Borrowed Joy

An Honors Thesis recital (HONRS 499)

by

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April, 2005

Date of Graduation: Spring 2005
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Borrowed Joy

Abstract

Every composer has a sound that is specific to his or her work. As a fledgling composer, I don’t yet have a “signature Pearl Rhein” sound to my music. However, while I am finding my voice, I try to take my influences from what I consider to be the best musical theatre composers: George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Sondheim, Jeanine Tesori, Jason Robert Brown and William Finn. On April 24, 2005, along with some close friends and brilliant performers, I gave a recital of works by these composers as well as original works.

My encore for the evening (which I announced at the beginning) was a song by William Finn called “Infinite Joy.” This is one of my favorite songs in the world because of its beautiful simplicity and because of its lyrics. The message of the song—that joy can be found everywhere—is such an important one to me that I considered naming my recital after the song. Unfortunately, William Finn himself had already named one of his song cycles Infinite Joy. I decided that my performance was meant to explore the composers who have most influenced my writing: those from whom I borrow my joy. That is how the title was decided.

This document includes the music to each song that was performed and an introduction explaining its significance.
"Prelude I"

by George Gershwin

I remember the first time I was aware of a composer's style. My father participated in a summer stock production of a revue called "Dancin' Gershwin" when I was 10 years old. He was the musical director and accompanist. I attended at least four performances of the revue, although I remember only one number specifically: a tap dance choreographed to "Fascinatin' Rhythm" and done in black lights, with the dancers wearing neon tap shoes and gloves. I thought it was brilliant!

A few months later, I heard my father listening to some instrumental music that, although I knew I had never heard specifically, sounded oddly familiar. I asked my father if it was by the same composer as "Fascinatin' Rhythm." I was so intrigued by the way the two songs seemed related, like cousins.

Gershwin has remained one of my favorite composers. I learned this Prelude my freshman year, during one of the few times I took formal lessons. I had actually been assigned the third Prelude, which I ignored (I got a C- that semester. I haven't taken lessons since).
To Bill Dale

Prelude I
(1926)

By GEORGE GERSHWIN
Edited by ALICIA ZIZ

Allegro ben ritmato e deciso

f con licencia

ff a tempo
West Side Story

by Leonard Bernstein

The year before I came to college, my father did a production of West Side Story. The piano score was at our house for a few weeks, during which time I would periodically take a few hours and pound through the entire thing just for the fun of it. One of my favorite passages occurs at the very end of the musical, after Tony has died. The orchestra (or in this case, the piano) plays a C major triad. It is first played with a D natural in the middle—this creates a tension that is sweetly resolved when the D moves up to an E. A C major triad has a lovely, simple, hopeful sound. This chord occurs three times, each time moving from tension to harmony. Underneath this chord, however, is an F sharp at the bottom of the keyboard. F sharp belongs nowhere near a C, and the resulting clash of notes is dark, ugly and painful. This happens twice: tension, resolve, pain. Tension, resolve, pain. The last chord, however, stops when it resolves—and Bernstein has noted that the final note, the E that makes everything all right, should be held “long.” The F sharp does not occur. In just 16 notes, Bernstein manages to encapsulate the entire plot of West Side Story.
"Valse D’Arabie: December 14, 1994"

by Pearl Rhein

This may be the first song I ever wrote. It is the first of which I have record. As a child I was homeschooled by my parents, which allowed me to attend classes periodically at Bethel College, where they teach. I wrote this song for a class in Music Theory. The assignment was to write a song that began in a major key, modulated into the relative minor, and then back into the major.

The title amuses me because it makes no sense. I remember asking my father how to write “Arabian Waltz” in French. I knew nothing about either France or Arabia, and I still don’t know why it had to be both. For that matter, it isn’t even a waltz.
“Buddy’s Crazy,” or, “You Could Drive A Person Blue”

music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, arranged by Pearl Rhein

My favorite composer for the theatre has always been Stephen Sondheim. The first musicals I heard by Sondheim were A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Into the Woods and Passion. Sondheim’s music is as complex and satisfying as any classical composition, and his lyrics are almost mathematical in their precision. Between the ages of 12 and 16 I wrote several choral arrangements of hymns and folk songs. I think arranging was a way for me to experiment creatively within the safety of a pre-existing song. I don’t remember a reason I decided to combine these two songs specifically, other than the fact that they work very well together.
"You Could Make A Person Blue"

or

"Buddy's Crazy"

Doo doo doo doo doo
doo doo doo
doo doo doo
doo doo doo
doo doo
doo doo doo doo
doo doo doo doo
doo doo doo
I've got those "God why don't you love me oh you -

do I'll see you later" Blues,

That "Long as you ignore me you're the -

-2-
"Only thing that matters" Feeling

If I'm good enough for you you're not good enough.

