

Reverberations: A Musical Exploration of My Roots

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Emily K. Wilson

Thesis Advisor: Mary Hagopian

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Hagopian". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Ball State University

Muncie, Indiana

April 22, 2002

Graduation: May 2002

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ABSTRACT

The final goal of this project is the performance of an hour-long voice recital. The recital includes short lecture vignettes describing my family members, telling stories about them, and relaying their musical tastes to the audience. Each grouping of three songs (all the same genre) is dedicated to a specific family member that finds that genre (i.e. spiritual, jazz, folk, musical theater) particularly meaningful or enjoyable. This project allows me to improve my own performance abilities while gaining insight into my family's musical backgrounds and experiences.

Ball State University Honors College presents...

Emily Wilson, soprano

with

Kristin Fischmer, piano

*"Reverberations: A Musical Exploration
of My Roots"*

A Senior Honors Thesis Project Lecture-Recital

Sunday, November 4, 2001

5:30 PM

Pruis Hall, Ball State University



*Featuring works by
Gounod, Puccini, Johann Strauss, Gershwin, Carter, and more.*

Emily Wilson invites you to her

*Senior Voice Recital,
"Reverberations: A Musical Exploration of My Roots"
in fulfillment of her Senior Honors Project*

November 4, 2001

5:30 PM

Pruis Hall, Ball State University



Driving Directions to Ball State University:

Log on to <http://www.bsu.edu/students/admissions/directions> for driving directions to Route 332 (McGalliard Rd.) in Muncie, Indiana. From there, follow the directions given below to **Pruis Hall**.

From the West: Follow McGalliard Rd. for approximately 8 mi. Turn Right onto Tillotson Ave. (the football stadium will be on your left). At the third stoplight, turn Left onto Riverside Ave. Proceed until you see Emens Auditorium on your left. Directly past Emens Auditorium, turn Left where you see a sign for parking and Woodworth Hall. Follow that road straight until you reach the parking garage. Parking is \$1.00. After parking, exit out of the West side of the building (toward all the large, academic, brick buildings). Pruis Hall is the first building next to the garage. It is the only all-gray, cement stone building on campus.

From the East: Follow McGalliard Rd. for approximately 4 mi. Turn Left onto Oakwood Ave. (there is a Shell station on the corner). Follow until it dead-ends into Bethel Ave. Turn Right onto Bethel Ave. Immediately get into the left lane. Turn Left at the first stoplight onto McKinley Ave. Proceed until you reach the first stoplight on this road and turn Left onto Neely Ave. Continue past the first residence hall entrance on your right, then turn Right at the second entrance (turn before the very tall, brick residence halls). Follow this street until you see a parking garage on your right. Parking is \$1.00. After parking, exit out of the West side of the building (toward all the large, academic, brick buildings). Pruis Hall is the first building next to the garage. It is the only all-gray, cement stone building on campus.

For a campus map: (put on your glasses for this one!)

Log onto: <http://www.bsu.edu/parking/campusma.html>

Pruis Hall is building #56

Get Lost? Call Pruis Hall (765) 285-5524 for assistance.

☆For Guests Coming from Columbus, OH:

Take I-270 to I-70 West. Follow I-70 until just past Richmond, Indiana, where you will get on Highway 35 North. (You might encounter a short detour on 35 North. The detour signs will force you to turn right. Just follow the signs and you will eventually return to 35 North). Take 35 North to where it merges with Highways 67 and 3 at the Muncie Bypass (the sign says Portland on the bottom). Ignore the signs before the bypass telling you to turn left for Ball State. Follow the Bypass until you get to the first stoplight and turn left onto McGalliard Road (Route 332). Follow the directions to get to Pruis Hall from the East (above).

