time of diversified and large orchestrated symphonies and operas. Yet, as classical music was at a zenith of popularity, it was an uneasy and confusing era. Closing in on the accepted, supported and successful romantic style of music was a social revolution that affected all art forms and worldwide attitudes. World War I was looming and the Second Industrial Revolution was about to explode initiating change and fears throughout civilization. Art forms have always reflected the times of which they exist, and this critical time of 1880-1933, like any other era, mirrors a highly diversified time of enormous change and renaissance.

This study is an examination of what the cabaret genre consisted of during this fifty year period. I explain the beginning, the peak and the slow but constant changes which occurred through the onset years in France, Germany and eventually America. I introduce and detail the idea that there are really two forms of cabaret that eventually amalgamate into one idea. I present the effects of world history and events that utilized the cabaret as a tool of expression for a generation and will surmise those effects have indeed provided a bridge to many of the musical styles and entertainment venues that we hold in present day society. In the recital portion of my dissertation, I perform a selection of cabaret songs which show specifically different styles and languages that depict the essence of the cabaret genre style as it has evolved from its inception in 1881. These works, garnered by research of cabaret history, provide tangible evidence of the musical stylistic changes which occurred through cabaret's roots in France, to its height of popularity in Germany and how it was perceived and developed in Britain and America.

CABARET: A HISTORICAL AND MUSICAL PERSPECTIVE OF A STRUGGLING ERA

by

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PREFACE

In the process of deciding my topic area for this lecture recital, I felt it important to utilize experiences and certainly interests in my own past as a vocalist. My musical education began with musical theater and singing jazz with the University of Oregon Faculty Jazz Band. Later, while working toward my Bachelor of Music degree, I found a much bigger and more rewarding challenge in classical music. Though my career blossomed professionally with opera and oratorio, I always knew that at some time I would return to my jazz beginnings.

Cabaret, with some classical and jazz influences, mirrors my own classical and jazz background. Musically, it has many jazz characteristics, including (but not limited to) a sense of freedom in rhythmic license, vocal production, staging when applicable and of course improvising. In contrast, many notable and respected composers of the more classical style of music have regarded cabaret as something to address. Therefore, there exist cabaret songs which appear to be written under the numerous sub-genre categories of theater music, also known as Commercial Contemporary Music (CCM). There also exist other cabaret songs which fall under the musical category of legitimate art song to which I refer as a more classical style.

My intent and goal is to examine how these two opposing styles of singing can somehow be combined and proven capable of existing in the same concert. I have chosen to search for answers through an examination of the history of cabaret and compositional practices of the time. During my research, I have examined historical events worldwide, vocal performance practices, literary influences and visual arts reflective of the time leading me to the conclusion that cabaret was far more than a genre of music or even a specific type of performance venue. Rather, it was the cry of a generation hurting and confused, its cry refusing to be ignored, but rather demanding to be heard as it struggled with the injustices, social and political that pervaded the time.

Eventually the cabaret, which can be labeled a genre of performing art and also a type of performance venue, was simply a tool: a multifaceted vehicle used with the intent of “being heard” and promoting change. Some of the greatest artists and minds of the time were its greatest supporters.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Musicologists and music historians have struggled to agree on the major questions surrounding the birth of cabaret. Author and performer Debra Tedrick calls it the “when,” “how,” “why,” and “who” questions linked with that influential and rather short-lived genre.¹ As one understands what cabaret is and what it is not, it becomes evident that there are simply too many factors integrated within its description to completely understand how cabaret originated. Supplying a significant influence on the arts and the political mores that dominated the majority of Europe around the turn of the twentieth-century, cabaret is ever illusive to a true and concrete description. The interpretation of this rich institution is rooted in complex cultural history of late 19th century France, and the distance of a century indeed presents difficulties in imagining the “flavor” of this past-time.² This all occurred after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), when the French were trying to regain their sense of self and declare their individuality again.

The significance of these findings indicates that much of our entertainment today has been birthed because of the cabaret years of 1881-1933. There was an appeal, a draw, even a “je ne sais quoi” according to the French that captured the attention of western civilization during its fifty year life span. That generation discovered there was a power in satire, sarcasm, honesty and humor – all common requirements of cabaret. Likewise, our present entertainment has continued using those same power tools which cabaret utilized. One need only observe the prevalent and

¹ Tedrick, Deborah Lynne. *Black cats, Berlin, Broadway and beyond: The genre of cabaret*. M.F.A. dissertation, University of Central Florida, Dissertations & Theses: 2006. p.40

² Fields, Armond. *Le Chat Noir: A Montmartre Cabaret and Its Artists in turn-of the Century Paris*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art 1993.

unmistakable sarcasm and/or humor that is thrown at political figures every election year to become aware of the cabaret influence.

Musically speaking, the two styles of singing, which can be plainly recognized as a *classical* style and a *popular (CCM)* style are simply that: two styles of singing. Sung separately or combined, they can be placed in one concert. In order for these styles to be effective, the singer must be knowledgeable of the vocal practices used in each while presenting a good command of healthy vocal technique and a passion to share the genre with an audience. Author Wolfgang Ruttkowski states that cabaret songs represent a “certain style of performance rather than a song, even though obviously not every kind of text can be performed as a cabaret song.”³

The popularity and importance of cabaret was a combination of many varied factors including a musical venue to vent about social and political injustices as well as a platform for the voice of the common and educated man to provide discussion and feedback within the “cabaret” setting. These factors primarily led to empowering people. Its significance is grounded in the clear recognition that the arts, how and where they were performed, not only proved powerful enough to initiate change but also reflected the emotional status of a society.

The choice of song repertoire for this lecture recital was selected by simple terms of variety of music, ranges, texts, and varying languages. The composers Erik Satie (1866-1925) and Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) represent the French contribution of cabaret. Satie was highly involved in the Montmartre cabaret and Poulenc, the composer who was a young man when cabaret faded from its peak years, was still highly affected by its style. The German composers chosen to represent the kabarett, Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951),

³ Ruttkowski, Wolfgang. “Cabaret Songs.” *Popular Music and Society*. Vol.25, no.3/4 (2001, Fall and Winter). p. 45

provide evidence of some musical changes from the French cabaret as it became a huge influential political power. Lastly, the English speaking composers, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) and William Bolcom (1938-) seem to derive their compositional ideas by referring to the commonalities of cabaret contents: humor, mood songs, prostitute songs, and ballad-like stories.

CHAPTER II

CABARET'S FRENCH BEGINNINGS

The simple description of cabaret was initially worded as, “a business that served liquor.” It was much more than that, and due to its growing popularity more cabarets began to open up around Paris. In the late 1880’s, a simple rural area of Paris (Montmartre district) evolved, becoming a home for artists and entertainment. This was the beginning of the golden age of cabaret, which lasted approximately fifty years. It ended in 1933 when political crises in Europe put an end to freedom of thought and expression, the traits cabaret exuded in its most exaggerated form.⁴ It was there that poor artists, people of high culture, doctors, bankers, journalists, poets and anyone who had a desire for intellectual banter could escape.

Even in modern times, the names of some are recognizable, such as the Moulin Rouge which was also located in the red light district of Montmartre in 1889. Many of these establishments featured scheduled entertainment that ranged in size from large, full floor shows, (though not in the early years) to individual soloists. Cabaret expert and author Lisa Appignanesi simplifies an order of musical venues which preceded and led to cabaret. Starting with the *Bistro* or *Café*, the main focus was the solitary singer. Soon the idea of costumes, props and minimal staging emerged as the *Café-Concert* came into being. Full scale bands and larger audiences were implemented next; this new venue was referred to as the *Music Hall*. Their focus was

⁴ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Cabaret”

entertainment.⁵ In contrast, cabaret reversed the growing pattern of bigger and bigger entertainment by focusing on intimacy and very specific artistic goals.

Montmartre and the Hydropathes

All music historians agree on the location of the first acknowledged cabaret establishment. *Le Chat Noir* (The Black Cat), founded by Rodolphe Salis, opened as the first cabaret on November 18, 1881 in the bohemian Montmartre district of Paris.⁶ Salis, a struggling painter, found himself fascinated with Montmartre and the cheaper rents there. With the financial



Figure 1: Le Chat Noir, 1906

aid of his father and the encouragement of new-found friends in the Hydropathes Society (an artistic group united by their love of poetry and “modern ideas” that found a home at Le Chat Noir with the sole intent of shocking people and delighting one another), he decided to open Le Chat Noir as a place for the Hydropathes to meet weekly and support local artists. (Figure 1) It was a private, secret society that held closed meetings and performances so that they could first recite to each other and second, entertain one another⁷.

Word spread quickly regarding the Hydropathes Society, making Le Chat Noir all the more alluring to the public. This society proved that the cabaret was more than music or songs and alcohol, a common belief held by the general society of the time. It was a free haven, a type

⁵ Appignanesi, Lisa. *The Cabaret*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. p.5

⁶ Ibid., p.11. Montmartre was considered a rural area for social outcasts, calling themselves the *canaille*, the rabble, snubbing the bourgeoisie and known for their famous windmills in the outlying areas.

