Recontextualizing Music For Social Change

by

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A Research Paper Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Approved November 2014 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2014
ABSTRACT

Recontextualizing Music for Social Change proposes alternative ways through which the traditional setup of a vocal recital may be transformed into a multidisciplinary performance with a specific social purpose. This task might be achieved by the conscious use and merging of elements such as innovation, ritualistic significance of music, and hopes for social change.

Rather than exclusively analyzing the nature of these three elements, this document seeks to exemplify the artistic use of these tools through the description of two doctoral recitals. These performances focus on the portrayal of two specific social issues concerning gender identity: the femme fatale, and sexual identity.

The first performance, Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype, reflects on the negative connotations of the French femme fatale stereotype. This dangerous image has been perpetuated through popular and mass media since the nineteenth century. The femme fatale has achieved an iconic status thanks to her appealing, damaging, unrealistic, and hypersexualized traits. Nevertheless, this male-constructed stereotype was actually conceived as a parody of female emancipation. Defatalizing the Femme Fatale seeks to create awareness of this image through a staged approach of Shostakovich's Michelangelo Suite, feminist poetry and prose, and euphonium music.

The second performance, Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons, analyses the biological nature of love. According to this perspective, Un-Labelling Love transforms a vocal recital into a scientific lecture. This lecture examines four developmental stages of romantic love through the performance of art songs and the inclusion of a narrator, who describes the biological and psychological changes experienced by two research subjects—the performers—during these love stages. Through a plot-twist at the end of the performance, Un-
Labelling Love also questions the patriarchal assumption that heterosexual kinship represents, by default, the unmarked category of adult pair-bonding. In summary, and based on scientific facts, this vocal performance seeks to encourage social assimilation of non-heterosexual kinship systems.
DEDICATION

A Samuel, Mónica, Ryad, Lucía y Nayla

Que el mundo los provea siempre de la inspiración necesaria para ser ustedes mismos con libertad, alegría, y responsabilidad.

A mis padres, Rosalía y Pedro, con todo mi corazón.

A David, que siempre está conmigo.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The successful culmination of both this document and my doctoral studies would not have been possible without my committee’s encouraging support. Dr. William Reber has been a remarkably supportive figure since the beginning of my graduate school experience. I would like to thank him for his guidance in writing this document, for always providing a solution to any of my inquiries, and for constantly challenging me to do more than is expected.

I am deeply thankful to Dr. Kay Norton, who, for many hours, patiently worked with me on the creation of this document. She has inspired me to question and unveil the workings of gender issues in music. Encouraging teacher, role model, and friend, she has taught me how important it is never to stop learning.

I have known Professor Anne Elgar Kopta for the last twelve years. During this time, she has witnessed my artistic development as a performer and as a director. I am indebted to her for her friendship, helpful advice, and offering me the opportunity to come to Arizona State University.

Dr. Rachel Bowditch has been an invaluable source of inspiration and encouragement. Her teachings have introduced me to a new world of possibilities in performance that have expanded my creative horizons. She has showed me that there are no limits when it comes to artistic creation.

The performances pertaining this document would not had been possible without the help of the artists who were involved in them. Their enthusiasm, good disposition, and hard work brought these concepts to life. My deep gratitude goes to Jenny Strickland, Jennifer Bindel, and Ben Marquardt (*Defatalizing the Femme Fatale*); and to Nina Cole, Thomas Strawser, and Xuelai Wu (*Un-Labelling Love*). I would also like to acknowledge Alfredo Escárcega, Gerald Willow, and Lizeth and
Lizbeth Hermosillo for their invaluable help with the performances’ technical requirements.

Lastly, Dr. Jerry Doan and Professor Gordon Hawkins have provided me with all the necessary technical tools to approach this vocal repertoire. Their encouragement has inspired me to create performances that defy the expectations of a traditional vocal recital.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The present document seeks to explore a professional singer’s possibilities to create performances that deviate from the standard concepts of opera and recital, while serving the social purpose of art. This seemingly simple approach is intended to emphasize the idea that vocal recitals have the capacity to transcend into an art form that is socially useful, beneficial, and valuable. This ultimate goal can be accomplished through the disruption of the traditional boundaries of entertainment through which music is often analyzed.

Through the study of the development, creative process, and performance of two doctoral vocal performances, I will give examples of the way music can be performed from a non-traditional and multidisciplinary approach that highlights social change. In order to achieve this goal, these performances heavily focus on two remarkable fields of inquiry in gender studies: the femme fatale and sexual identity.

I do not intend to present these performance concepts as models of what must be done in vocal arts, but rather as an example of the numerous avenues that a singer can follow in order to create art with a social purpose. One of the resources I utilized in order to accomplish the performances’ objectives is the recontextualization of songs. As a singer, I consider recontextualization to be a powerful tool that has the capacity to relocate vocal repertoire into our twenty-first-century circumstances. I also think that recontextualizing music is a more efficient way to deliver positive messages on gender awareness and equality than attempting to discover antifeminist, misogynistic, or sexist traits in the content of a specific composer’s works. In other words, recontextualization works as a metaphor of the two main currents that served as an inspiration for these performances: post-structural feminism and queer theory. Aesthetically, these performances disrupt
traditional artistic standards that define the way a piece is supposed to be performed or interpreted in the same ways that feminism and queer theory defy the established heteronormative social standards. The final outcome of these performance concepts will be examined in the following chapters, which describe thoroughly the kinds of repertoire used and the reasons why they were selected.

This introduction also aims to describe the three basic artistic values that were considered in the creation of each performance: innovation, ritualistic significance, and—naturally—social purpose. Of these three, the social purpose of music represents one of the most popular fields of interest that musicologists, researchers, and artists in general have tried to define and to understand.

Social Purpose and Perspectives of Social Change

In one sense, musical performance could be labeled as a narcissistic career choice; we decide to pursue music because—in the majority of the cases—it makes us feel good and it fulfills our emotional needs. Whether we agree or disagree that music is likely to be considered a narcissistic path, it is evident that it is at least less stereotypically practical than other professions. It is expected that the roles we fulfill in our society are directly linked to our vocations; therefore, medics heal, architects design, and teachers teach. It is both natural and necessary to pose questions such as “What is the use of a musician in society,” and “how does the artist create art for practical, social purposes?”

According to William Morris (1834-1896), it is the artist’s duty to represent the collective voice of communities, a voice that is capable of transcending fully rational thought in order to activate the creative nature of imagination and
emotions.\textsuperscript{1} He also believed that art should possess a human quality which would enhance its political and progressive values:

\begin{quote}
I do not believe in the possibility of keeping art vigorously alive by the action, however energetic, of a few groups of specially gifted men and their small circle of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding and enjoying their work. I hold firmly to the opinion that all schools of art must be in the future as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspirations of the people towards the beauty and the true pleasure of life . . . these aspirations of the people towards beauty can only be born from a condition of practical equality of economical condition amongst the whole population. Lastly, I am so confident that this equality will be gained, that I am prepared to accept as a consequence of the process of that gain, the seeming disappearance of what art is now left us; because I am sure that that will be but a temporary loss, to be followed by a genuine rebirth of art, which will be the spontaneous expression of the pleasure of life innate in the whole people.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

In Morris’s optimistic perception, meaningful creative processes and art result from a social state of economic and social equality, this kind of collective approach highlights humankind’s quest for self-expression and beauty. The last sentence of this fragment focuses on the disappearance of art as a manifestation of elitism and also on its rebirth as a cooperative societal effort. Thus, Morris’s perception on the social purpose is unifying; he believes in art as a human collective force that is capable of uniting people, while breaking the boundaries established by otherwise fixed social structures—especially, those concerning social classes.

Relatedly, Theodor Adorno’s concept of the ideally autonomous quality of modern art reinforces the thought that art has the capacity to criticize the workings of society and, at the same time, to express hopes of utopianism and national


\textsuperscript{2} Quoted in ibid., “8-9.
identity. Nevertheless, Adorno (1903-1969) recognized that art “remains powerless to affect social change.” This kind of view, which radically differs from Morris’s optimistic hopes, admits in a realistic way that modern art’s search for truth rather than beauty is meant to criticize social contradictions rather than to change them. Nonetheless, even when art is incapable of producing social change it does have the capacity to encourage it. In *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater*, Jill Dolan describes the possibilities of utopian performatives to create and produce moments of hope, affection, collective awareness, and—naturally—utopianism. In other words, these performatives have the power “to resurrect a belief or faith in the possibility of social change.”

I think it is unlikely that twenty-first century fine arts are as capable as mass media in significantly affecting societal cultivation process—that is, the power to create values and patterns through constant repetition. Nevertheless, a conscious assimilation of utopian performatives in creative processes might be the key to

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3 Julia Rothenberg, “Between Utopian Critique and the Politics of Affirmation: Art and Social Change in the Twenty-First Century,” (PhD diss., City University of New York, NY, 2006), vii. According to Rothenberg, Adorno describes art’s ideal autonomous nature as able to exhibit “a relative independence from other spheres of economic and social development . . . The separation of spheres characteristic of modernity, as well as the abstract and anonymous nature of the market has allowed art to maintain a degree of independence. Because of this independence, art is able to maintain a critical stance toward society. Although art claims and to a certain degree fulfills the conditions of relative autonomy, it is also firmly embedded in, and answers to, prevailing economic, social and political conditions” (ibid., 5-6).

4 Paraphrased in ibid., 5.

5 Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 5. Dolan’s concept of performatives describes “small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense” (ibid., 5).

6 Ibid., 21.
produce art with a social purpose. That being said, my perception of the social purpose of art can be summarized in a simple statement: it is our duty as artists to pose a question in the audience’s mind, and therefore encourage self-knowledge, deep thinking, criticism, and social awareness.

The two performances analyzed in this document specifically and respectively focus on the negative influences of the French femme fatale stereotype and the awareness of kinship systems that defy heteronormative parameters. In these discussions, I also hope to encourage the formulation of some simple questions, such as: “Who is this femme fatale and why is she so dangerous?” “Is there any real psychological difference between heterosexual and non-heterosexual love?” Even though the first performance, Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype, was not designed to portray perspectives of hope, it does emphasize the social perception of women in society through the lens of French decadence—a kind of perception that, unfortunately, has survived until today. Therefore, the performance concept promotes awareness on a specific social issue. The second performance, Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons, does convey a positive message of hope. This message focuses on the possibilities of a better, more tolerant world that is capable of assimilating non-standardized—non-exclusively heterosexual—systems of kinship. Both performances were created based on multidisciplinary elements that include devising techniques, poetry, and scientific research. Certainly, these elements do not represent by any means innovative resources in the world of theatrical performance; nonetheless, music has the possibility to be enriched by them. In this case, these elements turn

7 See appendix A for the performance’s program.
8 See appendix D for the performance’s program.
in an innovative tool when applied to the traditional concept and performance of a voice recital.

Innovation

What is the value of artistic innovation in the twenty-first century? The seemingly rhetorical nature of this question does not only seek to define and to understand the importance of innovation in artistic creation; it also embraces a wide span of categories of innovation’s value that include, but are not limited to, personal value, political value, economic value, social value, or entrepreneurial value. The artist’s quest to discover new forms of expression is both multidimensional and multilayered.