EMILY WILSON
soprano
in a
SENIOR HONORS RECITAL
assisted by
Kristin Fischmer, piano

Reverberations: A Musical Exploration of My Roots

- Cantata John Carter
2. Rondo (Peter go ring dem bells)
3. Recitative (Sometimes I feel like a motherless child)
5. Toccata (Ride on King Jesus)
- Mary, did you know? Mark Lowery and Buddy Greene
Amazing Grace *Traditional*
- Aria: Quando m'eno vo, from *La Bohème* Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)
- Aria: Ah! Je veux vivre, from *Roméo et Juliette* Charles Gounod
(1818-1893)
... Intermission ...
- Aria: Adele's Laughing Song, from *Die Fledermaus* Johann Strauss
(1825-1899)
- The Ash Grove arr. Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)
- Danny Boy arr. Fred Weatherly
The Irish Blessing Denes Agay
- Autumn Leaves Joseph Kosma
Stormy Weather Harold Arlen
Unforgettable Irving Gordon
- Someone to watch over me George Gershwin
(1898-1937)
- Lonely Goatherd, from *The Sound of Music* Richard Rodgers
(1902-1979)
- When I Look at You Frank Wildhorn

Emily Wilson is a student of Mary Hagopian.
She is a longtime member of Chamber Choir and ACDA
and director of the Yorktown Christian Chancel Choir.

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Honors Program at Ball State University.

PRUIS HALL
Sunday, November 4, 2001
5:30 p.m.

Series LVI
Number 48

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Program Notes for...

Emily Wilson, soprano
with Kristin Fischmer, piano

“Reverberations: A Musical Exploration of my Family”
Ball State University Honors College Lecture-Recital

November 4, 2001
5:30 PM, Pruis Hall



Valerie and John Wilson



Grace and Fred Wilson



Leona and George Mourad



Sarah Wilson and Brian Burke

Family Biographies

The biographies below are included to share with you a little background information about my family. Each biography also mentions how music first affected, and possibly continues to affect, each family member.

John R. Wilson (Father)

John Wilson was the youngest of three children born to Fred and Grace Wilson in Massillon, Ohio. John has a B.S. in business administration from The Ohio State University. He currently resides in Worthington, OH (a suburb of Columbus) with his wife, Valerie, of 27 years. He works out of his home for Absocold Corporation as Vice President of Product Management. In his free time, John enjoys genealogy, playing pool, and reading. His favorite music includes jazz, classical, and musical theater. His first musical experiences were listening to his mother and sister play the piano in addition to taking piano lessons as a child.

Valerie A. Wilson (Mother)

Valerie Wilson has lived most of her life in Columbus, Ohio. The daughter of George and Leona Mourad, Valerie's musical experiences began when she listened to the radio as she fell asleep every night. As a teenager, she listened to many record albums and can still remember the lyrics to most rock and roll songs. Valerie earned a B.A. in journalism from The Ohio State University and a Master's degree in Middle East studies from the University of Michigan. Valerie currently lives in Worthington, Ohio, with her husband, John. She works at an independent, college preparatory school as the Director of Communications. In her free time, she enjoys lecturing at church, watching college sports, reading, writing, and redecorating their home. Her favorite musical genres include classical music of the baroque period and music from around the globe.

Sarah E. Wilson (Sister)

Sarah was born in Columbus, Ohio to John and Valerie Wilson. She has a B.A. in history from the University of Dayton and a Master's degree in Technical and Scientific Communications from Miami University of Ohio. Sarah now lives in Vienna, Virginia and works for Fig Leaf Software in Washington, DC as a technical writer. In her free time, Sarah participates in Irish set dancing, reads, cooks, assists with the middle school youth group at her church, and is planning a wedding with her fiancé, Brian. Sarah's musical experiences include taking piano and trombone lessons as well as participating in numerous musical groups.