⁷ Tedrick. p. 40-41

of permission for artists to perform anything that made a statement. The Bistros and Café-Concerts showcased costumed singers, using props and singing love lyrics and/or mood songs. These venues provided a way to report current events while entertaining, but the Hydropathes expanded that idea by adopting songs (Chansons) while adding a satirical twist which proved it to be a powerful protest song. Historically, these songs were vehicles for the “initial elements of cabaret.”⁸

A trendy characteristic of the cabaret was its ability to combine varied art forms, thus creating new art forms. This trait acted as a catalyst for numerous entertainment performance venues as well as art form genres. Historian, Peter Jelavich writes, “all aspects of cabaret were always morphing and changing”⁹ leading more artists to participate. Some performing artists had celebrity status and were featured on posters, such as actor/singer Aristide Bruant, or Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec whose paintings and name are synonymous with the French Cabaret. Toulouse Lautrec painted dancer/actress, Jane Avril so often that her high leg kick with ruffles flowing made her an iconic representative of cabaret.

(Figure 2)



Figure 2 : Jane Avril at the Jardin de Paris. By Henri de Toulouse Lautrec, 1893

The Black Cat was a familiar character in French folklore and represented a figure that “punished disobedient children and sometimes acted like a seductive lover. More recently it

⁸ Ibid. p.40

⁹ Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1993. p.3

became a symbol for artistic freedom in Montmartre.”¹⁰ It is believed that Salis chose the title to represent the era of prominent symbolism. The sexual connotations of the cat advertised to the community that there were other facets to this establishment. In total, the message from Salis successfully permeated the attention of Paris and the long term outcome highlighted social and political opinions through entertainment provided.

Imagine this setting! A small café or corner restaurant in Paris...it comes alive only at night and you walk in. There are a handful of tables. It is fairly dark but you can see paintings by Toulouse-Lautrec on the tattered walls. Clinking glasses, smoke and laughter fill the room as you seat yourself at a table in front of someone presenting a bawdy poem. He finishes. People respond with laughter and an emcee introduces a small ensemble of instrumentalists who begin to play what appears to be a simple folk tune with a strong dance-like rhythm...the singer joins in. Her text is a humorous tale about prostitution. Following the song, another presenter stands up and recites a poem. It is sarcastic, funny and very honest regarding some injustice of the government and how they keep asking for more taxes. There is always some type of discussion that follows each of the many presenters. Some patrons even take it upon themselves to argue their personal views with performers. Welcome to the Cabaret!

The popularity of Le Chat Noir on the artistic world exposed a deep desire to delve into entertainment for other reasons than pure entertainment. Cabaret influenced the visual, musical and literary arts and left a permanent mark on the power of said arts. Author Robert Henning states:

¹⁰ Fields, Armond. *Le Chat Noir: A Montmartre Cabaret and Its Artists in Turn-of-the-century Paris*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of art, 1993. This excerpt is taken from the Forward by The Assistant Director for Curatorial Services

Through camaraderie, the stimulation of new and audacious ideas, the lively mixture of all professions and classes of people, artists found a sympathetic ambience for their creative impulses...the Chat Noir pervaded the art world of its time. It has left a legacy which we honor here.¹¹

Le Chat Noir (Figure 3) became the “place to be” and, as the addiction to this sanctuary grew, famous artistic patrons also grew in numbers including French painters, Adolphe Willette, Henri Rivière and the iconic Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Toulouse-Lautrec became so enamored and fascinated with the cabaret movement, he incorporated cabaret performers in many of his works of the period. The political satirist and caricaturist André Gill and numerous French poets such as Paul Verlaine and Jules Laforgue were only a few of the literary giants that frequented her doorsteps. Representing the world of music were some of the great French composers of the period, Claude Debussy, Erik Satie, Charles Cros, Jules Laforgue and a young Francis Poulenc. The more notable actors included Coquelin Cadet, the high stepping Jane Avril (Figure 2)¹² and Aristide Bruant (Figure 4), to name only a religious few.

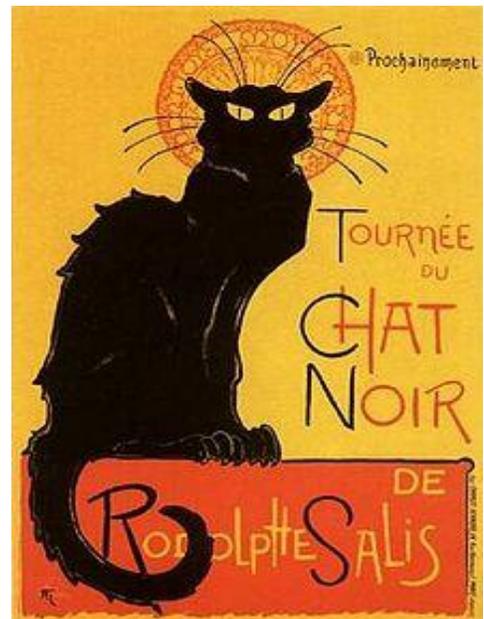


Figure 3: Tournée du Chat Noir. By Theophile Steinlen, 1896

¹¹ Ibid. This excerpt is taken from the Forward by The Assistant Director for Curatorial Services.

¹² Toulouse-Lautrec, Henri de. *Jane Avril at the Jardin de Paris*. 1893. The poster in Fig. 2 is of dancer/actress Jane Avril (1868-1943) who was made one of the most recognizable dancers of the cabaret due to Toulouse-Lautrec who painted her regularly.

The draw to the cabaret and its popularity was undeniable. By 1900 the craze spread to other areas of France. Cabarets were multiplying and their locations and atmospheres within played a role in the description of a true cabaret. The rooms had to be small and intimate as there were never large crowds able to fit in the facilities. This enabled a close group and easy banter or “discussion.” The ensembles consisted of a few wind instruments, piano and a drum.

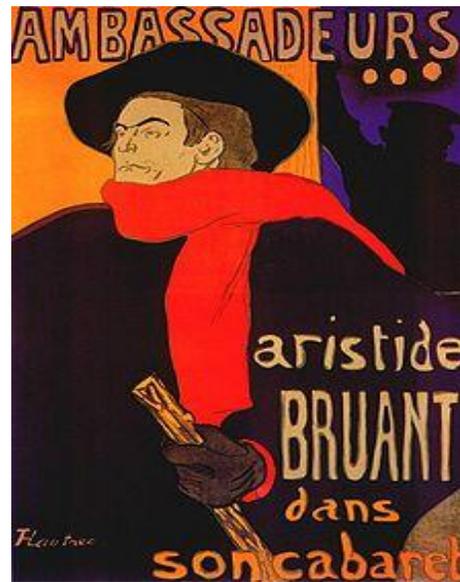


Figure 4 : Ambassadeurs: Aristide Bruant dans son Cabaret. By Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, 1892

The initial purpose of cabaret was to provide a small venue for entertainment and drinks. It was an attempt to follow the “Variety Show” originated in the English Music Halls. This same venue was mimicked in America with the name “Vaudeville.”¹³ However, cabaret brought a new type of intimacy not found in more traditional music venues. People sat at cozy candlelit tables, drinks in hand, while performers worked among them, sometimes joining them at their tables and interacting or conversing.¹⁴ People felt comfortable in this atmosphere and their singular opinions on any given number of subjects were valued and expected. This new venue separated the cabaret from other types of traditional entertainment because it was delightfully intellectual. Lisa Appignanesi states:

¹³ Jelavich, Peter. *Berlin Cabaret*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1993. p. 20

¹⁴ Kenrick, John. *Musicals101.Com The Cyber Encyclopedia of Musical Theatre, TV and Film*. S.l: s.n. 1996-2003. <http://www.musicals101.com>

Growing out of the café concert (Music Hall), the cabaret was, from its inception in 1881, immediately a more intellectual and self-consciously artistic form, though laughter and entertainment were of its essence.¹⁵

Clearly there were many draws to this venue, but in the end, cabaret was a great escape, the escape from compulsory political, religious, economical, sexual and social mores forced upon the people. These mores were scrutinized, routinely challenged and always presented through satire, irony and well prepared humor.