Living in a time when the arts are frequently associated with their practitioners’ living struggles (especially those related to limited financial income and lack of appreciation), it is not surprising that innovation is often driven by personal, economical, or entrepreneurial value. Professional opera companies, for example, now compete with independent companies that have created a place for themselves in the world of performing arts. Some other artists have opted to create works for specific kinds of audiences—especially children—whose support enhances the artist’s possibilities to generate art that is both profitable and appealing. Twenty-first-century artists frequently get involved in creative processes that are highly loaded with innovation and experimentation, and this seems necessary when they are required to fulfill the needs of a society that has already witnessed almost any possible manifestation of art. Through this lens, innovation does not only seem to represent the surest way to excel among an increasing and terrifying number of artists—all of whom strive to find a place for themselves in the world of artistic creation; it also encourages artists to discover their own identities.
Nonetheless, it is not my intention to praise the value of artistic innovation, or innovation per se, in this document. In my opinion, the personal value of innovation requires transcending into social value in order for art to be accessible, inspirational, and engaging. By saying this, I do not mean to state that art that has been exclusively created for personal satisfaction or lucrative purposes lacks transcendence or accessibility—to make such an affirmation would be dangerous and completely false. Nor do I intend to affirm that there are no artists whose work shows an authentic concern toward social change—this accusation would be also false. Numerous projects worldwide convey concern for social problems, and this has made them successful and transcendent. The world phenomenon of Venezuelan youth orchestras, for example, has not only given Venezuelan low- and middle-class youth new perspectives on learning, passion, and teamwork; it has also inspired orchestral conductors worldwide to adopt this model.9 El Sistema alumnus, Gustavo Dudamel, has also introduced this model to Los Angeles area. Similar efforts by the Organization of American States have resulted into the creation of youth orchestras in Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Haiti.10 Certainly, innovation is one of the most remarkable sources of these youth orchestra’s success; the disruption of orchestral models, which are usually confined to the limits of western perception of aesthetics,

9 Eliahu Sussman, “Music as a Vehicle for Social Change: Mark Churchill and El Sistema USA,” School Band & Orchestra 14, no. 1 (2011): 25. Sussman starts this article with a brief summary of this orchestral model’s origins: “El Sistema, Spanish for The System, was founded in Venezuela by José Antonio Abreu some 35 years ago. By providing impoverished youths with the chance to learn and play orchestral music, Abreu saw an opportunity to educate and empower children, their families, and their communities. Now, over 300,000 young people, primarily from Venezuela’s lower and middle classes, participate in what has become a world-renowned national youth orchestra system” (ibid., 25). This article focuses on Mark Churchill’s efforts to create youth orchestras in the US.

allows non-musicians to become a part of artistic processes and musical performances.

If the intersection of innovation and social purpose successfully coexists in the world of instrumental music, it is only logical that vocal recitals ought to surpass their static, traditional prototypes. Both Defatalizing the Femme Fatale and Un-Labelling Love were imagined according to the principle that vocal recitals and staging are not discrete concepts. Defatalizing explores the relationship between a female and a male character whose conceptions of women’s roles in society differ according to each one’s perception of reality. The elements used to support the female character’s perspective include feminist texts and poetry (by authors such as Virginia Wolf, Maya Angelou, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, among others). On the other hand, the male character speaks through a recontextualized approach to Shostakovich’s Michelangelo Suite. Other innovative elements in Defatalizing include the use of a non-traditional stage setup in which the audience was located on stage, euphonium music, and other devising techniques. In the case of Un-Labelling, one of the most notable performing resources was the use of a narrator (playing the role of a scientist), whose interactions with the audience described—in scientific terms—the emotional journey of two characters. In this performance, a female and a male character explore a romanticized approach of the psychological and physiological stages of love; the characters move toward a final, unexpected message emphasizing the idea that we all experience similar bodily and mental processes when under the influence of romantic attraction.

As an artist, one of my major concerns is to create performances that join the efforts of musical innovation and social purpose. Nevertheless, innovation and social purpose alone do not represent an unquestionable path to obtain positive collective responses from the audience or imminent success. Going back to youth orchestras
and my intention not to praise innovation by itself, it is important to consider another
significant component in the orchestras’ successes: their possibility of producing a
high quality, intentional human experience characterized by celebration and a sense
of belonging.

The following fragment from Eva Rieger’s chapter “I Recycle Sounds”
compares Brahms’s Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann to those composed
by Clara Schumann. Rieger accurately describes the way innovation is perceived in
our culture. Nonetheless, she also explores one of the possible meanings of music’s
human quality:

If we compare Clara Schumann’s piano variations on a theme by
Robert Schumann with the variations of Johannes Brahms on the same
theme, we find that whereas Clara Schumann’s variations are closely
connected with the original theme, Brahms creates a well-nigh new
piece of work. He departs from the original theme and turns his music
into Brahms’ music. It seems to me typical for a woman of the
nineteenth century that Clara Schumann was thinking more of Robert
than of herself. But our culture will always define Brahms’ variations as
the more valuable, because in our aesthetic hierarchy the innovative
effect is ranked highest of all.11

Clara’s emotional link to Robert Schumann not only represents a defining
element in the creation of her tribute, it also frames the presence of another
remarkable artistic value. In avoiding the urge to re-create Robert Schumann’s
theme in her own music, she evoked the value of commemoration and celebration—
in other words, Clara affirmed the ritualistic significance of music. Likewise, the
functional model of youth orchestras explores a ritualistic approach in order to
enhance the artistic, aesthetic, and human experiences of all partakers.

Ritual

In order to understand music’s ritualistic significance, society must be shaken to its roots. According to Roche who has studied the use of ritual in South Asia, “[r]itual music, the encoded, organized sound for religious ceremonies, is . . . a widespread means by which South Asians access or initiate deep levels of spiritual communication.”\(^\text{12}\) This concept is by no means limited to Asian cultures, and spiritual communication does not only refer to the creation of a link between the individual and other powerful, unknown forces; it also reinforces the significance of ritual as a commemorative element (as showed in Clara Schumann’s variations), or as a unifying force that promotes community’s union and collective efforts.

Music and ritual are intrinsically connected; the Senegalese Ndepp, for example, is a healing ceremony whose performance involves both a heavy use of percussive music and the participation of the whole community. During this ceremony, female healers lead the ritual, while the rest of the community supports the person to be healed with songs, music, and dance. In order to be healed, the subject must give in to the spiritual powers of music and enter in a deep state of trance which is framed by dance. Collective trance—and therefore, collective dance—is also a possible outcome.\(^\text{13}\)

Again returning to Venezuelan youth orchestras, it is not hard to perceive that the structure of this kind of musical ensemble is a manifestation of ritual artistic values. A community’s collective effort results in music making, communication,


solidarity, teamwork, and celebration. In other words, the conscious use of innovation, ritual, and social purpose in music has been a key element in the success of these orchestral models. Nevertheless, there is one more element in ritual that defines its powerful scope: its transformational nature.

Ritual is a performance; it provokes spiritual pleasure and it results in the transformation of the priestess, healer, or shaman who is in charge. Ritual may or may not have spectators who take part in the transformational process; transformation of the self is the ultimate goal (a goal that could be translated into communicating with other invisible forces, healing, creating connections with other individuals, or being exorcized, for example). Ritual is therefore a cultural manifestation in which power relationships, identity, and esoteric/exoteric knowledge coexist.

The traditional setup of a vocal recital represents a form of ritual as well; the performer is in charge, and she or he transforms into different characters and fluctuates among different emotions. The performer momentarily becomes a shaman, musical accompaniment is provided by a pianist or other chamber instrumentalists; music happens, and the magic begins: the audience is transformed as they let themselves be carried away by the pleasure of listening to an artist interpreting Brahms or Mozart, or by the ecstatic pride that they experience while seeing and listening a beloved one (friend, family, or significant other) recreating majestic vocal repertoire with a beautiful vocal technique.

Why then am I so interested in recontextualization of vocal performances—especially, in light of the fact that traditional recitals already fulfill the needs of ritual and even social change? As a musician—and, specifically, as a singer—it is not my mission nor my intention to disapprove the ways of a traditional vocal recital set up; I enjoy listening to vocal recitals and I have also performed them. Nevertheless, I
find vocal performances to be more socially useful when ritual is consciously assimilated and shaken to its roots: that is, when the performers abandon their power statuses and return to the collective. According to George, “[d]ifferent modalities of music-making are different modalities for exercising social and cultural power, for shaping, challenging, and negotiating relationships of authority and domination. Who performs, who listens, who is silenced, and who may not listen are important factors in this exercise of social and symbolic power”;\(^\text{14}\) therefore, it is not common for a singer to stop and think about ritual or power relationships, these elements are unconsciously implied in the concept of a vocal recital. But, as previously discussed, neither ritual nor performance are exclusively about power relations. According to Diana Taylor, performances “function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity.”\(^\text{15}\) Unsurprisingly, this quotation refers to theatrical performances, but it has the possibility and the need to be expanded to vocal recitals; this is the point when the assimilation of vocal arts as a transformational experience becomes necessary. In *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner describes the way performance and transformation go further than a change in the individual’s statuses:

Theatrical techniques center on these incompletable transformations: how people turn into other people, gods, animals, demons, trees, beings, whatever – either temporarily as in a play or permanently as in some rituals; or how beings of one order inhabit beings of another order as in a trance; or how unwanted inhabitants of human beings can be exorcized; or how the sick can be healed.\(^\text{16}\)

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As artists, we have the potential not to create a ‘second reality’ where performance takes place, but rather creating moments “in which audiences or participants feel themselves become part of the whole in an organic, nearly spiritual way.”\(^{17}\) In order for the audience to be transformed, the performers need to accept transformation, they thus abandon their positions as lead shamans and become one with the audience’s collectivity—one more partaker: “[o]nce transformed, the performer exists in a trance. He is not separated from that which possesses him, or that with which he is identified . . . during the performance there is only one reality: the one being performed.”\(^{18}\)

Because the performances analyzed in this document were designed for different types of audiences (a decision which will be discussed in the following chapters), they also represent different kinds of ritualistic significance. \textit{Defatalizing} emphasizes the ideas of transmission of knowledge, reinforcement of identity, and ceremony. The audience was located on stage for two purposes: to enhance a sense of immediacy and partaking rather than distance—a kind of distance which is much more noticeable in a traditional setup—and to encourage collective transformation. Through a series of projected and spoken texts, songs, and images, the performance intended to share specific information: the origins of the femme fatale stereotype, the way she is perceived in the twenty-first century, and her negative effects on our perceptions of the role of women in society. This concept was also emotionally engaging and draining for all partakers. Its symbolisms—an apple, the silhouette of a dead man on the floor, an empty theatre behind the performers—were designed to encourage imagination and personal interpretations; still, a handout that thoroughly explained the concept was provided for those who preferred not to speculate. This

\(^{17}\) Dolan, 11.

way, *Defatalizing* became a ceremony whose objective was to restore the real value of the first femme fatale, Eve, and thus, to change the perception of the role of women in society. Its seemingly dark ending served the purpose of a ritualistic initiation: the work is not done yet, there is still a long way to go in terms of equality, and this performance is no more than a mere starting point of awareness.

In the case of *Un-Labeling*, the performance’s more traditional concept used different levels of transformation. A vocal recital was turned into a scientific lecture, the audience was transformed into witnesses, and the performers became research subjects. The final effect was that of certain distance between partakers; nevertheless, the character of the narrator (lecturer) linked witnesses to research subjects. Finally, the unifying element throughout the performance was love. As love is a universal field of inquiry, scientific texts were used to support and justify the romanticized approach that the performance used in order to portray the stages of a romantic relationship (the four stages of romantic attachment were compared to the four seasons of the year). The relationship (or relationships) portrayed in the performance remained socially ambiguous—for example, it was never mentioned if the research subjects were involved in a monogamous relationship or if they participated in the social construction of marriage. This way, witnesses were able to relate to their own concepts of love throughout the performance. The final message also had a new ritualistic objectives: first, to pose a question in the witnesses’ mind concerning the real meaning of love (once again, an initiation), and then, to encourage a sense of unification among those who support non-heteronormative categories of love.