And "Thank you for the present but what's..."
wrong with it?" stuff. Those "Don't come any closer 'cause you -
know how much I love you" Feel -
ings,

Those "Tell me that you love me, oh you -
did - I got to run now?  Blues.

You could drive a person crazy.

you could drive a person mad.

-5-
First you make a person hazy.

so a person could be had.

Then you leave a person dangling.
sadly outside your door.

Which it only makes a person

gladly want you even more.
I could understand a person

if it's not a person's bag.

I could understand a person
if a person was a drag.

But worse 'n that, a person that titillates a person and then

-9-
leaves her flat is crazy.

he's a troubled person.

he's a truly crazy
person him self!

Doo doo doo doo

I've got those "Whisper how I'm better than I

think but what do you know?"
Blues.

-11-
That "Why do you keep telling me I stink when I adore you?"

That "Say I'm all the world to you you're..."
out of your mind,
I know there's someone else and I could

kiss your behind."
Those "you say I'm terrific but your

taste was always rotten"
Feelings...

-13-
You could drive a person buggy.

you could blow a person's cool. (Tell me that you love me)

Like you make a person huggy.
while you make her feel a fool (got to run now)

When a person says that you've up

set her, that's when you're good.
You impersonate a person

better than a zombie should

I could understand a person
if he wasn't good in bed.

Doo doo doo doo

I could understand a person

if he actually was dead.
I've got the blues, exclusive you, exclusive you, will anyone person ever get the juice of you? You're crazy.
you're a troubled person,

You're a moving, deeply maladjusted,

never to be trusted, crazy crazy
“Lay Down Your Head” from *Violet*

lyrics and music Jeanine Tesori

When I was a freshman in college I had the opportunity to act as musical director and accompanist for a production of *Violet*, a musical with words and lyrics by Jeanine Tesori. Tesori has only written one other full-length musical (the 2004 Tony nominee *Caroline, or Change*, book and lyrics by Pulitzer-prize winning playwright Tony Kushner). I have to admit to liking her in part because she is one of the only female composers on Broadway. Her style is unique in that she is able to incorporate disparate musical genres into her musicals without sounding (as is too often the case when composers “reference” pop, jazz, gospel or anything) like a cheap, artificial knockoff. The music in *Violet* relies heavily on bluegrass and early country elements.

I chose to perform this song in particular because Tesori is also a master at writing a beautiful melody. Few composers—even great ones—can create a melody that is completely unique and new yet sounds like an old friend.
Lay Down Your Head

Gently

N.C.

Lay down your head and sleep, sleep.

I’ll be your pillow, soft and deep.

Leave me your troubles; I will keep your

days gone by,

Original key: B major. This edition has been transposed down one half-step to be more playable.

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days gone by.

Lay down your head and dream.

dream. You're so much gentler than you seem.

Is there a chance you might re-
deem my days gone by.

my days gone by?

Faster
And oh, his

breath is so warm.

Mine is
short, and my ears are ringing.

Everywhere my skin is singing.

Tempo I

Lay down your head and sleep.

I will be pleased your soul to sleep.
Keep. Give yourself over to the
cresc.

deep of days gone by.

dim.

molto rit.

a tempo
“A Miracle Would Happen” from *The Last 5 Years*

Jason Robert Brown

Jason Robert Brown is part of a new school of musical theatre composers (also included are William Finn, Adam Guettel and Ricky Ian Gordon) who are writing intimate yet powerful musicals with very small ensembles or even just piano accompaniment. Brown in particular is an accomplished jazz pianist, so his scores are excruciatingly difficult but very rewarding and fun to play. *The Last 5 Years* is an autobiographical musical with very little dialogue and just two characters who tell their stories both backwards and forwards: Kathy begins as her husband is leaving her and moves back in time through the relationship, while Jamie begins when they first meet and moves forward. They only time they are in sync is in the very middle, when they sing a duet and Jamie proposes. Jamie keeps going, finally having an affair and requesting a divorce; while Kathy backtracks until her last song, which is about their first kiss.