Brian P. Burke (Brother-in-law to be)

Brian was born in Cleveland, Ohio to J. Terence and Kathleen Burke. Brian has two older brothers and one younger sister. A graduate of the University of Dayton, Brian now lives in Dayton, OH and works for Delphi Automotive Systems as a Manufacturing Engineer. In his free time, Brian plays vintage baseball, the button accordion, and takes Irish step dance lessons. Brian and his family created their own Irish musical group, Celtic Nightmare, in which he plays his accordion. His first musical experience was listening to John Denver singing Leaving on a Jet Plane and The Star Wars' Soundtrack. The Star Wars album inspired him to play the trumpet, which he did throughout his college career. Brian recently proposed to Sarah in front of the F.D.R. Memorial in Washington, DC.

Grace J. Wilson, 1916-2000 (Paternal Grandmother)

Grace J. Wilson was born in Massillon, Ohio on the second floor of the home where she lived almost all of her life. Grace took piano lessons for thirteen years and used that talent in her job playing the organ and selling sheet music at a five and ten cent store. In 1940, Grace married her high school sweetheart, Fred, and the two became parents of three children, Ann, Fred, and John. When her children were young, Grace directed the youth choir at the First Methodist Church. Later, she was the director of the Massillon Senior Citizens Group. Grace took a special interest to and befriended the Amish near her home. She gave over one thousand lectures on Amish religion and culture to schools, churches, community organizations, and other various groups. Grace loved cooking, sewing, playing the piano and organ, and spending time with her children and six grandchildren. She moved to heaven in December of 2000.

Fred J. Wilson (Paternal Grandfather)

Fred J. Wilson was born in Xenia, Ohio in 1917. After graduating from The Ohio State University, he was employed as a sales manager for a steel construction company for most of his life. At the age of twenty-three, Fred married Grace and they began their family of three children. Fred did not have many musical experiences before he met his very musical wife. Fred would listen to Grace and the children play the piano at home frequently. When Grace was about fifty years old, Fred bought her an organ that had been played at a local car dealership. The organ became an item of interest in the home for Grace, the kids, and eventually the grandchildren. In his free time, Fred loved to take photographs. He often was able to capture Amish life with his camera. Fred had his photographs of the Amish published in multiple magazines and books, including the cover of Ohio Magazine. In addition to photography, Fred loved history and began writing a book about the First Methodist Church in Massillon. Among family members, Fred is known for his world-class hot fudge sundaes.

Leona A. Mourad (Maternal Grandmother)

Leona was born in Royalton, Minnesota, the fourth of eight children. Her father passed away when she was only four years old, leaving her mother to raise eight children during the depression. Leona attended The Ohio State University and became a registered nurse. She eventually taught nursing at OSU as well as authored many medical textbooks later in life. Leona married her husband George and together they raised their daughter, Valerie. In the past, Leona volunteered her time with the American Cancer Society and recently was President of the Santa Barbara Ballet Guild. In her free time, Leona enjoys reading, solving crossword puzzles, making jam, swimming, and walking. She currently resides in Santa Barbara, California with her husband.

Asad George Mourad (Maternal Grandfather)

George was born in Bludan, Syria, the oldest of five children. His family members were merchants and owned their own store. George moved to the United States to attend college at The Ohio State University. While in college, George managed an apartment building where he met his future wife, Leona, who rented an apartment upstairs. He loved to listen to classical music and often played *La Traviata* to woo Leona. George received a degree in Geodesy and retired from Battelle Memorial Institute where he worked as a marine geodesist. For many years, George volunteered with the Central Ohio Lung Association. In his free time, George enjoys gardening, investing, solving crossword puzzles, and swimming. He now lives in Santa Barbara, California with his wife.

Translations

Quando m'en vo soletta, from *La Bohème*

Quando m'en vo
Quando m'en vo soletta per la via
La gente sosta e mira,
E la bellezza mia tutta ricerca in me,
Ricerca in me da capo a piè.

Ed assaporo allor la bramosia sottile,
Che da gl'occhi traspira,
E dai palesi vezzi intender sa
Alle occulte beltà.
Così l'effluvio del desio tutta m'aggira
Felice mi fa, Felice mi fa!