In summary, the present document describes *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype* and *Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons*. These performances were created from the merging of
social purpose, innovation and ritual—and under a recontextualized approach of academic music. Ultimately, these performance concepts aim to encourage social change, while offering artists the possibility to create art beyond their own needs, art that suggests the possibility of a better world.
CHAPTER 2
DEFATALIZING THE FEMME FATALE: THE VOICE BEHIND A STEREOTYPE

Introduction

Who is the femme fatale and why does she need to be defatalized? The connotations of the nonexistent verb "to defatalize," embrace a wide-ranging span of social phenomena that have consolidated and perpetuated the unrealistic—yet, culturally assimilated—nature and significance of the femme fatale stereotype. Thus, to defatalize the femme fatale means to deprive her from her natural tendency to become a deadly seductress, a barren temptress, a heartless assassin, or an evil dominatrix. To defatalize the femme fatale implies to disrupt the well-received and socially accepted Eve-Mary dichotomy,¹⁹ which reduces women to a binary behavioral classification of evil and seductive versus submissive and incompetent. But most importantly, to defatalize the femme fatale means to restore the egalitarian and intellectual ideals that the mid-nineteenth century women in France sought to defend, while an intimidated and conservative male population parodied, mocked, and inaccurately portrayed the emergence of French feminism and its supporters.

The ambitious task of defatalizing the femme fatal through a devised recital defies standard expectations. This performance does not pretend to represent a definitive solution to this stereotype's cultural assimilation, but an artistic tool capable of promoting femme fatale awareness among its partakers. Since we still live

¹⁹ I became acquainted with the term "Eve-Mary dichotomy" and its connotations thanks to the writings of Virginia Allen and Elizabeth K. Menon. This term will be used throughout this document to describe the contrasting nature of the femme fatale and the female redeemer. In Menon's words, "[t]he preexisting dichotomy between Mary and Eve... leads to other contrasting pairs, such as virtue versus vice, wife and mother versus prostitute..."—Elizabeth K. Menon, Evil by Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 18.
in a societal environment that continues to celebrate female subjugation to Napoleonic and Victorian standards, it is imperative that femme fatale awareness finds a place amid other social issues that have represented main focuses of collective concern (rape culture awareness, AIDS awareness, equality, and racism, among others).

But why is femme fatale awareness such a crucial matter? The concept of the femme fatale originated in the mid-nineteenth century France as a degrading, male-constructed juxtaposition to the image of the docile, innocent British Victorian woman—who had been popular since the late 1830s—and the Napoleonic feminine standards in post-Revolution France. No one should want to be a femme fatale, even though the idealized “docile” women were not even considered individuals. According to Besant, the virtues of a Victorian woman included "physical weakness, mental incapacity, and universal ignorance."²⁰ By contrast, the femme fatale image revolves around women who use seductiveness and cunning to achieve their ultimate goals—women that lead men into emotional or economic destruction, danger, and even death.

Mass visual culture represented one of the most important sources through which this stereotype was developed. Authors such as Virginia Allen and Joseph Clayborne Nunally have located the stereotype’s genesis in the work of French and British artists, poets, and writers such as Gustave Moreau and the so-called Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood—which included Algernon Swinburne.²¹ However, other femme fatale theorists—especially Elizabeth K. Menon—have discovered evidences

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that prove the femme fatale was carefully preconceived and socially tested before achieving her current iconic status. Post-July Monarchy women’s movements fought against the sexist standards established after the Revolution; consequently, caricaturists and illustrators portrayed parodies of women fighting for equal rights in printed media such as journals and magazines.

The femme fatale stereotype represented a broad societal ambivalence, as well as fear in some quarters during times when women rebelled against sexual repressiveness and clamored for rights such as political freedom, equality of treatment, and control of their own sexuality. The idea of women striving for emancipation and the re-emergence of French feminism eventually spawned exotic female characters in painting and sculpture who featured competing attributes such as seductiveness, charm, sexual appeal, barrenness, inaccessibility, and irresistibility. Thus, the femme fatale’s journey departed from popular culture (caricature, printed media, and literature), and eventually grew into other fine arts (especially in painting and sculpture). In general, the femme fatale stood for men’s misery, and any woman who showed the least desire for equal treatment was considered a metaphorical and rebellious “daughter of Eve.”

The figure of Eve—arguably, the first femme fatale—inspired the creation of Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype. Eve simultaneously embodies rebelliousness against patriarchal standards and the consequences—for a female—of giving in to theological and scientific curiosity (in other words, she sought knowledge, and she was punished). Eve unfairly evokes and represents humankind’s downfall, her rapport with the serpent has been mistakenly interpreted by Church.

22 Menon, 3.

23 Ibid., 17.
Fathers such as Tertullian and Saint Augustine as an evil alliance among temptation and sin—among the devil and the femme fatale.\textsuperscript{24} In the same manner, Eve’s intellectual nature has been unapologetically ignored and broadly underestimated. Eve’s real personality is far away from that of a seductive temptress; she did listen to the snake, she held a theological discussion with the creature, and she ate from the tree, but her actions were not motivated by ignorance, cunning, or wickedness—Eve presented herself as “intelligent, informed, and perceptive. Theologian, ethicist, hermeneut, rabbi, she speaks with clarity and authority.”\textsuperscript{25}

However, the biblical tale of Genesis suggests that God did not speak to Eve about prohibitions in Eden. If he did, the passage is not present in either Hebrew or Christian versions of genesis. God had given a specific command to Adam: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.”\textsuperscript{26} From this perspective, the woman is not as privileged as the man to hear the command from the creator’s own voice—surely, she learned it from Adam. However, Genesis 3 informs the reader that, although Eve did not directly hear the command from God, she is capable of faithfully interpreting God’s words:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, "You

\textsuperscript{24} Saint Augustine’s \textit{Genesi ad Litteram} and Tertullian’s “On the apparel of women” will be discussed later in this chapter. Saint Augustine questions Eve’s incapacity to recognize the Devil’s disguise (the serpent); on the other hand, Tertullian’s perceives women as Eve’s heirs who are predestined to seduction, manipulation, and wickedness.


must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the
serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did
say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the
garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” “You will not
certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that
when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like
God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the
tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for
gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her
husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of
them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed
fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.27

If Eve is capable of quoting God, it is to be understood that she is also skilled
enough to comprehend, interpret, and therefore defy his command. Eve voluntarily
disobeyed God; the snake did not force her, but merely persuaded her—thus, by
voluntarily defying God, she involuntarily became a philosopher. But what is Adam’s
role in this excerpt?

Yet throughout this scene the man has remained silent, he does not
speak for obedience. His presence is passive and bland . . . He does not
theologize; he does not contemplate; and he does not envision the full
possibilities of the occasion. Instead, his one act is belly-oriented, and
it is an act of acquiescence, not of initiative. If the woman is intelligent,
sensitive, and ingenious, the man is passive, brutish, and inept.28

Adam’s voluntary participation in this episode suggests that Eve is not a
malicious seductress. In other words, to speak in favor of the restoration of Eve’s
real nature implies taking a stand on femme fatale awareness.

Eve’s sins were eventually redeemed through Mary’s Immaculate Conception.

After Eve was punished with the pain of childbirth, Mary became not only a figure of

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28 Trible, God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality, 113.
redemption, but also a symbol of purity. However, according to Simone de Beauvoir, this purity might carry a negative connotation:

Mary’s virginity has above all a negative value: . . . For the first time in the history of humanity, the mother kneels before her son; she freely recognizes her inferiority. The supreme masculine victory is consummated in the cult of Mary: it is the rehabilitation of woman by the achievement of her defeat. Ishtar, Astarte, and Cybele29 were cruel, capricious, and lustful; they were powerful; the source of death as well as life, in giving birth to men, they made them their slaves. With Christianity, life and death now depend on God alone, so man, born of the maternal breast, escaped it forever, and the earth gets only his bones; his soul’s destiny is played out in regions where the mother’s powers are abolished; the sacrament of baptism makes ceremonies that burned or drowned the placenta insignificant.30

Through these lenses, Mary’s Immaculate Conception—conception without physical intercourse with another human—represents an alarming archetype that perpetuates the idea that fatalness must be permanently punished and shamefully remembered.31 But whose fatalness are we really referring to?

If Mary paid for Eve’s sins, it is only reasonable to think that painful redemption is a permanent stigma that women—the daughters of Eve—are expected to accept submissively and to embrace unquestionably as a life mission. Twenty-first century’s mass media does not help the cause, the insistent portrayal of women whose hypersexualized behavior is either punished, or celebrated as a life standard, strongly contributes to the social assimilation of the Eve-Mary dichotomy.

Currently, the most vulnerable group to mass-media cultivation process comprises teenagers. Incessant portrayals of the femme fatale as a false heroine—

29 Ishtar: Mesopotamian goddess of fertility, love, war and sex; she was known as “Astarte” by the Greeks. Cybele: Anatolian Earth Goddess.


31 According to the biblical account, only Mary’s first pregnancy was a result of Immaculate Conception.
who is capable of obtaining anything she wants through seductive cunning—
perpetuate the idea that manipulation and promiscuity are desirable attributes. The
femme fatale often uses sex as a way to obtain her ultimate goals, and this modus
operandi might be adopted by teenagers as an acceptable behavioral pattern.

Unsurprisingly, nineteenth-century perception of the femme fatale is little
different from the contemporary hypersexualization of female identity. Both
 perspectives restrictively classify human nature and promote the idea that personal
identity must be exclusively based on sexual behavior. According to Menon, mid-
century French anti-feminist movements expressed “a profound concern with the rise
of the women’s rights movement, and a corresponding antifeminist backlash that
finds justification in Eve and her femme fatale implications.”

Consequently, the extensive and powerful scope of these movements’ messages reached the following
centuries; the role of women in society has been condemned, unnecessarily
transmitted to the twenty-first century, and offensively diminished. Feminism has
been reduced to single words and monosyllables—on Mary’s side, women are
described as mothers and caregivers who are quiet, weak, pretty, shy, submissive,
and even incompetent. Eve’s side is equally unfortunate—the perception of women
as temptresses or prostitutes whose most significant attributes include sinfulness,
barrenness, and sexiness, among others. This perspective has revitalized the femme
fatale in such a manner that society has not only accepted her as an inherent part of
human interaction, it also clamors for her presence and celebrates her sexually-
oriented nature.

This line of thinking inspired my recital. Eve and Mary must be un-
dichotomized and—most importantly—both Eve and knowledge must be defatalized.
A complete and honest defatalization of womankind is perhaps one of the surest

32 Menon, 4.
paths through which society will develop notions of collective identity, social enrichment, self-construction, and authenticity while disregarding behavioral constructions perpetuated by mass media and patriarchy.

Seen simply, *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale* is a dialog between a daughter of Eve—who has rebelled against submissiveness—and an oppressive man. These characters represent symbols of the so-called femme fatale and the conservative society who finds her threatening. The performance forces involved a female actor, a male singer, a pianist, and a euphonium player; consequently, the creative tools used in this multidisciplinary approach include singing, reciting, euphonium music, and devising techniques. The performance explores a portrayed heterosexual relationship between the characters involved (the female actor and the male singer); in this relationship, the male imagines a femme fatale who is embodied in the female character. This kind of portrayal seeks to question the general view that female emancipation equates exclusively with sexual power: a kind of interpretation that disregards values such as equality, intelligence, and freedom of thinking.