¹⁵ ¹⁵ Appignanesi. p.5

CHAPTER III
KABARETT: THE MOVE TO GERMANY

Since cabaret became a political voice, it was inevitable that its influences would be carefully monitored by Germany. Prior to 1900, Germany utilized a hierarchical ladder of authority. The “yes-man” (conforming to the social and political norm) was encouraged and political disaffection followed. Corruption was prevalent; there existed a somber sense of duty to family, church, business and state.¹⁶ The French and their free spirit were completely misunderstood by the Germans, or if understood, they were scoffed at as lower class. This became more evident as cabaret took on “a more aggressively political character” when it flourished in Germany.¹⁷ The German Kabarett, also referred to as cabaret with a K, was about “breaking the rules.” The rumors of a new art form coming out of France, and the bohemian nature of cabaret, helped launch new thinking for the Germans. Albert Langen started the weekly satirical magazine, *Simplicissimus* (1896)¹⁸, which was politically daring and unapologetically brash. Though new to German thinking, it was welcomed by the commoners in society and was a good venue for voicing social and political injustices that were being experienced in their everyday lives. Partly due to the influences of Nietzsche and his views on philistinism (in contradiction, he valued art and challenged political and social norms), the Germans slowly began to consider that humor and alcohol consumption could be considered more allowable.

¹⁶ Appignanesi. p.36

¹⁷ Bateman, Marlene Titus. *The Cabaret Songs, Volume One of William Bolcom and Arnold Weinstein: An Exploration and Analysis*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Dissertation Services., 2002. p. 52.

¹⁸ Appignanesi. p.37

World Events and Influences on Kabarett

The Second Industrial Revolution occurred between 1875-1905, rapidly changing worldwide economics. These changes, clearly believed to be advancements, combined with economic and social unrest to lead to instability and more political controls. Between 1876 and 1903 alone, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone, Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb, Rudolf Diesel patented the diesel engine, Guglielmo Marconi invented the wireless telegraph and the Wright brothers made their first successful airplane flight. In addition to these events, there were significant changes within worldwide politics which propelled unrest and eventually led to World War I (1914-1918). A generation struggled to keep up with the plethora of advancements and although it had an effect on the arts, it had a more significant effect on society.



Figure 5: Yvette Guilbert, 1913

The arts became a needed outlet for a sense of community and assurance. The German kabarett became more than a source of entertainment; it became a needed voice of courage, representing the power of the people and a reflection of their concerns.

The famous French cabaret diseuse, Yvette Guilbert (1865-1944), took a concert tour through Germany in 1902 (Figure 5). This served to get the attention of the German people and their desperate need for entertainment that ventured outside the walls of conventionality.

Kabarett concentrated more on use of the diseuse (female monologue entertainer) and relied on regular poetry as well as ballad-like tunes. The ballad usually consisted of numerous

verses in strophic form, telling a story. The music therefore took second seat to the texts. In addition, due to Guilbert, the use of more body involvement and facial expression became expected. In the concert hall or professional stage, the voice's primary importance was beauty of sound. Now the voice was a tool for expression and "Sprechstimme" was commonplace.¹⁹ In the French cabaret beginnings, the freedom of the voice to be used with untrained techniques was accepted as part of the charm, but "Sprechstimme" (the use of speech type singing) was initiated and perfected in the German kabarett.

The German artists dedicated themselves almost completely to political and/or social topics where they were able to criticize using cynicism, sarcasm and irony. The Germans wanted the best of two worlds. On the one hand, it was a very proud time for German composers in the classical world of music where their works were prolific and highly successful. Yet, other people were drawn to this apparent shallow folk music or popular song forms (kabarett) which was deeply satisfying because of its literary content; the kabarett flourished.

As in Paris, the first German kabarett, *Überbrettl*²⁰, was founded in 1901 and then branched off into many other smaller venues beginning in Berlin. As the Weimar Republic came to power, it ended most forms of censorship, and kabarett enjoyed a time of unmitigated freedom. However, during that era (1919-1933), the Nazi regime, which eventually came into power in 1933, attempted to annihilate the art form. This forced many performing artists to escape to the safety of other countries such as America.²¹

¹⁹ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd ed., s.v. "Cabaret"

²⁰ Appignanesi. p. 38

²¹ Tedrick, Debra Lynne. p.2. The Weimar Republic was the name given by historians to the parliamentary republic established in Germany to replace the imperial form of government, named after Weimar (1919).

Kabarett's horizons broadened, often adding elements such as partial or full nudity. The Weimar Era was decadent, lascivious, and lewd, as it utilized the freedom that censorship denied. It continued to deal with contemporary society, political and social commentary. The kabarett was also enamored with sexual content, particularly homosexual themes. Like burlesque, kabarett utilized lewd humor and bawdy performances. It was an "anything goes" atmosphere.²² Debra Lynne Tedrick states:

Whereas the original French cabarets featured intellectual and insular clientele, concerned with 'slice of life' performances that lampooned society at large, German Kabarett during the Weimar Era bit harder at the establishment. German Kabarett got bolder and more politically satirical, warning its public of the demon that was to come as the Nazis came to power.²³

When historians speak of the height of cabaret, they are always referring to the German kabarett. If indeed this genre is related to rebellious, brash and obstinate behavior, then the peak of its existence was in Germany. What started out as a natural reaction to the political controls, turned into an all out civil war. The members of the Munich bohemia were vehemently against the strict morality law, the Lex Heinze, which permitted police to interfere with art and ended up being the most bitter dispute over censorship in the Wilhelmine era (1871-1918).²⁴ The Lex Heinze could take the form of censorship, deletion of one part of a performance, book confiscations or imprisonment of an overly offensive artist.²⁵ The resistance came in the form of the Goethe Alliance for the Protection of Free Art and Science. Members passionately and

²² Ibid., p44.

²³ Ibid., p.44

²⁴ Jelavich, Peter. *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting and Politics*. Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1985. p.140. The Wilhelmine Era refers to the period of German Kaiser, Wilhelm I, 1871, to the abdication of his grandson, Wilhelm II, 1918.

²⁵ Appignanesi.p.43

aggressively verbalized they were prepared to do anything to fight against the Lex Heinze. The war was on and kabarett was winning. Its defiance was pure and unadulterated, proven by its popularity, continuous growth of entertainment ideas and poetry which fed on painful honesty. Marya Delvard, the first stage vamp of the century, symbolized kabarett. She dressed in a customary clinging black dress with a high neck, while singing with a tired melancholy voice. Following are typical lyrics of a song she regularly performed. The words from German writer, Frank Wedekind's (1864-1918) are painful and honest.

Ilse

I was an innocent child,
Fifteen no more,
When love drove me wild,
Pleasure turned me into a whore.

He held me tight, that boy
Laughed and whispered his joy
Gently tugged my head,
Down, down onto the bed.

Since then I love them one and all
Life is a bright spring, a happy sigh,
And when my charms fade and fall
I'll gladly take to that last bed and die.²⁶

Marya Delvard brought life to these uncomfortable lyrics descriptive of the times she lived in. This was an indication that kabarett songs were evolving along the path of their lifespan because of one common goal: to bring the text alive and make it as powerful as possible by reflecting the political and social issues of the time.

²⁶ Ibid., p.46

CHAPTER IV

STYLES

Cabaret songs, seemingly simple, are actually complex compositions when dissected analytically. There are basically two schools of styles, but they expanded as the cabaret song moved forward and from one country to another. According to author Wolfgang Ruttkowski, these two schools can be summarized by two different artists: Yvette Guilbert (*Rhythme Fondu*) and Aristide Bruant (*Chanteuse*). Though both are from the French cabaret, each has solidified the two distinct schools of style.²⁷

When most think of cabaret style, they will most likely think of Guilbert's method. Although she began her cabaret singing using the *chanteuse* style of singing (which is considered sing-song), she bravely broke through with a new creative and highly effective style, "*Rhythme Fondu*," which is translated as a "softened rhythm." Plainly put, she is more of a *recitalist*, as someone who recites but with added music, which was unheard of and innovative during her era. Commonly found in jazz performance practices, the *rhythme fondu* style allows for an abandonment of the underlying meter for the sake of the text being expressed.²⁸ This is not to be confused with "speaking voice," which is merely speaking but remaining faithful to the written rhythms. So unique and unusual was this style, Guilbert actually baffled her audiences at first. She declared it was her contribution to the art of the *diseure*. Ruttkowski claims that only a "thoroughly musical artist can afford this style without losing track."²⁹ The difficulty is using

²⁷ Ruttkowski., p. 45

²⁸ Ibid., p. 46

²⁹ Ibid., p. 47

the new found freedom while never allowing the ear to forget where one is or what is happening in the accompaniment.

It should be noted that the *rhythme fondu* style is not for just any singer. Similar to “scatting” in jazz, this technique was used by Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Tormé and Carmen MacRae in post-World War II, as they relied heavily on keen awareness of chord progressions while knowing the melody thoroughly. This recitation, which gently toys with proper pitches, can also be found in musical theater as well. Additionally, actor Rex Harrison introduced it in musical theater and made a career using this style while never considering himself a singer.