E tu che sai che memori e ti struggi,

Da me tanto rifuggi?
So ben,
le angoscie tue non le vuoi dir,
So ben ma ti senti morir!

When I walk
When I walk all alone in the street
People stop and stare at me
All look at my beauty
From head to foot.

And then I savor the subtle yearning
Which transpires from their eyes
And which is able to appreciate
The hidden beauties.
So the aura of desire surrounds me,
It makes me happy! It makes me happy!

And you, that know, that remember, and
yourself destroy
Why do you shrink from me?
I know very well
You don't want to express your suffering,
But you're dying from it!

Ah! Je veux vivre, from *Romeo and Juliet*

Ah! Je veux vivre Dans le rêve
qui m'enivre Ce jour encor!
Douce flamme, Je te garde dans mon âme
Comme un trésor!

Cette ivresse De jeunesse
Ne dure hélas! qu'un jour,
Puis vient l'heure Où l'on pleure,
Le cœur cède à l'amour,
Et le bonheur fuit sans retour!

Ah! Je veux vivre dans ce rêve
qui m'enivre Longtemps encor!
Douce flamme, Je te garde
Dans mon âme Comme un trésor!

Loin de l'hiver morose,
Laisse moi, laisse moi sommeiller,
Et respirer la rose,
Respirer la rose Avant de l'effeuiller.

Douce flamme, Reste dans mon âme
Comme un doux trésor Longtemps encor!

Ah! I want to live in the dreams
That intoxicate me again
Sweet flame, I keep you in my heart
As a treasure

This drunkenness of youth
Lasts, alas but a day
Then comes the hour when one weeps
The heart gives in to love
And happiness flees without return

I want to live in the dreams
That intoxicate me for a long time again
Sweet flame, I keep you in my heart
As a treasure

Far from the morose winter
Let me, let me slumber
And breathe the rose
Breathe the rose before its plucking

Sweet flame, Stay in my heart
Like a sweet treasure for a long time again

RECITAL TRANSCRIPT

Cantata—3 movement

Thank you for coming. This is a very exciting time for me to share music with all of you as I get close to ending my college career this May. This recital is in fulfillment of my Honors College Thesis Project. When I was attempting to come up with ideas for this project, my heart kept bringing me back to my family. I realized I have spent a great percentage of my life living with, learning from, and loving my family, but rarely have I been adamant about telling them how much they mean to me and inspire me to be the best I can be. With this in mind, I also took notice to how important music has been in my life and in the individual lives of my family members. My family's musical tastes overlap to an extent, but also vary greatly. Growing up in the home I did, I was exposed to a lot of amazing music because my parents had this phenomenally large, very eclectic music collection. One night it was Pavarotti and the next, Linda Ronstadt. I have learned to cherish the various musical tastes in this world and that is why I feel so blessed to be able to share the musical tastes of my family with you today.

The piece you just heard is a very contemporary spiritual by John Carter. The first three selections on the program constitute the more sacred portion of the recital. This next piece we will perform, reminds me a lot of my mother. It is called Mary's Song. The song focuses on the life of Jesus and how he died for all of us. My mother has been a very sturdy rock in my religious upbringing. She was very adamant that my sister and I grow up with some faith base and I cannot thank her enough for that. Many nights as my mother was cooking dinner, I would sit down at the piano and play songs for her. Every once in awhile, a random "pretty" or "sounds good!" would come from the kitchen. When I played this next piece for my mom, she exclaimed "What a beautiful song!!" and she is definitely right about this one. Mom, Mary's Song is for you because, like Mary, you are so very strong, caring, nurturing, and selfless. You are my present-day Mary... my loving mother for eternity.