The male singer speaks through Shostakovich’s *Michelangelo Suite* (1974); his opinions, concerns, and rage against the femme fatale flow across Michelangelo’s verses. Shostakovich did not conceive this suite as an anti-feminist piece; rather, it represents one of the most remarkable forms of the composer’s late style—a musical testament. Still, the suite’s powerful statements, contained rage, messages of frustration, and perspectives on love, life, death, and politics, make it the best candidate for performance re-contextualization.

Dmitri Shostakovich and Michelangelo Buonarroti have been subjects of heated debates on gender, feminism, and sexism. Shostakovich’s opera *Lady Macbeth* (1934)—to set an example—has been broadly described as a feminist piece; nonetheless, Laura Frances Jones has unveiled several anti-feminist traits in the
opera’s plot. The main character, Katerina Izmailova, embodies a symbol of female objectification and also features remarkable femme fatale traits. She is a victim of male oppression; nevertheless, “in overtly politicised readings, Katerina’s oppression as a woman is treated as epiphenomenal to her oppression as a citizen.” Sexual politics in *Lady Macbeth* can be easily analyzed through the lenses of feminism, but Dmitri Shostakovich was also able to create musical pieces with an outstanding social significance. He was deeply concerned about topics such as the social purpose of art, the role of the artist, and the faith of his compatriots; several of his masterpieces were inspired in the oppression experienced by his people during Stalinism.

Michelangelo’s side of the equation is less fortunate. Certainly, Michelangelo was a man clearly ahead of his time; he embodies an endless inspiration source for artists, queer theorists, and historians. Still, his misogynistic expressions have been more carefully—and frequently—analyzed than those of Shostakovich. Authors like Rictor Norton have examined Michelangelo’s sexist behavior:

Michelangelo was probably anti-feminist; certainly he was sexist, and he believed wholeheartedly in male superiority. In one sonnet he declares that the highest form of love cannot be for a woman, because a woman is not worthy of a wise and virile heart. His contemporary biographer, Condivi, said that Michelangelo often spoke exclusively of masculine love. In all of his correspondence, he never hinted, even obliquely, at marrying. He was extraordinarily secretive, and burned all of his drawings and papers before he died.

Nevertheless, *Defatalizing* was intended to create femme fatale awareness rather than to emphasize anti-feminist or misogynistic traits in Shostakovich or

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Michelangelo’s works. Certainly, specific pieces in the *Michelangelo Suite* are more suitable for an anti-feminist reading than others (i.e. Number 2, ”Morning,” a song whose text praises and describes, exclusively, the physical attributes of a woman). However, most of the songs in the suite regard topics such as politics, life, death, and frustration. In the recital’s final outcome, Shostakovich’s and Michelangelo’s frustrations against the government were interpreted as frustration against women; deep insights on life, death, and the role of the artist were transformed into self-praise statements, victimization, and psychological violence. Lastly, insights on love emphasized an objectifying perception of women. Since both Shostakovich and Michelangelo exemplify controversial historical characters, their works represent an ideal territory for artistic interpretation of controversial ideas. It also helps Defatalizng’s cause to depart from a fully masculine point of view in order to unchain a comprehensible dialogue between the male and the female character.

The recital’s female character, on the other hand, speaks with the voice of several women. The writers selected for this piece belong to different time periods, countries, and social backgrounds. Texts by writers such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648?-1695), Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859), Malvina Blanchecotte (1830-1897), Virginia Wolf (1882-1941), Maxine Kumin (1925-2014), Maya Angelou (1928-2014), and Phyllis Trible (born 1932) are merged into a collective voice that clamors for respect, equality, and freedom. The male and female voices alternate in an epistemological dialogue between Shostakovich’s songs and feminist texts.

While I created this performance, it seemed logical to search for mid-nineteenth century French female writers—in order to serve the purpose of giving a voice to the women who originated the nineteenth-century feminist movements. Rather than seek songs with openly anti-feminist texts, I chose Shostakovich’s suite
as a locus of recontextualization and thus focused on a social issue rather than on an individual. In the same manner, to focus on mid-century female writers would have arguably lessened the femme fatale’s universal impact. Therefore, a chronological and territorial expansion of the femme fatale’s history reinforces her iconic status during pre- and post-femme fatale time periods.

Indeed, important nineteenth-century poets did find a place in *Defatalizing*: Malvina Blanchecotte and Marceline Desbordes-Valmore were selected due to their artistic impact, but also because of their broad generational difference, a decisive element in the development of their styles. While Desbordes-Valmore lived through the post-Revolutionary years and thus the Napoleonic code for women, Blanchecotte witnessed the last years of the century and the re-emergence of feminism. In this context, Desbordes-Valmore’s writings seem darker and more realistic, perhaps a consequence of the rising of feminist movements and the realization that male population who felt threatened by them worked hard enough to devalue and mock any efforts for female emancipation. On the other hand, Blanchecotte’s poetry is slightly more optimistic but her style remains dark. Blanchecotte’s “Battles,” for example (a poem used in *Defatalizing*), convey a powerful message of pride.

The inclusion of contemporary writers such as Phyllis Trible, Maxine Kumin, and Maya Angelou was intended to highlight the problematic perception of the femme fatale in the present time. In the midst of a pro-femme fatale culture, it is necessary to evoke messages of peace, coexistence, respect, and equality. Trible’s interpretation of Adam and Eve is strategically located at the climax of the performance; her powerful reading of Genesis claims a humanistic, feminist, and realistic perception of Eve’s scientific and theological curiosity. The inclusion of Kumin’s “The Masochist,” presents an example of psychological and physical violence against women—her straightforward style calls for unmasking the kind of misogyny
often disguised as courtesy and love. Lastly, Maya Angelou’s poems, full of respect, celebration of women, peace, and love, are located at the extremes of the performance—“Phenomenal Woman” and “Caged Bird” are the second and last texts respectively, in order to create symbolic limits to patriarchy.

The insertion of works by Virginia Woolf and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz served new purposes. Brief prose by Woolf, taken from her diaries and *A Room of One’s Own*, linked the female character’s objective perception of reality and the male’s uncontained rage. Since Woolf lived during a transitional time (between the Victorian Era and modern times) it seemed accurate to use her works as transitions and emotional detonators. Woolf’s serenity and intellectual accuracy release pleading and wrath from the male character. Finally, the addition of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the so-called “Tenth Muse,” works as a magnifying glass that highlights patriarchy’s instability and vulnerability. Her poem, “Disillusionment,” touches two powerful topics: owning oneself, and detachment from loss and anxiety. In *Defatalizing*, the most crucial conflict among the two characters emerges from the female’s capacity to own herself and the male’s resistance to loss.

Symbolically, *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype* locates Eve in the twenty-first century. This new social and environmental context allows her to give up on Adam and patriarchal conventionalisms. As she abandons “Paradise,” Eve confronts the oppressive male forces that aim to relocate her in a destructive, submissive, and fatal context.
Review of Literature

*The Femme Fatale*

*Defatalizing the Femme Fatale* focuses on the perception of women as metaphorical “daughters of Eve.” According to Menon, this term was first used by Balzac in an essay published in *Le Siècle* (1831).\(^{35}\) Menon states that the biblical, historical, and artistic context of the term *fille d’Eve*, and the use of Eve as an example of unacceptable behavioral standards had a great impact on the way the role of women in society was perceived during times of intense feminist activism.\(^{36}\)

Some of the mid- and late-nineteenth-century’s most remarkable feminist movements include: public protests and publication of feminist journals after the July Monarchy,\(^ {37}\) Maria Deraismes’s public lectures on women’s issues (1868-1871), and the “true foundation” of French feminism by León Richier—who launched *Le Droit des Femmes* in 1869 and organized the International Congress of Women’s Rights, held in 1878.\(^ {38}\)

The terms *fatal* and *fatality*, were relegated to Eve in the nineteenth century, whose art was inspired in the “growing tendency from Antiquity to the Middle Ages to portray the descendants of Eve as creatures exercising a fatal and dangerous charm, and who needed to be subjugated to the rule of the male sex.”\(^ {39}\) Virginia Allen has

\(^{35}\) Menon, 28.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 18.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., 140-141.

stated that the term femme fatale was not used as such until the twentieth-century; however, Menon has identified usage of the term as early as 1860 in J. de Marchef-Girard’s *Leur femmes: leur passé, leur present, leur avenir.*

The problematic chronology of the femme fatale’s genesis reflects simultaneous social phenomena that France and Victorian Europe experienced during the nineteenth century. Since this document pertains specifically to the feminist movements that propitiated negative portrayals of equality in France, and to the ways anti-feminist mass culture and arts used Eve as a symbol of unwanted female insurgence, it is appropriate to trace a brief historical background of feminism and the ways French women’s movements developed.

Authors such as Miriam Schneir have credited the origins of “old feminism” to North-American culture. According to her, the first organized movement arose in 1848 in Seneca Falls, NY. Leaders in that effort, which would become a full-fledged movement, were abolitionists Lucretia Mott (1793-1880) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). Schneir states that in these American women’s rights movements, French feminism found inspiration and a clear structural organization. Still, the ideal of female emancipation did not represent new territories to French women in the nineteenth century. Notions of feminism had existed in France as early as the pre-Revolution years. The French concept of female emancipation confronted many political and social obstacles, and it signified a step toward progress that predated the 1848 north-American movements. A considerable number of pre-Revolution

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40 Menon, 20

41 Miriam Schneir, *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, (Vintage: New York, 1994), xiv. Schneir uses the term “old feminism” to describe women’s movements from 1776 to 1929—movements whose major concern was social and political equality.

42 Ibid., xv.
victories were accomplished by feminists. As early as 1785, the Marquis de Condorcet spoke in favor of a better education for women. His essays also contained important topics such as the social condition of prostitutes, women’s political rights, and the way “arguments used against women’s rights could be turned against many men: that they lacked genius, that they were uneducated, that they had no time to acquire a rational and enlightened political outlook.”

Elizabeth Racz states: “[t]he success of the parlement of Grenoble in Dauphiné in defying the king's prerogative in 1787 was in a large measure achieved by women.” In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote that “during the entire ancient régime working-class women as a sex enjoyed the most independence,” and they were oppressed on an economic but not sexual level.

These notions of equality were re-shaped during the Revolution (1789-99). According to Racz, “[t]he feminism of pre-Revolutionary times lacked depth of analysis and concrete social objectives, and its influence did not go beyond the narrow intellectual circle in which it had originated. The French Revolution gave it content.” During the Revolution years, women supported the cause of freedom through active participation. They did not lead the Revolution, but they fought alongside men, and even bourgeois women supported the cause—de Beauvoir mentions characters such as Lucile Desmoulines, Théroigne de Méricourt, and Charlotte Corday, the latter of whom murdered Jean-Paul Marat.

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45 De Beauvoir, trans. Constance Borden and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, 126.

46 Racz, 151.

The publication of *cahiers* (pamphlets or lists) was a determining factor in organizing and voicing women’s demands. Thanks to these types of documents, ideals of emancipation found their way into public spheres. The *Cahier des doléances et réclamations des femmes, par Mme. B . . . . B . . . .*, for example, clamored for egalitarian rights regarding land property and also presented the argument that “women can only be represented by women.”48 Unsurprisingly, the demands of Third-Estate women differed from those made by higher classes—Third-Estate women, for example were concerned about unemployment and hunger, while higher class women demanded a better education and divorce laws.49

Despite these efforts, the post-Revolution years re-oppressed women. Napoleon’s rise to power embodied another dangerous threat to feminism; the Napoleonic Code again relegated women back to domestic matters and Napoleon, “[I]ke all military leaders, want[ed] to see woman solely as a mother.”50 He did his best to annihilate hard-earned women’s rights by setting unlivable conditions for “the unwed mother and the illegitimate child.”51 Additionally, the Code prohibited wives from practicing law and promoted female obedience.