The second style, *Chanteuse*, is epitomized by the cabaret singer Aristide Bruant. Extremely famous as a cabaret singer during the widely popular time of Montmartre and Le Chat Noir, Bruant was a true Chanteuse (a term also referring to a person). This is a style that employs singing throughout a song. Although a singer can do much while vocalizing, if that singer uses any type of *Sprechstimme* or recitation, it is not the chanteuse style of cabaret singing. The intricate changes in styles were morphing so rapidly that labeling singers, methods and contents during the cabaret years was a challenging assignment. For example, there existed, the “chansonnier,” “chanteur,” “chansonnière,” “chanteuse,” “diseur,” and “chansonnette.” Each had a different role and description ranging from the “chansonnier,” who sang poetry he wrote (even though someone else may have written the music) to the chanteur who sang poetry by someone else.³⁰

The debate whether cabaret song is a literary genre or music genre is still contested, as it really depends on the text and how the music is performed. It is true that the effectiveness of the song is dependent on the literary quality of the text. As genres of music and entertainment (and

³⁰ Ibid., p. 49

particularly song) have expanded after cabaret into musicals, operettas, vaudeville, variety shows and reviews, they have all been affected by the honesty and directness of the cabaret.

Song Content Categories

Cabaret songs generally have four types of textual content, although there are some sub-genres that exist. Focusing on these primary four, there is a distinct pattern to the progression of these content categories that parallel the growth of Cabaret from France to Germany. Wolfgang Ruttkowski defines these as *The Ballad*, *The “I” or Prostitute Song*, *The Viennese Couplet*, and *The Mood and Feelings Song*:³¹

The Ballad. Chronologically, this is the earliest form of song found in French cabaret. A basic definition of the ballad is a light, simple song which tells a story which consists of two or more stanzas all sung to the same melody. Sometimes the use of obvious, and even “tacky” rhyming will present itself which certainly adds to the charm and/or humor of a song. However, rhyming is not generally found in the more serious texts. In this lecture recital, an example of the ballad is *La Diva de L’Empire* (Erik Satie).

The “I” or Prostitute Song. This is a format that has the singer introduce herself and talk to her audience before she begins to sing. Sometimes she would even talk to the audience whilst in the middle of her song, sharing her own feelings. This method of song was used prior in the operetta or musical farce but was commonly found in cabaret’s “prostitute songs.” An example in this recital is, *Tell me the Truth About Love* (Benjamin Britten). Due to its sexual content, *Gigerlette* (Arnold Schoenberg) exemplifies the “prostitute” song.

³¹ Ibid., p. 53-56. Ruttkowski explains in detail his content categories as a vehicle to analyze the cabaret songs. They have been described here in a condensed form.

The Viennese “Couplet.” This song content ranges from reflections of personal topics (such as sexual), to social or political. The Viennese Couplet, in traditional musical analysis, refers to a musical form used by the Viennese school: AABB. This type of content category is defined by structure of the couplet and is primarily for satire. Using a joke as a formula, there is the set up and then the punch line. With this song, there is a refrain (AA) or chorus and verses (BB) that elaborate the story line. Again, Satie’s, *La Diva de L’Empire* is a good example (see below). This refrain sets up the story but is also used as a punch line. The verses are used as set ups. To illustrate, what follows is verse 1 only and the refrain, where it is clear how the couplet is present:

Refrain : **(A)** Sous le grand chapeau Greenaway,
 Mettant l’éclat d’un sourire,
 D’un rire charmant et frais, De baby étonné qui soupire,
(A) Little girl aux yeux veloutés, C’est la Diva de l’Empire.
 C’est la rein’ dont s’éprenn’nt, Les gentlemen
 Et tous les dandys De Piccadilly.

Vs. 1 : **(B)** Dans un seul "yes" elle mettant de douceur
 Que tous les snobs en gilet à cœur,
 L’accueillant de hourras frénétiques,
(B) Sur la scène lancent des gerbes de fleurs,
 Sans remarquer le rire narquois
 De son joli minois.³²

Moods & Feelings Songs. Songs whose primary purpose is to reflect or provoke certain moods or feelings fall in this group. As they are often originated by lyrical poems and then set to music, this music is composed on the mood the poem evokes. In this recital the French song, *Les Chemin de L’Amour* (Francis Poulenc) and *Waitin* (William Bolcom) are clear examples due to the moods on which they focus and encourage.

³² Satie, Erik. *Mémoires et chansons, Piano et Chant*. Paris: Editions Salabert, 1988. p.56-61

Musical Differences between Classical and Cabaret

Music prior to the birth of Cabaret was typically popular, folk or formal classical in style. The “Late Romantic Period” provided the many influences of Brahms, Mahler, Strauss, Wolf, Debussy, Gounod, Tchaikovsky, Ravel and others that catapulted new ideas in classical compositions. Orchestrations became larger as Tone Poems became more prolific and a slow but steady move towards chromaticism and atonality surfaced. Here are a few differences between classical music world and Cabaret (CCM) music that widened their gap:

Late Romantic Music

Large Orchestrations

Ensembles (small and large)

Through-Composed

Common Use of Leitmotifs

Texts: Spirituality, Perfect Romantic Love, Mature

Rhythms Highly Complex

Melodies Can Be Long

Extensive Use of Chromaticism

Beauty of Vocal Legato Line

Large Concert Hall

Cabaret Music

Small Orchestrations

Ensemble Size (3-8)

Ballad, Strophic

No Leitmotif

Bawdy, Sex, Satire, Political Texts

Rhythms Simple

Dance-Like, Simple, Short Melodies

Chromaticism Rare

Vocal Beauty Not as Important, Sprechstimme

Very Small Facilities

The Ten Commandments of Cabaret Life

Simplicissimus, the aforementioned satirical magazine started and published in 1896 by Albert Langen, eventually grew and expanded into the artist's pub entitled the *Simplicissimus Künstlerkneipe*. Whereas the onset of cabaret welcomed the artists, bohemians, and night-life loving bourgeoisie, the *Simplicissimus Künstlerkneipe* maintained a clientele of poets, political radicals and students opposed to the official norms of cultural life.³³ They drew up and entertained their own *Ten Commandments of Cabaret* that have since become a historical reflection of that time and that genre. The commandments that were published and placed on the entrance door of that establishment offer yet another glimpse to reasons why the kabarett was so popular.

1. Come, if possible, late, so that the guests already there know that you *do* have something else to do.
2. Give your coat to the woman in the Cloakroom. You're a friendly man and your coat is new.
3. Sit down haphazardly and noisily. Then change your seat often until you find one with the right shape.
4. Read the menu and wine list loudly and emphatically to your companion. Learn it if possible off by heart, and then order a portion of "later."
5. When everything concerning your material welfare has been looked after, take part – even if at first only willingly – in the artistic presentation. Look upon the conf rencier with contempt right from the start. He's an ass and because of that, let him feel your spiritual superiority.
6. Time your noisy interjections so that they erupt precisely where they don't fit. This contributes enormously to enlivening the programme.

³³ Appignanesi. p. 64

7. If you're a woman, then criticize the dress of the performing artiste boldly and with wit. (Don't forget your lorgnette as a prop for this). *Author's Note: A lorgnette is a pair of opera glasses that have a holding handle.*

8. During song presentations, aim your cigarette smoke casually toward the podium. The singer will inhale it willingly. It makes his voice soft and supple.

9. During acts, use your cutlery and glasses in an unbothered fashion. Their sound does one good and replaces the band.

10. When you have been bored long enough by the programme and have gotten angry over the bill, leave as noisily as you came in with the consciousness of having spent a most enjoyable evening.³⁴

³⁴ Appignanesi. p.63. Appignanesi refers to the *Simplicissimus-Künstlerkneipe*, ed. Rene Prévot, where the Ten Commandments were first displayed in Munich. A variety of sources refer to this group of non-sense rules to signify the bohemian and carefree mood that the establishments insisted upon.

CHAPTER V
INFLUENCES ON AMERICA

In order to immigrate to America, Kabarettists had to make efforts to blend with the an American society suffering from its own cultural issues including the abolition of slavery, the Depression, Prohibition, Women’s Rights, the Beat Generation and the Gay Liberation Movement, which all made for good cabaret fodder. Prohibition turned out to be the best thing for Jazz and the characteristics of cabaret influenced entertainment. History suggests that America’s Jazz scene became a parallel to cabaret as the new “breakthrough” music.

America’s Gilded Age and Jazz Infancy

During the beginnings of French cabaret, the United States was at peace with the world. In 1890 America was friendly with the Canadian north and the neighbors to the south. During this *Gilded Age* (1870-1901) the National Treasury was overflowing and the country was considered prosperous. There was a jealous interest of America among European nations.³⁵ Since it is clear that cabaret began as a voice of frustration due to any number of injustices viewed by the people, it would not appear the United States was a very good candidate to follow that music venue or style. However, after the abolition of slavery, many blacks found themselves with

³⁵ Nicholls, Brendon. “The Beat Generation: Literature, Gender and Race in Postwar America.”, *War-Torn Tales: Literature, Film and Gender in the Aftermath of World War II*. Edited by Danielle Hipkins and Gil Plain. New York: Peter Lang Publishers.1997. p.224

limited employment opportunities and turned to musical entertainment, playing in clubs and brothels where the jazz sub-genre, Ragtime, was first founded (1897-1918).