1. Mary's Song

Last December I lost someone very important to me, my Grandmother Wilson. It saddens me that she is not here in person today to hear me sing, but I know she is watching over me smiling because her family is all here together today. Grandma Wilson was a wonderful woman with an awesome love of life. Although she only stood about 4'10" tall, including her hair, she was a mighty woman with an opinion about everything. Her quick wit and sense of humor drew people to her...well...that and her famous backrubs. Grandma only knew about six different stories and she managed to tell them all at least twice at every family gathering. One of my favorites describes a time when my mother and father came home during their first few years of marriage. My grandma said to my father, "John, WHERE did you get that haircut? It is just terrible!" My father replied, "Mom, you're digging your own hole, just drop it." Of course, grandma continued as always, "Well it is just the worst thing I have seen. C'mon, where did you get that?" After enough badgering and reminding my grandma of the ensuing hole, my dad admitted, "Valerie cut it, Mom." Well, I'm sure that was one of the few moments in life when my grandmother actually had nothing to say because of the large foot in her mouth.

This next piece, a favorite of hers, reminds me of all that she was to me and to my family. "Amazing Grace" could not be a more fitting title to describe my amazing Grandmother, Grace Wilson.

2. **Amazing Grace**

I did not begin to like opera until I was a sophomore in high school. I gradually began to listen to more and more of it and began to fall in love with this very special music. Often on rainy Sundays, my mom and I would sit down and watch the movie "Moonstruck" with Cher and Nicholas Cage. It became the staple movie we would watch when I came home from school for visits. Anyway, in the movie, Nicholas Cage takes Cher to see the opera, "La Boheme." Throughout the movie, small little bits of themes from the opera are added in between scenes and such. I began to want to watch the movie just to hear the bits of music in between the scenes. So when I had the opportunity to sing an aria from this opera, I felt so blessed. In this next song, the character Musetta is attempting to catch the eye of her ex-boyfriend by describing how beautiful she is and how she cannot understand how he could not love her. It is titled, "Quando m'en vo soletta."

3. **Quando m'en vo soletta**

I would like to reiterate a short story that appears in the bios in your program notes. Although *La Bohème* is near and dear to my heart, opera is a type of music that my grandparents (my mom's parents) listen to frequently and really enjoy. When my grandfather was attending college, he worked as an apartment manager. His room was in the basement of the building, next to the laundry facilities. My grandmother lived upstairs and often made trips to the basement to do her laundry. My grandfather often listened to opera, especially "La Traviata," which happened to be a favorite of my grandmother's as well. He began to take a special notice to this beautiful woman in the building. He told me that whenever she would come downstairs to the laundry room, he would play "La Traviata" and turn up the volume loud enough that she would notice and come talk to him in his apartment. These were their first encounters with one another and I think it is safe to say that opera truly brought them together.

This next song is from a story most of you are familiar with, *Romeo and Juliet*. Juliet sings the aria after she has just seen Romeo for the first time. She is experiencing that giddy, euphoric feeling of a new love. It is titled, "Ah! Je Veux Vivre."

4. **Ah! Je veux vivre**

INTERMISSION

5. **Adele's Laughing Song**

My mom always tells me stories about how when I was little I would listen to the radio or to my sister's record player and then come down stairs and pick those songs out note-by-note on the piano without having had any lessons. Even though I may have had a good ear as a child, I have to admit that my sister, Sarah, inspired a lot of my interest in music. Sarah had been taking piano lessons for a few years and I wanted to be just like her, as most little sisters do. Eventually my hands were large enough that my sister's piano teacher said I could begin my own lessons. I really enjoyed taking lessons because it made me one step closer to being able to play the songs that Sarah did. Every Christmas, my sister and I pulled out our favorite duet book and would sit at the piano and play Christmas duets for hours.

My sister is very lucky to have found someone who loves music as much as she does, her fiancé, Brian. The two are very interested in Celtic music and are both heavily involved in various types of Irish dance. They like to attend various Irish festivals and have opened my eyes to some very wonderful Celtic music. Because of this, I dedicate these next three folk pieces to them. The first, The Ash Grove is a simple folk melody with a lovely little story to tell. The second, Danny Boy, is a

traditional standard that I'm sure many of you love as much as I do. The third piece, The Irish Blessing, is my blessing to them that they will have a healthy and happy marriage.