Napoleon’s fall in 1814 marked the beginning of First Restoration. This period and the following years continued to support the patriarchal standards of the Napoleonic code. According to de Beauvoir, divorce was abolished by the Restoration in 1816 and the bourgeoisie became even more powerful.52

48 Quoted in Racz, 155.

49 See Appendix F for a table that summarizes the most representative events of female activism during the Revolution years.


51 Ibid., 128.

52 Ibid.
Nevertheless, the cause was far from being completely lost. As years passed, feminist movements that stood against Napoleonic and Restoration standards started to re-emerge. Their proximity to the second half of the century framed the social environment that eventually led to the creation of the femme fatale stereotype. In 1848, a wave of nationalism spread about Europe. Although unification was not immediately achieved by most countries, the egalitarian ideals of the French Revolution inspired Italy, Romania, Germany, and Spain, among others countries.53 According to Alice Primi, during the 1848 revolution, "French women attempting to play a public role turned to the past with a two-fold goal: to reconstruct the process of their own exclusion the better to fight it, and to include their demands in a political continuum."54 Those who rebelled against oppressiveness were silenced by 1851—at the latest.55 De Beauvoir and Primi emphasize the importance of thinkers such as Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), and Étienne Cabet (1788-1856); who advocated female emancipation.

Primi’s writings address a crucial trademark of the femme fatale genesis—the threatening quality of female liberation. According to her, “the inheritors of Fourier, and especially of Count Henri Saint-Simon, were considered to be licentious lunatics, and no woman dared present herself as their follower.”56 “Licentious lunatic” suggests immorality, wickedness, lack of judgment, and mental illness. Since those


55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., 153.
who best suited this category supported female emancipation, it is implied that the idea of equality was considered immoral, wicked, and pathological. Which, then, were the acceptable features of a moral, decent, and rational woman?

The year 1837 marked the beginning of the Victorian era in England. Since this document concerns the genesis of the French filles d’Eve concept, I will not examine the creation of the femme fatale in England. Nonetheless, it is important to understand that British perception of French women was unflattering. According to Allen, the femme fatale stereotype varied according to the countries that conceived her:

For the French . . . she was frequently oriental; for many others, she was an amalgam of ancient classic and later central European folklore, as in Lamia, Siren, Vampire. . . . Romantic Englishmen also drew on these sources, but for them, even when a femme fatale was not clearly intended, a dangerous woman was automatically understood to be at least partly French.57

In opposition, the English Victorian woman exhibited a sacredly domestic nature. According to Nunally:

[The two most cherished ideals of the Victorian masses were the sanctity of the home and the purity of the women, especially English women. Domesticity was (at least in theory) the fountain of man's happiness and the foundation of England's greatness.58

Expectedly, feminine virtues were also misinterpreted. Bessant explains: “it was supposed that physical delicacy was interesting; that feminine virtues included physical weakness, mental incapacity, and universal ignorance; nature and the laws


58 Nunally, 4.
of nature were ignored . . . she scorned the ruder delights that pleased the baser soul; [and] eating was abhorrent to her."\(^{59}\)

Thus, the Victorian ideal woman and the Napoleonic Code’s feminine ideal share the value of domesticity. Going back to France, the femme fatale is usually conceived as a late-nineteenth-century invention. Nevertheless, according to Elizabeth K. Menon, she appeared in popular culture and literature earlier than she did in other fine arts. Theories of female degeneration and the fatal woman “did not suddenly appear at the end of the [nineteenth] century. Rather they were tested first within the popular realm before being assimilated into the fine arts of painting and sculpture.”\(^{60}\)

Originally, French popular culture was addressed to poor social classes, but during the July Monarchy (1830-1848) it became mass produced and therefore accessible to the middle class—the majority of the population. Manifestations of popular culture included journal illustrations, novels, and theatre performances. Their messages introduced radical political discourse to post-1848 French society during a time in which the boundaries between popular art and fine art began to fade. On this matter, Menon notes the femme fatale presence in different forms of arts and media: salon paintings from 1885 to 1900, the use of the term “femme fatale” in literature at least as early as 1860, and visual representations of women in the late 1860s (illustrated journals, posters, decorative arts, caricature).\(^{61}\) Tracing the story of the femme fatale in France may thus be summarized in the following manner: a deep concern for equality during the Revolution years, a subsequent historical decay

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\(^{59}\) Besant, 16

\(^{60}\) Menon, 3.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.
during the first half of the century, and a re-awakening to feminism. Further, creation of the femme fatale stereotype represents “not the subject of feminism but a symptom of male fears about feminism.”

Most femme fatale studies focusing on late-nineteenth-century paintings and literature do not consider the appearance of this stereotype in popular printed media. The analysis of popular images is essential in the sense that it reflects late-century feminine “qualities” and cultural expectations. Menon’s analysis focuses on images portrayed in journals on “manners,” especially La Vie Parisienne (1863-1939), a heavily illustrated publication that constantly featured illustrations and caricatures of the filles d’Eve. In the fine arts, the femme fatale became a recurrent topic in the writings of Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, and in the paintings of Gustave Moreau and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She is associated with the Decadents, Symbolists, and even Art Nouveau artists. According to George Ross Ridge:

The decadent writers feel, some explicitly, many implicitly, that she [the femme fatale] is no longer woman as nature meant her to be. She incarnates destruction rather than creativity. She has lost the capacity for love, and with it her function as wife and mother. The new heroine is malevolent. Decadent men, themselves malignant, become even worse because of her. This is woman as the French decadents perceive her... Woman is a problem for the decadent writer. Whereas the romantic heroine is subdued, invariably passive, the decadent femme fatale is active, even violent.

63 Menon, 7-8.
64 Allen, 1.
But the femme fatale is no heroine. Basically, she stands for the misery of men—“[t]heir love is a passionate death-struggle in which the active female destroys the passive male.” 66 Her damaging nature is an allegory of the way feminism threatened the patriarchal, societal, and political organization of nineteenth-century France. The femme fatale’s genesis is also a product of the emergence of a new ideological tendency in the arts: “[a]lmost none of the work of the [nineteenth] century would have been possible without the widespread conviction that art—and the artist—exist for their own sake and not to fill a social, moral, or economic purpose.” 67 Therefore, the belief that art was purposeless and its increasing tendency to immorality generated a perfect territory for the hypersexualized nature of the femme fatale. Virginia Allen points out: “[t]he sexual implications of the femme fatale in her full blown forms in the second half of the nineteenth century were precisely dependent on the development of this theoretical basis for the arts.” 68

Authors like Mario Praz have emphasized the fact that fatal women—Lilith, Harpies, Sirens, Gorgons, Lewis’s Matilda, Mérimée’s Carmen—have always existed in literature and mythology, but they were not considered a type until the mid- and late-nineteenth century. 69 In the mid nineteenth-century, Théophile Gautier’s fascination for the exotic was also crucial in his interpretation of the fatal woman as a merciless assassin. In his Mademoiselle de Maupain (1835), for example, Gautier describes femme fatale traits of the Egyptian, Cleopatra:

Ah! Cleopatra, now I understand why you spent the night with your lovers and you had them killed the next morning. — Sublime cruelty,

66 Ridge, 352.

67 Allen, 81.

68 Ibid., 80.

because, in the past, I did not have enough curses to describe it! Oh, voluptuous woman, you knew human nature so well, and there is depth in this kind of barbarism! 70

Mario Praz continues by stating that “the knowledge of her own body is an end in itself, beyond which life has nothing to offer[.] Cleopatra, like the praying mantis, kills the male whom she loves.” 71 Cleopatra represents a clear symbol of fascination with the exotic, but French women are not excluded from this unflattering perception. Twenty-two years after the publication of Mademoiselle de Maupain, Baudelaire’s Fleurs du Mal (1857) reflected the author’s ambivalent perception of the eternal feminine. According to Allen, “[t]o Baudelaire the artist, Woman personified all there is: life, death, virtue, sustenance, torture, damnation, and redemption.” 72 Allen emphasizes that in the Fleurs du Mal, woman is not perceived as a person and she “is significant only as an adjunct to man, and as a Mother.” 73

The femme fatale is a symptom of the nineteenth century’s social decadence rather than a symbol. Although there is not a specific kind of femme fatale, the societal collectives that created her supplied a series of traits that include—but are not limited to—vengefulness, destructiveness, barrenness, promiscuity, irresistibility, inaccessibility, seductiveness, cunning, perversion, arrogance, exoticism, eroticism, ambition, physical beauty, and immorality. Gail Finney has condensed these traits and has articulated a more comprehensible definition of the femme fatale:

The typical femme fatale of the nineteenth century is cold, arrogant, and inaccessible, yet irresistible; defiant of social convention; mysterious, enigmatic, and exotic, often Middle-Eastern or North-  

70 Quoted in Praz, 214. Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.

71 Praz, 215.

72 Allen, 71.

73 Ibid.
African; charming yet cruel, sometimes to the point of perversity and even sadism; she frequently... excites men's desire without satisfying it. But the essential, defining quality of her nature, combining as it does beauty and death, is its two-sidedness. It is thus not difficult to recognize why the type of the femme fatale flourished in the latter nineteenth century: erotically fascinating yet dangerous, the fatal woman is the figure of an overcompensating reaction both to the sexual repressiveness of the era and to the waves of hysteria and feminism it produced.74

Nonetheless, each femme fatale shares three specific attributes: 1) she is male-constructed, 2) her fatalness is usually punished—typically, with death, and 3) “[s]he is characterised above all by her effect upon men: a femme cannot be fatale without a male being present, even where her fatalism is directed toward herself.”75

Eve

In the biblical tale of Genesis, Eve pays for her sins by experiencing the pain of childbirth, grief, and the sorrows of Adam. Her forbidden quest for knowledge, in defiance of God’s command, also makes her responsible of losing Paradise. However, she was not perceived as a destructive agent until Church Fathers such as Saint Augustine (354-430) and Tertullian (c. 160-c. 225) popularized new readings of the biblical events of Genesis.

In the account of Genesis, to set an example, the snake does not serve the Devil’s purpose of tempting humankind—the snake is just a snake, and it considered Eve to be intelligent enough to hold a philosophical discussion with her. However, Saint Augustine questioned the creature’s real identity and intentions:

74 Gail Finney, Women in Modern Drama: Freud, Feminism, and European Theater at the Turn of the Century (Ithaca, IL: Cornell University Press, 1989), 52.