As cabaret continued to adjust and change during the late 1920's and 1930s, there were social issues in America that contributed to entertainment changes as well. The depression and prohibition led to *Speakeasies*. They experienced a not-so-secret popularity much like the European cabarets, but were run by gangsters and provided illegal alcohol. It was an evolving entertainment of parody, satire and sarcasm under the umbrella of intelligence, and it continued to survive. Throughout the entire twentieth century the influences of cabaret contributed to the musical styles and venues of entertainment such as Big Bands, Musical Theater, Night Clubs, Jazz and eventually film and TV.

In the 1930s, the great depression hit and unemployment rates increased to 25% nationally. It was far worse for African Americans as the unemployment rate reached 60% for this demographic. Blacks were not allowed to do studio or radio work³⁶ as musicians. Because of this, they took their music to the streets or anywhere else they could perform. Their music had a new sound, unfamiliar and contagious to the listener, proven by its continual growth and popularity. It was first labeled *Jazz* by critics referring to the progressive black music which started in New Orleans and moved up the Mississippi landing in Chicago in 1915.³⁷

³⁶ About.com: Jazz. <http://jazz.about.com/od/historyjazztimeline/a/JazzByDecade193040.htm> (accessed 08/16/2010)

³⁷ The History of Jazz. <http://meltingpot.fortunecity.com/zaire/721/historyframe.htm> (accessed 08/16/10)

Cabaret's Commonalities with Jazz

Although the comparisons of cabaret music style and the venue for performances differed from jazz sub-genres, these two music styles have been linked. They were both founded on injustices, frustrations, and unrest which effected many people. They also found ways to defy what were considered *normal* music practices. Cabaret music pushed the limits of accepted song texts to bawdy and uncomfortable topics, while jazz sub-genres broke the rules of harmonies and rhythmic freedom. Both made a statement and received the attention of the western world.

Older generations viewed both as threatening traditional ways and values. Jazz was looked upon as immoral, an aspiration for which cabaret always strived. Jazz critic Joachim Berendt defines jazz as a "form of art music which originated in the United States through the confrontation of blacks with European music" and concluded that "jazz differs from European music in that jazz has a special relationship to time, defined as 'swing,' which is a spontaneity and vitality of musical production in which improvisation plays a role."³⁸ Decades later, jazz morphed into other sub-genres like Swing, Blues, Dixieland, Bebop, Cool Jazz and the music of the Beat Generation. Jazz's foreshadowing of the Beat Generation utilized spontaneous prose as a performance method. Spontaneity, or abandoning control, mirrored improvisation elements within Jazz music and was one of the reasons why the Beat Generation adopted jazz so easily. At times their music had a tendency to influence one another. Beat Generation founding father Jack Kerouac used "Blow as deep as you want to blow" as a statement reflecting the beatnik attitude.

³⁸ Berendt, Joachim E. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to Fusion and Beyond*. Translated by H. and B. Breidigkeit with Dan Morgenstern. Brooklyn, NY:Lawrence Hill Books. Brooklyn. 1981. p. 371

“Beat writing blew like a horn because jazz influenced the very structures of its art and social life.”³⁹

The “Beat Generation”

Similar to the French cabaret, the American *Beat Generation* was initiated by a group of writers in the 1950s. Though they didn’t have the title of the cabaret Hydropathes Society, they held the same kind of status and mystery as their French literary predecessors. These writers, often considered the founding fathers of the beat generation, primarily consisted of Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), William S. Burroughs (1914-1997) and Jack Kerouac (1922-1969). They were novelists, essayists, and spoken-word performers who were not drawing attention to their work but rather “launching a full-scale assault on society.”⁴⁰ Author Preston Whaley reiterates this thinking stating:

It has stressed the sense in which Beat literature was intrinsically oppositional and radical and symbolized the struggle of the individual spirit against regimes of governmental-corporate, ideological, and aesthetic power. This oppositional assessment of the Beats clusters around prominent signs in the 1950s such as McCarthyite demagoguery, the FBI black lists, HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), the suppression of the working class and civil rights, the “Howl” obscenity trial and other censorship incidents, the barriers to publication and academic recognition, and cultural industry images that pictured a homogeneous United States whose constituents were white, affluent, heterosexual, suburbanite American families that seemed to know themselves through nonessential shopping.⁴¹

³⁹ Whaley Jr., Preston. *Blows Like a Horn: Beat Writing, Jazz, Style, and Markets in the Transformation of U.S. Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.2004. p. 6

⁴⁰ Appignanesi. p. 228

⁴¹ Whaley. p. 1

The *Beats*, also known as *Beatniks*, became an embraced cultural phenomenon known for rejecting materialism, status quo, and the bourgeoisie. As with the early years of cabaret, Beats originated by rebelling and attempting to shock society. They were considered hedonistic, delving into topics such as:

- Alternate forms of sexuality and freedom in sexual expression (a prominent subject during the kabarett years as well)
- Experimentation of drugs
- Interests in eastern religions

Literature used by the Beats reflected the thoughts and feelings of a generation, and when compared to the early years of cabaret, there are some definite similarities. The era in which this poem was written is unclear.

I was an innocent child,
Fifteen no more,
When love drove me wild,
Pleasure turned me into a whore.

He held me tight, that boy
Laughed and whispered his joy
Gently tugged my head,
Down, down onto the bed.

Since then I love them one and all
Life is a bright spring, a happy sigh,
And when my charms fade and fall
I'll gladly take to that last bed and die.⁴²

This poem is based on the lyrics from Frank Wedekind's 1891 play, *Frühlings Erwachen* (*Spring Awakening*) as recited by the character, Ilse, who speaks of the inequities of certain behaviors between men and women. These biases were prevalent and unfair in 1890 as well as 1960. These beliefs are still valued today, as the Broadway musical production of *Spring*

⁴² Appignanesi. p.46

Awakening, taken from the original *Frühlings Erwachen*, received eight Tony awards including Best Musical in 2010. Beginning as a voice for injustices in 1891, the sentiments of this poem still hold true and continue to capture the attention of people struggling for a voice to be heard.

CHAPTER VI
SONG CHOICES

The repertoire for the recital portion of this document reflects songs from the French cabaret, German kabarett and works by American and British composers influenced by the cabaret after 1938. The lyrics (and English Translations), song content categories, characteristics of cabaret previously noted, background information and performance recommendations are provided with each selection. The common rhyming patterns, indicative of many cabaret songs, are shown in bold type.

Les Chemins de L'Amour⁴³

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)
Text : Jean Anouilh (1910-1987)
From Musical, *Léocadia*. 1940

Les chemins qui vont à la mer
ont gardé de notre passage,
Des fleurs effeuillées
et lécho sous leurs arbres
de nos deux rires clairs
Hélas! Des jours de bonheur
radieuses joies envolées
Je vais sans retrouver trace
dans mon Coeur....

Refrain : Chemins de mon **amour**, :
je vous cherche **toujours**,
Chemins **perdus** vous n'êtes **plus**
et vos échos sont sourds. Chemin du désespoir,
Chemin du souvenir,
Chemin du premier jour Divin chemin d'amour.

⁴³ Poulenc, Francis. *Les Chemins de L'Amour : Valse Chantée*. Paris : M. Eschig Publishers. 1945.

Si je dois l'oublier un jour,
la vie effaçant toutes choses Je veux dans mon coeur un souvenir repose plus fort que notre
amour Le souvenir du chemin
où tremblante et toute éperdue Un jour j'ai senti sur moi
brûler tes mains.

Refrain

Translation: The Pathways of Love

The paths that arch of the ocean
protect our crossing, .
flowers losing their leaves and the echo under the trees,
Our two bright laughs.
Alas, from days of happiness
radiant joys take flight,
I journey without recovering your traces
In my heart.

Refrain: Paths of my love
I try to find you always
lost paths, you don't exist anymore,
And your echoes have been muffled.
Paths of despair,
Paths of memory,
Paths of first love,
Divine pathways of love.

This I am duty-bound to forget one day
the way that life obliterates all things.
I want in my heart that a memory will rest
More strongly than another love.
The memory of paths
Where trembling and completely passionate,
a day I have felt above myself
to burn and be consumed by your hands.

Refrain

Content Category: *Mood/Feeling and "I" Song.*

This text is in first person, and the primary goal of the piece is to create a specific mood justifying the content category. The lyrics lament the many paths to love: the past paths hurt so badly and the hope for the right path leads to love again. It is often said that the French believe

that love is pain, and this song supports that theory. There is no humor or political satire present, and the relaxed tempo and vocal freedom (playing with rhythms within the chordal progressions) give this song a strong sense of the cabaret genre as well as jazz. There is an honesty in the lyrics which creates a sense of vulnerability from the singer and makes this one of the most beautiful and haunting songs in the cabaret genre.