6. The Ash Grove

7. Danny Boy

8. The Irish Blessing

I have mentioned the musical tastes of many of my family members, but now I am going to talk about MY favorite music because...well, because this is my recital and I can. I think my friends would agree that I have some of the most varied musical tastes of anyone. I enjoy almost all types of music, but my favorite music to sing is jazz and musical theater. There is something emotional about these songs that make me feel like I have a great heart and soul connection with them. The next three jazz pieces always remind me of those smoky bars in the 50's with the solo singer accompanied by piano and maybe soft saxophone. I hope you enjoy them as much as I do.

9. Autumn Leaves

10. Stormy Weather

11. Unforgettable

I was introduced to Broadway musicals when I was in middle school and saw my first, "real" Broadway show. My parents' 19th anniversary was coming up and my mom had no idea what my father was planning for them. My mother had wanted a new vanity for their bedroom, but was not sure what the ultimate gift would be. My father, being the creative guy he is, decided to write her a poem and include it in her card. Little does he know, even though this anniversary was 8 years ago, I managed to find the poem he wrote her and thought I would share it with you all. Don't worry, he won't mind. It reads....

I planned to give you gifts of gold
Diamonds, gems, and a coat from mink.
But you hinted...no, you told,
All I want is a powder room sing.

Although some may say, you've lost your sanity,
But after 19 years, if that is what you want,
You'll get your new vanity.
And so, you don't need to moan and to groan,
Before long you'll also have a new throne.

So let's pick it out and get it put in
Then your wall-papering job can begin.
But this is not the end of my gifts,
Cause it is not very romantic, if you get my drift.

You see, I plan to go out on an October date,
To see a Broadway show with my young mate.
You can guess which show and at what time,
But "Les Misérables" is too hard to rhyme.

Not only did my Dad take my Mom to see this show, he also took my sister and me. We went to the Ohio Theater on a Sunday afternoon and saw the most wonderful production of Les Misérables. This show remains to be my favorite to this day. The little poem I read gives you an idea of how much my father cares for his wife and daughters. My father is not the type of person that finds it easy to put his feelings into words, but he definitely shows his love for us in everything that he does. I will take actions over words any day. My father is one of the most generous, supportive, and self-sacrificing people that I know. The following musical theater pieces I dedicate to him.

- 12. Someone to Watch Over Me**
- 13. The Lonely Goatherd**
- 14. When I look at you**

Audio Recording

My sister, in her extreme generosity, offered to create a CD cover and insert for the recording of my recital. Her proficiency using the software program, *Pagemaker*, enabled her to produce the insert included with the CD. The insert is a summary of my program notes and includes photographs of my teacher, accompanist, and me. The lecture and singing are both on the recording.

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help of a number of people. Miss Hagopian, thank you for helping me become the musician I am. You have helped me not only see the notes, but truly internalize the music. Kristin, your touch on the piano is like none other. Thank you for being so flexible and listening carefully when I asked for any changes. Not only did you accompany me beautifully, but you provided me with more support than I could have expected during this journey. Sarah, you never fail to surprise me with your expert work. My CD looks so professional and is something I will cherish forever. Not all sisters would put in the time you did to help her little sis' in that way. Mom, the reception you prepared was top notch. It was wonderful to be able to share time with friends and family after the big event. Dad, thank you for putting so much time into creating video and audio recordings. Now I can share this event with those who could not attend. Tim, you were the best friend and supporter I could have imagined. I think I would have collapsed from the stress of this experience without your kind words. Thank you for always being there for me. Finally, thank you to the Pruis Hall staff who took care of me in every way possible. Ball State University is lucky to have such a talented crew.