In the serpent, it was the Devil who spoke, using that creature as an instrument, moving it as he was able to move it and as it was capable of being moved, to produce the sounds of words, and the bodily signs by which the woman would understand the will of the tempter. But in the woman, who was a rational creature and able by her own powers to speak, it was not the Devil who spoke, but it was the woman herself who uttered words and persuaded the man, although the Devil in a hidden way interiorly prompted within her what he had exteriorly accomplished when he used the serpent as an instrument.\textsuperscript{76}

Saint Augustine presents the serpent as Satan himself and, while doing so, he condemns Eve’s inability to recognize the devil’s disguise. From his perspective, Eve’s sin was transferable to all humankind: \"[a]ccording to Augustine’s . . . view, human nature is irretrievably corrupted by original sin, the legacy of which has been handed down as concupiscence.\"\textsuperscript{77} Tertullian’s moral judgments on Eve—and womankind—are substantially more severe and unapologetically accusatory:

And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the devil’s gateway: you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert—that is, death—even the Son of God had to die.\textsuperscript{78}

Thus, the idea of Eve and women as femmes fatales did not quite originate in the Bible, but rather in its interpreters. These interpreters might have found inspiration in Lilith, Adam’s first wife according Judaic tradition and who rebelled


\textsuperscript{77} Christine Fauré, \emph{Democracy without Women: Feminism and the Rise of Liberal Individualism in France} (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), 21.

against submissiveness. Nevertheless, Eve also rebelled against submissiveness by seeking knowledge and obtaining humanity’s downfall instead. Not until Mary’s appearance are Eve’s mistakes redeemed, which allows humanity’s hopes to reemerge.

According to Menon, the contemporary perception of Eve as a temptress has also found its origin in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. In Milton’s perspective, “Satan is seduced by Eve’s beauty . . . It is the serpent’s ability to speak that leads a curious Eve to the tree of forbidden knowledge . . . Adam makes the deliberate . . . decision to eat the fruit so they may suffer together.” However, Eve’s figure is closer to the late-nineteenth century “new woman” concept than she is to the femme fatale. According to Stott, the new woman is a feminist, a woman who challenges the century’s sexual morality and who seeks new opportunities of employment and education. This woman represented a threat to the nineteenth century because her desire for emancipation resisted post-Revolution France’s social structure. Menon has also identified three dangerous traits of the new woman in the works of Camile Mauclair and Marius-Ary Leblond: independence, critical thinking, and mobility.

Thus, the femme fatale is a parody of the new woman. This stereotype was created during times when “[w]oman’s nature was given specific definition and purpose, involving both her appearance and submissive behavior.” The femme fatale is not exclusive to the nineteenth-century, “but she is fabricated,

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79 Quoted in Menon, 19.

80 Stott, viii.

81 Mobility. Late nineteenth-century French feminists embraced the use of the bicycle as a form of increasing muscular strength and as a symbol of independence. The use of the bicycle was condemned by oppressors for it distanced women from their family circle—Menon, 112.

82 Ibid., 18.
reconstructed in, and apparently necessary to, the cultural expressions” of its closing years.\textsuperscript{83} She can be featured as a prostitute, a vampire, an exotic woman, and—of course—as Eve, among other representations. But the voice behind this stereotype belongs to Eve and her sisters, women who had been unfairly depicted by authors such as Tertullian, Saint Augustine, and Milton, among others as the downfall of not only men, but also humankind.

Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Performance

\textit{Antecedents}

It all starts with Eve. Eve evokes science, curiosity, and knowledge. Through this document, it is my intention to emphasize the idea that Eve’s voice represents the voices of every woman who believes in the seemingly utopian hopes of an equalitarian coexistence. Therefore, Eve as an archetype has the possibilities to become a symbol of equality—a symbol that originates within women’s ideals, personal stories, and professional and social struggles within a \textit{still} patriarchal society. Naturally, Eve also serves as representation of these women’s victories.

As a male, my interest in Eve emerges from a basic principle: Eve’s \textit{first woman} status expands her iconic power to a broad set of social, epistemological, behavioral, and interpretative possibilities—she is the \textit{first other}. From my \textit{other} perspective, I consider that Eve embodies the most unquestionable representation of minorities and their struggles. This way, Eve’s hermeneutical questionings represent her heritage to an unsatisfied group of women and men who have been critical enough to question the patriarchal workings of a twenty-first century society. In other words, Eve embodies a symbol of oppression and resistance for any individual.

\textsuperscript{83} Stott, viii.
who has been affected by her or his otherness (women, people of color, LGBTQ community, and third-world citizens, among others). Nevertheless, Eve’s heritage cannot spontaneously and romantically blossom from within ourselves. It must be awakened and preached, in the same manner that other values—such as tolerance, compassion, and equality, among others—are required to be cultivated, reinforced, and nourished. I do think Eve’s heritage also embraces femme fatale awareness.

From my opera singer perspective, I move through a musical world that has already embraced, assimilated, and cherished the downfall of women. Opera heroines—usually male constructed daughters of Eve—tend to share femme fatale traits, but also fatal destinies: the concept of femme fatale in opera is not only related to men’s destruction, but also to the deaths of the fatal women themselves.

Women in opera have died for many reasons and in many different ways; it is not surprising that the source that leads these women to death is usually a man. Men in opera are so often related to women’s death that it seems surprising no one has ever considered creating the concept of an operatic homme fatale. But why exactly do opera heroines have to die?

I first became acquainted with feminist perspectives on opera heroines through works such as Susan McClary’s Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality and Catherine Clément’s Opera, or the Undoing of Women. It was striking to discover that, from a feminist perspective, opera represents a merciless graveyard of female figures whose dreams, desires, and intentions were annihilated by a man—or the way they feel about a man. Opera heroines die for both dramatic and social reasons: dramatically, an operatic plot requires an introduction, development, a conflict, and a resolution; this resolution is often achieved through redemption and/or punishment—in other words, death. Socially, “[i]n operas such as Carmen, Lulu, and Salome, the ‘victimized male’ who has been aroused by the temptress
finally must kill her in order to reinstate social order.” Some scholars find it pointless to analyze dramatic and musical pieces through a social lens. This is one of the reasons why feminist musicology has been highly criticized. Those who resist social criticism in opera believe that opera composers’ concerns and compromises are indebted to musical creation rather than to diminishing the role of women in society. Nevertheless, feminist musicology has found a purpose in revealing misogynistic traits in opera: the reconstruction of a musical language that has often relegated women’s place in society to unrealistic roles—that of dramatic temptresses, incompetent virgins, godlike symbols of purity, victims of circumstance, or male-motivated destructive agents.85

That being said, I do not intend to suggest that opera performances should be banned from fine arts practices. It would be shameful to relegate musical masterpieces to silence, but it would be even more dangerous to remain unaware of their patriarchal—and most of the time, unconsciously patriarchal—constructions. *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype* emerges from the necessity of creating an anti-opera. This performance creates an artistic and epistemological space where woman does not have to sing in order to be heard, where man has to sing in order to emphasize well-known misogynistic musical constructions, where redemption is achieved through intellect and emancipation rather than through punishment and death, and where Eve’s real voice is capable of transcending the otherwise patriarchal nature of staged vocal performances—especially, opera.


85 By no means is this perspective universally accepted in the opera world. It is the one, however, that inspired this recital.
Characters and performers

Defatalizing requires four performers on stage: a female actor, a male singer, a euphonium player, and a pianist. These four performers represent two sets of social forces: the male singer and the pianist represent patriarchy—or, concretely, they symbolize the femme fatale’s creators—on the other hand, the female actor’s texts are framed and/or accompanied by euphonium. The sole selection of euphonium already implies a social stand: I did not wish to reinforce a stereotypically feminine sonority. Instruments such as the flute or the harp are often associated with female players, while other kinds of sonorities—double basses, bassoons, or tubas—are expected to be performed by men. These kind of gender expectations have considerably diminished within the last years. However, this document does not intend to analyze gender stereotypes in instrumentalists. I considered that the selection of a neutral and relatively unusual recital instrument was a crucial matter in properly delivering the performance’s message. On this matter, the euphonium became a safe bet: its warm sound evokes both power and vulnerability; it is human rather than stereotypically masculine or feminine. Even when the instrumentalists in Defatalizing are not supposed to fulfill gender specifications, the performance of the piece (April 24th and 25th, 2013) interestingly displayed a binary, contrasting combination of performers: a female pianist accompanying the male singer, and a male euphonium player accompanying the female actor.

The two main characters—actor and singer—portray a couple whose relationship has dissolved and who reencounter each other on the stage. The performance starts with a dialogue after the man walks on stage and perceives the woman’s presence:
Woman: Did you seriously follow me here?
Man: Can we talk?
Woman: No
Man: Please... Don't you think we deserve a second chance?
Woman: No. I’m done giving second, third, or fourth chances—I need to give myself a chance this time, and this can’t happen anymore.
Man: What do you mean this?
Woman: You don’t care what I think, you don’t value my opinions, you don’t even see me as a person—for you, I’m an extension of yourself.
Man: But I love you...
Woman: No, you don’t. You love an idea of me... something that doesn’t exist.
Man: I gave you everything I had, and now you destroy me, just like that.
Woman: Sorry.

The opening dialogue’s purpose is to establish the relationship between these two characters; nevertheless, a certain degree of ambiguity in the information received by the audience opens the doors to imagination. The audience obtains a handful of specific facts from this dialogue: 1) the characters were involved in a romantic relationship, 2) the woman decided to leave it, and 3) the man blames the woman for his current misery. Still, other specifics of the relationship are open to the audience’s speculation: How long did the relationship last? How much time has happened since dissolution? Under what kind of circumstances did the relationship end? The main reason these questions are not answered, is that *Defatalizing*
develops during a kind of symbolic timing that becomes personal to every partaker. On the other hand, the performance clarifies some of the issues that the couple experienced during their romantic partnership: obsessiveness, manipulation, psychological and physical violence—in all cases, coming from the man.

In a modern portrayal of decadent artists, the man imagines a femme fatale: the woman represents both an object of physical desire and the source of his misery. The feminist texts used in the performance imply that the woman, motivated by a desire for freedom and equality, abandoned their relationship in order to pursue a healthier modus vivendi. The woman thus portrays Eve and every woman who has rebelled against patriarchy. She craves emancipation, knowledge, and respect; the man insistently tries to drag her back to the obscurantism of their relationship, he judges her, and he seeks to punish her. In my perspective, this woman must be defatalized. Woman’s defatalization process is not an easy task, according to Stott:

The process of deconstructing or disentangling a fabricated representation such as the femme fatale is a politically important one. To disentangle the representation of sexual types is to come to understand the complex systems by which we are kept in place in our lives, by which models of unacceptable sexuality are held up to us and to which we are referred.86

Therefore, Defatalizing calls for defiance, and for understanding that the real femme fatale is not the woman who indiscriminately seduces men and aims for their destruction, but rather the woman who is unfairly parodied for her egalitarian ideals.

Since the femme fatale has been successfully perpetuated and embraced by contemporary society—mostly through mass visual media like cinema and television, Defatalizing also places a somewhat specific question in the audience’s mind: “is the femme fatale stereotype truly supposed to be cherished?” Film has undoubtedly

86 Stott, xii.
represented one of the artistic territories that have encouraged the blossoming of the femme fatale stereotype and its survival. Internationally, a great amount of famous actors—some of them more iconic than others—have immortalized the femme fatale. This extensive list includes figures such as Theda Bara, Pola Negri, Bebe Daniels, Marlene Dietrich, Clara Bow, Greta Garbo, Louise Brooks, Barbara Stanwyck, Jean Harlow, María Felix, Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, Anita Ekberg, Elizabeth Taylor, Brigitte Bardot, Pam Grier, Sharon Stone, Gong Li, Salma Hayek, Uma Thurman, and Angelina Jolie, among others. Many of these actors—especially, the last names of this list, staring with Pam Grier, have portrayed a different kind of femme fatale.