The musical form is ABAB, which also mirrors the poetic form. The first and second verses (mm.1-36) are followed by the refrain (mm. 36-66). Although straight forward in its form, this song has many metronomic liberties throughout. It often feels like every cadence requires rubato, but one must plan carefully where to use it and to what extent. If not thoroughly planned in advance, the piece can drag and get continuously slower. Keeping a strong sense of three (or the feel of a “waltz”) will prevent this from happening. It is important that the piano treats the introduction and the postlude as a piano solo, where varied dynamics and tempi are encouraged and even expected. A true “Mood/Feeling” content song must allow a great deal of variety in dynamics and tempi for the sake of revealing the mood of the text. This mood should guide the performer throughout.

La Diva de L’Empire⁴⁴

Erik Satie (1866-1925)

Text: Dominique Bonnaud (1864-1943) and Numa Bles (1871-1917)

1904

Refrain (A) Sous le grand chapeau Greenaway,

Mettant l'éclat d'un **sourire,**

D'un rire charmant et **frais**

De baby étonné qui **soupire,**

(A) Little girl aux yeux veloutés,

C'est la Diva de l'Empire.

C'est la rein' dont s'éprenn'nt

⁴⁴ Satie, Erik. *Mélodies et Chansons: Piano et Chant*. Paris : Editions Salabert,1988. p.56-61.

Les gentlemen
Et tous les dandys
De Piccadilly.

(B) Dans un seul "yes" elle mettant de **douceur**
Que tous les snobs en gilet à **cœur**,
L'accueillant de hurras frénétiques,
(B) Sur la scène lancent des gerbes de **fleurs**,
Sans remarquer le rire **narquois**
De son joli **minois**.

Refrain

Elle danse presque **automatiquement**
Et soulève, oh très **pudiquement**,
Ses jolis dessous de fanfreluches,
De ses jambes montrant le **frétillement**.
C'est à la fois très très **innocent**
Et très très **excitant**.

Refrain

Translation: The Diva of the Empire

Refrain: Under the great hat Greenaway,
Showing the burst of a smile,
Of a laugh charming and fresh
Of a surprised baby who sighs,
Little girl with velvety eyes,
It's the Diva of the Empire.
It's the queen of whom become enamored
The gentlemen
And all the dandys
Of Piccadilly.

In only a "yes" she puts so much sweetness
That all the snobs in waistcoats to heart,
Welcome her with frenetic hurrahs,
On the stage toss wreaths of flowers,
Without noticing the mocking laugh
Of her sweet little face.

Refrain

She dances almost automatically
And lifts up, oh very modestly,
Her underthings of frills and furbelows,
Of her legs showing the quivering.

It is at the same time very very innocent
And very very exciting.

Refrain

Content Category: *The Ballad and The Viennese “Couplet.”*

This song is a simple narrative song telling the story of a young flirtatious girl, making it a ballad, but it is also considered a Viennese “couplet” for two reasons: its AABB form (noted in the French lyrics above) and the text, which suggests a joke set-up and then a mild, but effective, punch line. Because Satie grew-up in and around the first cabaret, Le Chat Noir, his cabaret music can be considered truly indicative of the original musical styles written and performed. Satie often utilized simple melodies and strong dance-like rhythms, and this is a good example of that writing.

The performers need to fully understand the translation and point of the story to be effective in the presentation. The poem tells the story of a young girl (the diva) in a cabaret establishment called “L’Empire.” Her Greenaway hat (named after Kate Greenaway, a British designer who created the very large hats of the elite during the turn of the century) was her trademark attire. The hats were extreme in their velvet, beaded braids, plumes and their fit which hovered over the left eye. This diva is a tease. In her performance as a cabaret singer, she acts like a little girl. She flirts with her skirt. Showing a hint of leg, she giggles and laughs at her predominantly male audience with her proposed naiveté. All of these characteristics should easily guide the performance of this song. It is simple in form and alluring in content. There is no climax musically or textually. Satie sets the song in 2/4 and notes that it is to be performed in “Temps de Marché” throughout. The accompaniment begins with a dance-like introduction, which acts like a “vamp.” It could possibly play on for any number of extra measures which would allow a singer to speak to her audience if so desired. A comfortable tempo (a quarter-note

at 60 beats per minute) should be consistent throughout. There are a selected few measures where the singer and accompanist can stretch a word or cadence for effect as in measure 13, “d’un rire charmant et frais.” Although the tempo is fairly strict, the singer can show great variety in the two verses by singing long legato lines verses staccato singing as in measures 61-64. It is here where the text, “Elle danse presque automatiquement” (she dances almost automatically), presents an appropriate time to sing more staccato. The more the singer is willing to flirt with her audience, the better. However, it should not be at the cost of excellent vocal production as is the occasional practice in later Kabarett songs where sprechstimme is common.

Gigerlette⁴⁵

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
 Text: Otto Julius Bierbaum (1865-1910)
Brettli-Lieder (Brettli Songs) 1901

Fräulein **Gigerlette**
 Lud mich ein zum **Tee**.
 Ihre **Toilette**
 War gestimmt auf **Schnee**;
 Ganz wie **Pierrette**
 War sie **angetan**.
 Selbst ein Mönch, ich **wette**,
 Sähe **Gigerlette**
 Wohlgefällig **an**.

War ein rotes **Zimmer**,
 Drin sie mich emp**fang**,
 Gelber Kerzens**chimmer**
 In dem Raume **hing**.
 Und sie war wie **immer**
 Leben und Esprit.
 Nie vergess ich's, **nimmer**:
 Weinrot war das **Zimmer**,
 Blütenweiss war sie.

Miss Gigerlette
 Invited me to tea
 Her evening gown
 Was as white as snow
 Like a little sparrow
 She was done up
 I'd wager that even a monk
 Would look upon Gigerlette
 With pleasure.

A red room it was
 In which she received me
 Yellow candlelight
 Shimmered in the space
 And as always, she was
 Full of life and spirit
 Never can I forget it:
 Wine red was the room
 She was white as a blossom.

⁴⁵ Schoenberg, Arnold. *Brettli-Lieder*(*Cabaret Songs for Piano and Voice*). Los Angeles, CA: Belmont Publishers. 1970.

Und im Trab mit **Vieren**
Führen wir zu **zweit**
In das Land spazieren,
Das heisst Heiter**keit**.
Daß wir nicht verlier**en**
Zügel, Ziel und **Lauf**,
Saß bei dem Kutschier**en**
Mit den heissen **Vieren**
Amor hinten **auf**.

And in a trot on all fours
The two of us went
For a ride in that land
Called happiness.
That we not lose reins
and running to the target
sitting in the background
With our hot limbs
Love lied there.

Content Category: *The Ballad and the Prostitute Song.*

If a song is considered a prostitute song, because it tells a story, it will almost invariably be a ballad as well. This story, in first person, speaks of a sexually inexperienced man who shares his first sexual encounter at a brothel where he meets “Fräulein Gigerlette.” It is difficult to miss the humor in the description of Fräulein Gigerlette; she is dancing around like a little sparrow dressed all in white. Humor also presents itself through the constant barrage of rhyming patterns in every line of the text, indicative of cabaret’s stylistic play-on-words.

Schoenberg begins the song with a four-measure piano introduction which should be played with metronomic ease and particular attention to measure 4, with its marking *ritardando*. Again, the literary content should guide the tempi and dynamics if not already provided. The general tempo is not suggested but phrasing suggests somewhere in the vicinity of a quarter note at 75 beats per minute. The song consists of three verses which appear to be somewhat strophic. In each verse, the young man grows in his interest and excitement towards her which has an effect musically where the singer must pace her excitement carefully so that she does not climax too soon in her story telling.

The Brettli-Lieder are named after the *Überbrettli*, a Kabarett establishment which was part of the famous Berlin *Buntes Theater*. (Figure 6)⁴⁶ Schoenberg wrote these songs just prior to moving to Berlin where he was hired to conduct there. Known for the development of the twelve-tone method, Schoenberg validates his compositional abilities by writing these songs in a more tonal fashion.

In the third verse, the singer, due to the text, should consider a slow *accelerando* (mm. 49-56). The piano has a *ritardando* marking in m. 57 which pulls the music back to an *a tempo* and then the *accelerando* starts over again, reflective of the text's true meaning; this is sex with the ebb and flow of excitement. Schoenberg cleverly and humorously writes a musical climax indicative of the physical sexual climax and it cannot be ignored. In performance, the singer and accompanist must be completely willing to take full advantage of that moment (mm.65-68) and make use of the *ff* dynamics and the *ritardando*. If not performed with a sense of abandonment in the last verse, the song fails in what Schoenberg was seeking. The entire Brettli-Lieder, a combination of eight songs, are intellectually humorous and dramatically suggestive regarding sex. Due to the conservative nature at the end of the century, these songs were antithetical and became popular quickly.