“A Miracle Would Happen” is a perfect example of why I love to listen to and especially to play Jason Robert Brown’s music. The piano part is pure jazz, and difficult but rewarding to play. The lyrics are frank and funny if a little scary in their honesty.
A Miracle Would Happen
(Jamie & Kathleen)

Music and lyrics by
Jason Robert Brown

Ev'ry-one tells you that the min-ute you get mar-ried Ev'ry oth-er wo-man in the world sud-den-ly finds you at-
tractive. Well, that's not true... It on-ly af-fects the kind of wo-men you al-ways wanted to sleep with. But they

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6/14/01
wouldn't give you the time of day before, And now they're banging down your door And falling to their knees...

At least that's what it feels like, because you Can Not Touch Them. In fact, you can't even look at them—Close your eyes, close your eyes, close your eyes. Except you're sitting there, Eating your corned beef sandwich,

And all of a sudden this pair of breasts walks by and smiles at you, And you're like "That's not fair!" And in a pe...
In a sick world, a miracle would happen, and every other girl would fly away.

And it'd be me and Kathy. And nothing else would matter. But it's fine.

It's fine. It's fine. I mean, I'm happy. And I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine.

It's not a problem, just a challenge. It's a challenge to resist temptation.
And I have to say... that... what ex-acer-bates... the problem is I'm at these par-ties, I'm the cen-ter of at-tention, I'm the Grand

Fro-mage, and her she com-es... “Let's get a cup of cof-fee!” “Will you look at my man-u-script?” And I'm

show-ing her my left hand, I'm ges-tic-u-lat-ing with my left hand,... and then WHOOMP! There's Ka-thy, 'Cause she
knows (They always know). And there's that really awkward moment where I try to show

I wasn't encouraging this (Which of course I sort of was), And I don't want to look whipped in front of this

woman, Which is stupid- I shouldn't care what she thinks, Since I can't fuck her anyway! And in a per-

fect world, a miracle would happen, And every girl... would look like Mis...
And it's fine, Kathy, and nothing else would matter. But it's fine.

it's fine, it's fine— You know I love her and it's fine, it's fine, it's fine—

It's what I wanted! And I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine! It's not a problem, just a challenge.

It's a challenge to resist temptation.
When you come home to me, I'll wear a sweeter smile, And hope that, for a while, You'll stay. When you come home to me, Your hand will touch my face And
banish any trace of gray.

Soon, a love will rise anew Ever greater than the joy I've felt just missing you, And once again, I'll be So proud to call you mine When
Finally you come home to me.

I'll be there soon, Angel.

I'll finish up this chapter and be out the door. I swear I'll be there soon, Angel.

Don't give
up on me yet I am so

proud of you, Kathy
You're

doing what you never got to do before And I will

be there, ripe and crawling If_{f} fuck in'

6/14/01
Random House stops calling. Don't lose faith. Don't get down. Don't despair. I'll be there! And in a per-
...feel world, A miracle would happen, And that

day would finally be here, And it'd be me.

...and you, Riding it together, And the things we do, Go

in' like we planned, We're gonna make it through, And nothing else will matter, We'll be fine.
we're fine. We're fine, we're fine. We're fine, we're fine. We're

I'll be there soon. Angel.

I swear, I will....

Safety (Jump when Kathleen is set)
“Larissa”

music and lyrics by Pearl Rhein

This is a song I wrote for my girlfriend’s birthday. I am more self-conscious about performing this song than any other because it is the most personal song in this collection and also my first attempt at writing lyrics. When writing the lyrics I strove for the simplest expression of what I was trying to communicate. As for the music, I tried not to censor myself or sacrifice any sound I wanted for the sake of meter or other musical rules. Since the song is so personal, I wanted it to be the most honest expression possible of my feelings.