According to Mainon and Ursini:

> With the rise of the second wave of feminism in the early 1970s and the third wave in the 1990s, women began to reclaim the image of the femme fatale, much as they did the word “bitch,” reclaim it from its male guardians and redefine it in their own way. One will easily notice . . . how fewer and fewer are punished by the end of the movie, a resolution that was almost *pro forma* in American films pre-1970. With the collapse of the Production Code and the influence of the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s, attitudes toward women, marriage, sex, pleasure, food, and politics all underwent a seismic shift which even the recent turn to the religious right in the last decade has never been able to erase, only weaken.\(^{87}\)

> I strongly disagree with the idea that the absence of punishment represents the salvation of the femme fatale. Many of these great actors have portrayed the stereotypical fatal woman who—punished or not—is fueled by revenge, desire of destruction, or violence. Naturally, these desires are motivated by and/or addressed toward a man. The idea of a re-defined femme fatale—one who is not punished—shows how successfully anti-feminist movements of mid-nineteenth century persisted to our times, turning this image into something that is acceptable and

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worth of praise. On this matter, *Defatalizing*’s main female character represents an anti-fatal woman. She is driven by knowledge, self-esteem, a deep desire for emancipation, and serenity. She also demands that a new type of woman must be celebrated, portrayed, and socially assimilated: the intelligent, independent, *human* woman who manages to be herself in the middle of a highly stereotyped society.

**Space**

*Defatalizing*’s performance concept was created during a time of my doctoral studies in which I became acquainted with new devising techniques and the theories of Richard Schechner and Jacques Lecoq. Although I had already enjoyed the opportunity of participating in devised projects during my first years of training, this was the first time in which I decided to merge performance theories with vocal recitals.

Thus, the performance’s structure (a dialogue between song and poetry/prose), its staging, musical content, use of light, use of symbolic props, and its multidisciplinary approach were framed by a non-conventional use of the space. *Defatalizing*’s performances were designed for the Evelyn Smith Music Theatre at Arizona State University. As a music theatre, the space contains an orchestra pit and a vertical set of seats which allows the audience to see musical performances from any spot. Space reconstruction was based on reversion: the audience was located on stage, the performers on the area of the non-lowered orchestra pit, and the theatre seats remained empty.

This way, the colocation of chairs on stage allowed the creation of an environmental set in which the audience’s space eventually merges with the performers’. Still, the performers’ space remained somewhat defined by the use of_________________

88 See Appendix C for *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale*’s ground plan
light on the orchestra pit area. Originally, it was my intention to locate the audience’s seats within the performance space on the orchestra pit; nonetheless, I remained aware that—for my concept—the partakers required some distance. This physical distance allows the audience to analyze the workings of patriarchy from a more objective—but still transformational—point of view, and thus contemplate the wholeness of the space metaphors. I aimed to remain faithful to Schechner’s ideas “to create and to use whole spaces. Literally spheres of spaces, spaces within spaces, spaces which contain, or envelope, or relate, or touch all the areas where the audience is and/or the performers perform.”89 Thus, space metaphors consisted in the creation of spheres and paths: a sphere around the mailbox, another one around the desk, the chalk outline, and the instrumentalists. The paths between those spheres turned into new spaces. The two texts that were delivered from the theater’s empty seats allowed the audience to take a look at the man’s inner world—seemingly majestic, but empty, and only brought to life a when the female character delivered texts from those empty seats. On these cases, she worked as the man’s voice of conscience—reminding him that patriarchy is not the right path.

Defatalizing’s intimate set enhances a ritualistic, engaging experience. At the beginning of the performance, the female character is seated with the audience. When the male enters and looks for her, every woman—or man—in the audience becomes a threat, a possible Eve. He establishes visual contact with the audience, he finds her and looks at her and, after a moment of silence she replies “Did you seriously follow me here?” And so it begins.

89 Schechner, Environmental Theatre, 2.
Performance Structure

This section describes the performance’s structure in the following manner: the performance’s script has been attached below in its totality, with the addition of explanatory comments. Every song text quoted from Michelangelo Suite will be complemented with other necessary information—the space or spaces used in that specific song, the original context in which the text was conceived, and its recontextualized, anti-feminist approach. Since the whole concept is based on a dialogue defined by male verbal attack and female response, the spoken texts work on the same manner: the prose or poetry that responds to the male’s original statement is followed by a description of the space used in the delivery of that text. Following this information, the reader will find the messages that the woman seeks to deliver through the text, and the euphonium music that accompanied her.

Introduction

The female character walks in and finds a place on stage—as if she were a part of the audience—and she waits for the performance to start. As the audience waits, a screen, which is set for projecting the songs’ translations, displays basic information on the femme fatale’s origins and significance.\(^90\) The lights on stage (audience’s side) go off, and new lights are set on different places: center-stage—between the orchestra pit and the audience, and the spheres corresponding the chalk outline, the desk/type machine, and the chair/mailbox. Both instrumentalists walk on stage. The performance officially starts with the melancholy sound of Francois Glorieux’s "Twilight." As the piece fades, the man enters from stage right, carrying flowers. He walks toward the center and establishes visual contact with the audience.

\(^{90}\) See Appendix B for the handout with this basic femme fatale information (this handout was attached to the program).
until he finds the woman. They exchange looks, and the dialogue starts. After delivering his last line, “I gave you everything I had, and now you destroy me, just like that,” the man locates himself within chalk outline—assuming himself as a femme fatale victim. The woman leaves after saying “Sorry” and music starts playing.

Song #1. “Truth”

Space. Chalk outline sphere—during the song, the man places the flowers within the outline.

Text Translation.91

My lord, if any ancient proverb is true, it’s surely this one, that one who can never wants to. You have believed fantastic stories and talk and rewarded one who is truth’s enemy. I am and long have been your faithful servant, I gave myself to you like rays to the sun; but you don’t suffer or care about my time, and the more I exert myself, the less you like me. Once, I hoped to rise up through your eminence, and the just scales and the powerful sword were what was needed, and not an echoing voice. But heaven is the one that scorns all virtue if it puts it in the world, and then wants us to go and pluck fruit from a tree that’s dry.

Original Context. This sonnet—probably ca. 1551—represents “an angry denunciation of the ingratitude of some important patron who had given commissions to rivals and rewarded M[ichelangelo] insufficiently for his labors.”92

According to Saslow, this patron could be Pope Julius II. Michelangelo’s letters of

92 Ibid., 73.
1506-7 period complain of the pope’s payment delays and behavior. Saslow goes on: “Line 7, implying that much of M[ichelangelo]’s time has been unproductive, may refer to the way that Julius often abruptly shifted the artist from one unfinished project to another. Two phrases are usually taken as references to the pope. The powerful sword recall’s Julius’s military prowess; . . . The tree that’s dry suggests a veiled pun on Julius’s family name, Rovere = oak.”

Shostakovich composed the Michelangelo Suite a year prior to his death (1974), this musical testament approaches topics such as justice, death, the role of the artist, and love—these issues were constantly portrayed in Shostakovich’s late-period works. The composer thus expresses his legacy through Michelangelo’s words, “not only identifying with Michelangelo’s personal, political and creative struggles, but with much of his world-view and philosophy as well.” Other important element of the composer’s late style—the merging of symphonic music and vocal works—is also a trademark of this suite. The recurring theme of this song is “an atonal collection of eleven notes” and the song “expresses anger that there is no earthly justice to be found in this world.” Naturally, Shostakovich supports Michelangelo’s idea that the State does not fulfill the artist’s necessities.

93 Saslow, 74.


96 Bender, 12.

97 Ibid., 33.
Recontextualized Approach. Michelangelo’s frustration has been directed toward the woman. The man then turns to god and demands an answer: “why do you attack your faithful servant and ignore the woman’s [Eve] evil deeds?” The “one who can” and “never wants to” thus refers to the woman who now rejects and disapproves the man’s sick conception of love. As the man’s pleads turn into “an echoing voice,” he enrages against god. Thus, the final reference to the barren trees alludes both god’s deaf ears and the barren nature of the femme fatale. In summary, the man considers that his objectifying perception of the woman and his way to “love” are not only acceptable, but also ideal and desirable. According to him, there is nothing about his attitude that should be punished.

Poem/Response #1. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s “Angry young man, slouched at your school desk...” (First stanza)  

Space. An empty seat on the theatre, on the third row—the performance’s background, illuminated by violet light. From the audience perspective, the woman is located on the right side of the space.

Text.

Angry young man, slouched at your school desk,  
Whose heart only warms to the touch of the sun,  
You’d deny the use of words and of ink  
To those who make the home rosy and warm?  
Well-read, but embittered by your weariness,  
So irritated by our bright birdlike chirps,  
You crown our heads with whippings and scorn.  
You will be childlike once you have learned:

98 See Appendix G for brief biographical facts on female writers.

When you can smile,
You’ll understand us.

_Context and Message._ Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s poem has three stanzas in total. Since its content represents the author’s response to the young Paul de Molènes’s misogynist article, "Les Femmes Poètes," it seemed logical to constantly reference this text during the whole performance.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the three stanzas, responding to the man’s angry statements, were separated and placed in an almost-symmetric manner throughout the piece.

Desbordes-Valmore starts this text with the phrase “Angry young man, slouched at your school desk.” This text alludes the man’s display of rage in the previous number. However, at the end of the previous song, the man sits by the desk and starts typing a document. This way, the text transforms into a direct reference to the man typing. The woman openly accuses the man of not acknowledging the values of intelligence, intellectual capacity, and creative possibilities in a female. As he types, he is able to listen to the woman, but he remains seemingly unaffected by her words. The woman then recognizes that this man, who is incapable of smiling, and “whose heart only warms to the touch of the sun,” will not be able to find happiness within his narrow-mindedness.

This is the only text in the performance in which the woman is accompanied by two different sounds: first, the man’s typing machine, working as an oppressive force that seeks to silence the woman’s voice but does not succeed at doing so. Second, the opening motif of Glorieux’s “Twilight,” inserted between the poem’s lines, just before the woman delivers the phrase: “When you can smile, you will understand us.”

¹⁰⁰ Schultz, 33.
Song #2. "Morning"

Space. The man starts the piece sitting by the desk, and typing the last words of a “love” letter. After he finishes, he stands up and moves through stage-center, reading—singing—the letter aloud. He then goes toward the mailbox and deposits the letter. He exits.

Text Translation.\textsuperscript{101}

How joyful is the garland on her golden locks, so happy and well fashioned out of flowers each one of which thrusts forward past the others that it might be the first to kiss her head. Throughout the day, that dress is gratified which locks her breast and then seems to stream down; and then that golden lace touches her pretty cheeks and neck. But even more delighted seems that golden ribbon glided at the tips, and made in such a way that it presses and touches the breast it laces up. And her simple belt that’s tied up in a knot seems to say to itself: “I want to stay here forever!” what, then, would my arms do?

Original Context. According to Saslow, this sonnet was written “on the verso of a letter dated 24 December 1507, which M[ichelangelo] received while working in Bologna.”\textsuperscript{102} This is one of the few poems in which Michelangelo openly expresses admiration for “specific details the female form.”\textsuperscript{103} Still, as there is no evidence that Michelangelo was romantically linked to anyone at this time, Saslow suggests that this sonnet represents “essentially an exercise in a traditional Petrarchan conceit.”\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} Saslow, 69.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
Recontextualized Approach. The man, who has momentarily controlled his violent outbursts, is now convinced that he can recuperate the woman’s love by typing a love letter (the song’s text). The letter, however, does nothing but praise the woman’s figure and physical beauty. He is not capable of understanding that his perception of the woman disregards human essential qualities such as intelligence, empathy, kindness, and freedom of thinking. In other words, he deprives the woman of her personality and reduces her to a visually and kinesthetically pleasant object. Relatedly, the femme fatale stereotype revolves around women whose physical attributes become irresistible to her victims. She is equally the source of men’s fantasies and men’s misery.