Figure 6: BunteTheater, Berlin, 1901

⁴⁶ http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/sub_image.cfm?image_id=2157. Accessed 10/6/10

Prolog⁴⁷

Kurt Weill (1900-1950)

Bertold Brecht (1898-1956)

Die Sieben Tödsunden der Kleinbürger (Seven Deadly Sins of the Petty Bourgeoisie) 1933

- 1) Meine Schwester und ich stammen aus Louisiana
Wo die Wasser des Mississippi unterm Monde fließen,
wie Sie aus den Liedern erfahren können.
Dort hin wollen wir zurück kehren, lieber heute als morgen.

- 2) Wir sind aufgebrochen vor vier Wochen,
nach den grossen Städten, unser Glück zu versuchen.
In sieben Jahren haben wir's geschafft, dann kehren wir zurück.
Aber lieber schon in sechs!

- 3) Denn auf uns warten unsre Eltern and zwei Brüder in Louisiana:
ihnen schicken wir das Geld das wir verdienen.
Und von dem Gelde soll gebaut werden ein kleines Haus,
ein kleines Haus am Mississippi, in Louisiana.
Nicht wahr, Anna? Ja, Anna

- 4) Meine Schwester ist schön, ich bin praktisch.
Sie ist etwas verrückt, ich bin bei verstand.
Wir sind eigentlich nicht zwei Personen, sondern nur eine einzige.
Wir heißen beide Anna.
Wir haben eine Vergangenheit und Eine Zukunft,
Ein Herz und ein Sparkassenbuch,
und jede tut nur, was für die andre gut ist.
Nicht wahr Anna? Ja, Anna.

Translation: Prologue

- 1) My sister and I left Louisiana
Where the water on the Mississippi flows beneath the moon,
Like you always hear in the old songs,
We look forward to our home-coming and the sooner the better.

- 2) It's been four weeks since we started
after the big cities to try our luck.
In seven years our fortune will be made and then we can go back.
In six years would be much nicer!

⁴⁷ Weill, Kurt. *Die Sieben Todsünden der Kleinbürger der Kleinbürger*. New York: Schott Music Corp. 1956.

3) For we wait for our parents and two brothers in Louisiana:
We'll send them all our money as we make it,
For all the money's got to go to build a little house
A little house on the Mississippi in Louisiana.
Right, Anna? Yes, Anna.

4) My sister is beautiful, I'm practical.
She's just a little mad, my head is on straight.
We are really not two persons, but only one.
And both of us are Anna,
Together we've but a single past, a single future,
One heart and one savings account,
and each does only what is good for the other.
Right, Anna? Yes Anna.

Content Category: *Mood/Feeling and "I" Song*

Although this song tells a story, it is not a simple ballad; it is a small story within a much larger story. The song is the first movement in the work which Weill calls a *Satirical Ballet Chanté*. There are two main characters, a vocalist and a ballerina, who play one person. Anna I (mezzo-soprano) plays the hardened, pessimistic persona and Anna II (ballerina) plays the alter ego, who is innocent and naïve. This song is written in the first person, which is one of the chief characteristics of an "I" song. However, due to its chromaticism, jazz-like harmonies, and the desperate attitude and text of the singer (Anna I), this is also considered a mood/feeling song. Guided by the mood and the textual content, Weill writes this song in *through-composed* form. The text makes no use of rhyming, nor is there any humor or play-on-words. This is a text that, at the beginning, sets up the remaining ballet storyline and it is reflective of the hard life and existence for Anna who represents all women.

Although Weill never wrote cabaret music, he was greatly influenced by it and ironically his name is often partnered with the genre. This affiliation is due to his literary contents, musical style, harmonies, and innovative performance practices, such as the combination of mezzo-soprano and ballerina working as one persona. He encouraged *sprechstimme* wherever the

singer deemed it appropriate, and his collaboration with Brecht addressed topics that reflected subject matters of the day (also a cabaret musical characteristic). The story line in *The Seven Deadly Sins* provides a window into the injustices and hardships of a woman's life. She vacillates between the expected traditional behaviors of a female and the realities of trying to survive in a desperate environment.

“Prolog” is the opening movement of *The Seven Deadly Sins* and sets the mood for the entire work from the start. The only marking Weill offers in measure 1 is *Andante sostenuto* which allows some freedom regarding the tempo. It is important to remember the story takes place during a long, hot summer in Louisiana, and therefore, a feeling of “dragging” or weariness in the introduction is recommended. This can be created if the dotted eighth note in the right-hand is stretched a bit long throughout. The left hand should feel heavy and steady while the right hand, representing mostly wind instruments, should be lighter and cleanly articulated. The vocal part is separated into 4 textual sections (see text on page 37).

- Section one: (mm. 15-22) should be sung very legato and *p-mp* dynamically to continue the mood already established by the introduction.
- Section two: (mm. 24-30) the vocal line begins to demonstrate more bitter attitude by use of larger intervals and use of dotted rhythms which reflects the oncoming frustration by Anna I.
- Section three: (mm. 33-42) is to be sung legato again. The story line continues as she fantasizes about their “little house on the Mississippi.” Weill composes the music and words in such a way that stressed syllables fall on unstressed beats creating an unsettled feeling.
- Section four: (mm. 45-61) concludes the piece with a final explanation of the two personas and how they view issues differently, thus setting the scene for the remainder of the ballet.

Although sprechstimme is welcome, it should only be used as a tool for expressing the text of this song.

Tell Me The Truth About Love⁴⁸

Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)
Text: W.H. Auden (1907-1973)
Cabaret Songs 1938

Recitative: Liebe, L'amour, Amor, Amoris..
Some say that loves a little boy and some say it's a **bird**.
Some say it makes the world go round and some say that's **absurd**.
But when I asked the man next door, who looked as if he **knew**,
His wife was very cross indeed and said it wouldn't **do**...

Verse: Does it look like a pair of **pajamas** or the ham in a temp'rance **hotel**? O tell me the truth about love.
Does its odour remind one of **llamas**, or has it a comforting **smell**? O tell me the truth about love.
Is it prickly to touch like a **hedge is**? Or soft as eiderdown fluff? Is it sharp or quite smooth at the **edges**? O tell me the truth about love.

Recitative: I looked inside the summer house, it wasn't ever **there**.
I've tried the Thames at Maidenhead and Brighton's bracing **air**.
I don't know what the blackbird sang or what the roses **said**,
But it wasn't in the chicken run, or underneath the **bed**.

Verse: Can it pull extraordinary **faces**, is it usually sick on a **swing**? O tell me the truth about love.
Does it spend all its time at the **races**, or fiddling with pieces of **string**? O tell me the truth about love.
Has it views of its own about **money**? Does it think Patriotism enough? Are its stories vulgar but **funny**? O tell me the truth about love.

Recitative: Your feelings when you meet it, I am told you can't **forget**.
I've sought it since I was a child and haven't found it **yet**.
I'm getting on for ...thirty-five, and still I do not **know**,
What kind of creature it can be that bothers people **so**.

Verse: When it comes, will it come without **warning**, just as I'm picking my **nose**? O tell me the truth about love.
Will it knock on my door in the **morning**, or tread in the bus on my **toes**? O tell me the truth about love.
Will it come like a change in the **weather**? Will its greeting be courteous or bluff? Will it alter my life **altogether**? O tell me the truth about love.

⁴⁸ Britten, Benjamin and W.H.Auden. *Cabaret Songs: For Voice and Piano*. London: Faber Music Publishing.1980. p. 2-6

Content Category: *Ballad and “I” Song*

The first person text places this song in the “I” song category. The label of recitative at the start of certain sections suggests this is also a ballad (there is an ongoing story in the recitative). The song begins with ten measures of recitative, followed by a verse with a vamp in the piano. After the verse ends with the text, “O tell me the truth about love,” the next ten-measure recitative begins, and this continues for three verses. The recitative allows for a legato line or, if the singer prefers, Sprechstimme, as used in German kabarett. The sprechstimme creates an intimacy with the audience, a critical characteristic of the cabaret genre. Though the main subject in the text is *love*, Auden’s play-on-words and rhyming schemes throughout give this song its sophistication.

The piano should keep the tempo consistent at the recommended half note=58. However, the vocalist has the liberty of playing with the written rhythms if carefully planned. This does not mean one should not stay true to the note values, but rather, it encourages an acceptance to vary the rhythms for the sake of the text. This is also the performance practice of jazz. *Less-is-more* is a good adage to remember when deciding where to venture. Measure 12 is a good example of this idea: the voice enters with triplet quarter notes which can be slightly varied by using straight quarter notes. However, this should not be done every time. The vocalist should experiment with singing directly into the faces of the audience to encourage their sense of involvement and remember that British humor can be very dry. It would be appropriate to play some of the comical lines with absolutely no expression or possibly sing some to her accomplice, the pianist.

Amor⁴⁹

William Bolcom (1938-)

Text: Arnold Weinstein (1927-2005)

Cabaret Songs, Volumes 1 and 2 1977-1985

It wasn't the policeman's fault in all the traffic **roar**...
Instead of shouting halt, when he saw me,
He shouted **Amor, Amor**...

Even the ice cream man (free ice cream by the **score**), instead of shouting Butter Pecan,
One look at me, he shouted **Amor, amor**...

All over town it went that **way**, Everybody took off the **day**
Even philosophers **understood**
How **good** was the **good** 'cuz I looked **so good**.

The poor **stopped** taking **less**,
The rich **stopped** needing **more**,
Instead of **shouting** no and **yes**,
Both looking at me **shouted Amor!**

My stay in town was cut **short**.
I was dragged to **court**.
The judge said I disturbed the peace and the jury gave him what **for!**

The judge raised his **hand**, and instead of desist and cease
Judge came to the **stand**, took my **hand**
And whispered Amor, Amor....

Night was turning into **day**
I walked alone **away**
Never see that town **again**,
But as I passed the church house **door**,
instead of singing **amen**,
The choir was singing,
Amor.

⁴⁹ Bolcom, William. *Cabaret Songs, Volumes 1 and 2 : For Medium Voice and Piano*. New York: Edward B. Marks Publishing, 1985. p.30-36

Category Content: *Ballad and “I” Song*

The primary focus of this song is the story line. It is clearly a ballad and because the story is in first person, it is also an “I” song. Bolcom’s use of many traditional cabaret characteristics in this one piece makes it one of the more memorable songs patterned after cabaret of the 20th century. It is full of humor by the use of rhyming schemes, and alliterative pairings. There are numerous references to political and/or public establishments: starting with law enforcement, moving on to businesses, social classes (rich/poor), the court system with judge and jury, finally ending with the church. The humor pokes fun at all these subjects and even the singer herself.

The character singing is similar to the main character in *La Diva de L’Empire* where she is a tease and is well aware of her sexual draw. She uses it to the fullest by stating repeatedly that when people see her, they cannot help but simply say, “Amor.” All these factors play an important role in how the singer will deliver the song. One can sing it with a large dose of naiveté or a complete awareness of what her ambitions are by “playing” the policeman, the ice cream man, philosophers, the poor, the rich, the judge and the church choir.

Bolcom indicates “Light, rhythmic: Pachanga Tempo” at the start of the piece. The metronome marking can be somewhere between 110-118, and special attention should be made to avoid accelerandos. This piece is full of syncopations and difficult ensemble moments. The piano and voice must work as one, the piano being equally as important as the voice. Due to the happy and coy personality of this piece and because the finish (which is spoken) is so personal with the audience, it is often considered a great last song in a recital.

Waitin⁵⁰

William Bolcom (1938-)
Text: Arnold Weinstein (1927-2005)
Cabaret Songs, Volumes 1 and 2
1977-1985

Waitin, waitin,
I've been waitin.
Waitin, waitin, all my life.
That light keeps on hiding from me,
But it someday just might bless my sight.
waitin
waitin

Content Category: *Mood/Feeling and "I" Song*

Consisting of twenty measures in length, *Waitin* is the shortest song in volume 1 of Bolcom's *Cabaret Songs*. Written in first person, it is considered an "I" song. However, it is written in such a way that there is a distinct emotion that prevails, leading to the conclusion that this is also a Mood/Feeling song. The ostinato pattern played in both hands provides a sense of an unending conclusion, as does Bolcom at the end of the song; the singer simply repeats "waitin..." as if the waiting is endless.

Some musicians are confused as to why this is considered a cabaret song when first introduced to the work. After all, the traditional cabaret characteristics seem remote. There is no joking, satire, parody or rhyming present in the poem and the subject of love is nowhere to be found. Instead of a light, dance-like piano accompaniment, the feeling is heavy and sad. In fact, the singer must ponder and carefully consider how the song should be presented. The one cabaret characteristic that is predominant in *Waitin* is the injustice on a very personal level provided by

⁵⁰ Bolcom, William. *Cabaret Songs, Volumes 1 and 2: For Medium Voice and Piano*. New York: Edward B. Marks Publishing. 1985. p.22

the literary content. This is a person who feels hopeless and unable to fight life for any number of reasons. Because of this change of pace and literary content, it is a good choice for variety in a recital selection.

The form is ABA and assumes a sense of balance and finality. Bolcom utilizes traditional harmony and allows the text and the reoccurring rhythms to be the focal point of the song. The vocal line ventures from the rhythm only once in the middle section, and the syncopated rhythms must be cleanly articulated. It is not recommended to use Sprechstimme, rubato or too much variety in dynamics, but should be simple in its presentation.

Black Max⁵¹

William Bolcom (1938-)
Arnold Weinstein (1927-2005)
Cabaret Songs, Volumes 1 and 2
1977-1985

A) He was always dressed in **black**,
Long black jacket, broad black **hat**,
Sometimes a **cape**,
And as thin, and as thin as rubber **tape**:
Black Max.
He would raise that big black hat to the big shots of the town who raised their hats right back,
Never knew they were bowing to...
Black Max.

B) I'm talking about the night in Rotterdam
When the right night people of all the town
Would find what they could in the right neighborhood of Black Max.
There were women in the windows with bodies for **sale**...
Dressed in curls like little girls in little dollhouse **jails**.
When the women walked the street with the beds upon their **backs**,
Who was lifting up his brim to them?
Black **Max**!

⁵¹ Ibid., p.23-29

C) And there were looks for sale.....

The art of the **smile**....

Only certain people walked that mystery **mile**:

Artsits, charlatans, **vaudevillians**,

men of mathematics, acrobatics and **civilians**.

There was knitting needle music from a lady organ **grinder**,

with all her sons **behind her**;

Marco, Vito, Benno (was he strong! Though he walked like a woman) and Carlo, who was **five**...

He must be still **alive**!

Ah. Poor Marco had the syph, and if you didn't take the terrible cure those days you went crazy...and died...and he **did**.

And at the coffin before they closed the **lid**, who raised *his lid*? Black max!

A¹) I was climbing on the train, one day going far **away** to the good ol' **U.S.A.**,
when I heard some music underneath the **tracks**.

Standing there beneath the bridge,

Long black **jacket**, broad black **hat**,

Playing the harmonica,

one hand free to lift his hat to me: Black Max.

Black Max, Black Max.

Content Category: *Ballad*

According to Bateman, the story of Black Max is Bolcom and Weinstein's most popular cabaret song.⁵² The song is written in an ABCA¹ form, and each section tells part of the story.

Each section of the song leads to the next and entices the listener to anticipate the next portion of the song. The cabaret flavor comes from the sinister mood it portrays by use of the minor key, harmonies and textually delving into the underworld with prostitutes, charlatans, lady organ grinders, Marco with syphilis and the mystery man, Black Max. In addition to the dark side of the story, Weinstein creates a humorous element throughout by use of rhyming and alliterative pairs.

Bolcom notes that it should be performed in an inflexible tempo throughout. This may prove somewhat problematic in measures 56-59, as the marking is to be somewhat spoken and

⁵² Bateman. p. 87

mechanical. Instincts may lead the performer to increase the tempo, but it should be held steady as indicated. This will also assist in the upcoming spoken section, “Marco, Vito, Benno...”

Lastly, one should choose a progression for singing each “Black Max” at the end phrases. They should be different and reflect the subject matter previously sung.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Examination of world history during the 1880s provides insight into the beginnings of cabaret. It began with a need for free speech and light entertainment among friends in Paris who harbored frustrations due to social injustices. Initiated by the writers and poets of the Hydropathes Society, cabaret's effect was immediate as a budding music genre as well as a new performance venue. It quickly migrated to other parts of Europe, experiencing its zenith in Germany until the Nazi regime censored it completely. The effects in America are still present.

As world events progressed and changed, so followed the arts, which have always reflected the state-of-mind of any given population and/or era. It is no wonder that the “who,” “where,” “why,” and “what” questions of cabaret are difficult to answer. Changes have been subtle since its inception, and cabaret has transformed itself into various and numerous personas or sub-genres that have also mirrored the times in which it existed. From Music Halls and Burlesque to Variety shows and late night talk shows, the effects of a handful of people in Montmartre, France have changed the way the 21st century has viewed the performing arts. Cabaret acted as a catalyst for creating new art forms; it was a renaissance of the performing arts. As an old saying foretold, “Necessity is the mother of invention,” so perhaps cabaret was inevitable. There was a generation that felt it necessary to be heard and cabaret was the invention.

There was a power within cabaret that attracted the intellectual as well as the commoner. The power was found in satire, sarcasm, parody and humor. It became so popular and so

effective that it attracted some of the greatest composers, singers, artists and literary giants of the day and continues to allure audiences and performers alike.

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