Poem/Response #2. Maya Angelou’s “Phenomenal Woman”

Space. Chair/mailbox sphere. Still, the woman moves with freedom as she delivers the text. At the end, she sits on the chair, next to the mailbox. (Before reciting the text, the woman walks to the mailbox, opens it and reads the letter. Then she says aloud: “This is all he thinks of me!”)

Context and Message. The decision to use “Phenomenal Woman” for this performance was not an easy one. Originally, my idea for a response to Michelangelo’s “Morning” consisted on a text that praised—exclusively—women’s intelligence. Nevertheless, re-finding “Phenomenal Woman” turned into an eye-opening experience. “Phenomenal Woman” does not praise the female form from a stereotypical point of view; the poem rather admires female figure, intelligence, and

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105 To see the complete text of the poem “Phenomenal Woman,” please refer to: Maya Angelou, The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou (New York, NY: Random House, 1994), 130-131. Permission to use the text of Angelou’s works in this treatise was not granted by Random House, the copyright holder.
mystery based on the author’s self-confidence. The topic of self-confidence in the poem becomes an emotive force that relates to Angelou’s early struggles: being called ugly and a deep sense of non-belongingness. The overcoming such negative feelings allow the author to create a celebratory text that is both joyful, deep, and engaging.

In the performance, the woman uses the text as an anthem that celebrates both her self-acceptance and her emancipation from an oppressive man. Differently from Maya Angelou, the woman in the performance has surely been called “pretty” several times. In the previous song, the man praises her beauty, hair, and breasts; nonetheless, his praising is obsessive and empty. He sees what he wants to see, not what she really is. The woman has been referred to as “pretty,” but the compliment’s unfortunate nature is helplessly objectifying. She feels pretty after liberating herself from patriarchy and understanding that the man’s perception is completely narrow and simplistic. She now perceives herself as irresistible in a non-fatal way—the reason why men feel so attracted to her is her inner sense of self-realization, not her physical attributes.

In this text, the euphonium plays excerpts from Glorieux’s “Promenade” as an introduction to each of the poems stances. The joyful character of this piece—second movement of Glorieux’s Euphinic Moods, with the first one being “Twilight”—complements the celebratory nature of Angelou’s poem.

Song #3. “Love”

Space. The man starts on the theatre’s front row, sitting on a seat between the euphonium player and the desk. He carries a bottle as he has clearly been drinking. He uses the song’s musical bridges to move toward the woman—who is sitting on the chair.
Text Translation.\textsuperscript{106}

Kindly tell me, Love, whether my eyes
really see the beauty that I long for,
or if it’s just in me when, looking around,
I see that woman’s face carved everywhere.
You must know, since you come along with her
to rob me of all peace, which makes me angry;
yet I wouldn’t want to lose even the smallest sigh,
nor would I ask for a less burning fire.
“The beauty that you see does come from her,
but it grows when it rises to a better place,
if through the mortal eyes it reaches the heart.
There it is made divine and pure and beautiful,
since what’s immortal wants things to be like itself:
it’s this, not that, that first leaps to your eyes.”

Original Context. This sonnet (ca. 1530) features a dialogue between
Michelangelo and “Love,” they discuss “whether beauty is inherent in the person
perceived or is, using the modern phrase, \textit{in the eye of the beholder}.”\textsuperscript{107} Love replies
that it is the spiritual beauty of the soul what the human eye perceives. The soul is
therefore the \textit{immortal} character Love refers to. According to Bender, “[i]n ‘Love’ the
use of 12-tune themes depicts the transformation of chaos into certainty”\textsuperscript{108} and
“serves as a type of cantus firmus”\textsuperscript{109} which evokes Russian Orthodox Liturgical
music. Finally, “[c]haos depicted by the 12-note cantus firmus is resolved into the
certainty of D major tonality as Love confirms that the artist’s work is divinely
inspired.”\textsuperscript{110}

Recontextualized Approach. The man has been drinking as a part of his
dwelling process. He walks on stage as the woman delivers the last lines of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{106} Saslow, 122.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Bender, 25.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 27.
\end{flushright}
“Phenomenal Woman.” He has unsuccessfully asked god for answers, and now he turns to love. He wishes to know why the image of this woman keeps on haunting him and destroying him. The first questions are concise: “is she really that beautiful? Or is it just me?” He recriminates Love: “You must know, since you come along with her to rob me of all peace, which makes me angry.” Since the woman is a femme fatale, her mere memory has the capacity to disturb the man’s peace. Yet, he delights in his misery: “...yet I wouldn’t want to lose even the smallest sigh, nor would I ask for a less burning fire.”

Love’s response is directly addressed to the woman; not to state that the woman’s beauty comes from her immortal soul, but rather as a sarcastic insinuation that this cold-blooded woman does not possess a soul. “What’s immortal wants things to be like itself,” the man delivers these lines as an incomprehensible dilemma: “how can this woman be so beautiful if she does not have a soul?”

Poem/Response #3. Virginia Woolf’s quote

Space. The woman is sitting on the chair. The text is addressed to the man, who is standing up next to her.

Text.111

I can only note that the past is beautiful because one never realizes an emotion at the time. It expands later, [and] thus we don’t have complete emotions about the present, only about the past. (The woman then adds the phrase “And we are past” at the end of the quote.)

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Context and Message. This particular quote can be found at Woolf’s diaries. While experiencing a remarkably stressful moment—“two books to see through the press, mainly between tea & dinner; influenza, & a distaste for the pen,”112 the author reflects on the reasons why humankind dwells on the past: the memories that we “remember; & make more of.”113 This seemingly nostalgic quote takes a positive twist in Defatalizing’s performance:

So far, the previous songs and texts have approached femme fatale traits such as irresistibility, insensibility, and destructiveness. In this case, Virginia Woolf’s quote seeks to emphasize another important feature of the so-called femme fatale: vengefulness. The previous song has been framed by a psychological, verbal attack to the woman. A femme fatale would naturally react through psychological or physical violence, but the performance’s main character has decided to interrupt an unnecessary chain of violence, and she responds to the man’s attacks with serenity and compassion.

The woman refers to the past as “beautiful” for two reasons: First, in order to honor the experience of learning—her romantic relationship with the man cannot be described as a beautiful experience, but learning can. She values the gratifying outcome of this emotionally draining, violent, and destructive relationship—she is now able to stand for herself, to recognize her own value, and to fight for her own ideals and happiness. Most importantly, she owns these achievements to herself.

The second reason why she refers to the past as “beautiful” involves the overcoming of negative emotions toward the man. She genuinely wishes for him to find peace; she expects him to realize that the past can be beautiful for him as well. Differently from a femme fatale, this woman is not fueled by hatred. Her pacifist

112 Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, ed. Anne Olivier Bell, 5.

113 Ibid.
response is accompanied throughout her speech by a fragment of Gordon Jacob’s *Fantasia*.

*Song #4. “Parting”*

*Space.* Stage-center and mailbox sphere. The man signs to the woman.

*Text Translation.*

How will I ever have the nerve
without you, my beloved, to stay alive,
if I dare not to ask your help when leaving you?
Those sobs and those tears and those sighs
that came to you with my unhappy heart,
my lady, testified distressingly
to my impending death and to my torments.
But if it is true that through my absence
my faithful servitude may be forgotten,
I leave with you my heart, which is not mine.

*Original Context.* This madrigal’s background is partially unknown. According to Saslow, “the text was set to music and published in Naples as part of a song collection by Bartolommeo Tromboncino of Verona.” It was possibly written between 1513 and 1518.

*Recontextualized Approach.* After the woman’s last intervention, the man attempts to recover her love by pleading. Not being able to accept this relationship is in the past, he picks up the flowers from the chalk outline and re-offers them to the woman toward the end of the piece. Naturally, he emphasizes feelings such as pain and anguish. He offers his heart, but he remains seemingly unaware of his previous

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114 Saslow, 81.

115 Ibid.
violent outburst—the woman, as an imaginary femme fatale, has these effects on him. He is not able to escape from her charms, but his slavery is voluntary.

_Poem/Response #4. Virginia Woolf’s quote_

_Space._ Mailbox sphere. The woman begins sitting on the chair, talking to the man, then she stands up in order to leave. The man stops her.

_Text._

_By hook or by crook, I hope that you will possess [yourself] of money enough to travel and to idle, to contemplate the future or the past of the world, to dream over books and loiter at street corners and let the line of thought dip deep into the stream._

_Context and Message._ Most of the feminist poetry and texts used for this performance did not experience a process of recontextualization. However, in the specific case of Virginia Woolf’s second quote, I particularly enjoyed reinterpreting the quote’s nature in order to honor the author’s multifaceted creativity and universality. That being said, the quote “By hook or by crook” comes from Woolf’s essay _A Room of One’s Own_, which represents one of most important landmarks of twentieth-century feminism. The quote is originally addressed to women; Woolf encourages female writers to increase their literary production through a multidimensional approach that embraces different genres, including fiction. She hopes that these women will find the financial resources not only to proliferate in a writing career, but also to receive inspiration from multiple sources—such as traveling. According to Woolf, “[i]ntellectual freedom depends upon material things.

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Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom.”117 The author recognizes the importance of material resources in developing an intellectually satisfying way of living.

However, in Defatalizing’s concept, the quote is addressed to the man. His narrow perception of reality must be expanded by intellectual freedom, a quality that he does not possess. The woman discusses material resources (concretely, money). With her speech, she does not mock the man’s unrealistic attempts to gain her love back; she brings him back to reality instead. She challenges the man and speaks his language—since he seems incapable of introspection and letting go of the past, she resorts to materialism. In the original quote, the author recognizes that a wealthy artist has more possibilities to travel, find inspiration, and live comfortably. However, in the case of the man, and in order to open the possibility of communication, dialog must necessarily depart from materialism. The woman understands he perceives the world through objectification; still, her good intentions and wishes remain authentic. She wants this man to be a better human being, just not by her side. Her speech is brief and decisive, and her participation in this pointless dialogue is over. Since this text somehow works as an extension of the previous one, it is also accompanied by another excerpt of Jacob’s Fantasia that evokes the idea of sweet closure. Nevertheless, when the woman tries to leave, the man stops her.

*Song #5, Wrath*

*Space.* Stage-center, the path between the mailbox sphere and the chalk outline. Toward the middle of the song, the man pushes the woman and throws her down to the chalk outline.

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116 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 112.
Here they make helmets and swords from chalices and by the handful sell the blood of Christ; his cross and thorns are made into lances and shields; yet even so Christ’s patience still rains down.

But let him come no more into these parts: his blood would rise up as far as the stars, since now in Rome his flesh is being sold, and every road to virtue here is closed.

If ever I wished to shed my worldly treasures, since no work is left me here, the man in the cope can do as Medusa did in Mauretania.

But even if poverty’s welcomed up in heaven, how can we earn the great reward of our state if another banner weakens that other life?

Original Context. This sonnet represents another attack against Julius II, it is a reaction against the materialism and violence that Rome experienced under his papacy. Saslow suggests the following text references: “No work is left me here suggests a date shortly after M[ichelangelo]’s completion of the Sistine Chapel ceiling in 1512 . . . the man in the cope, the pope . . . Medusa, . . . [t]he pope, implicitly can annihilate the artist by anger or neglect . . . [S]tate . . . may refer to spiritual state . . . another banner, that of war instead of the banner of Christ.”

Musically, the piece features one of Shostakovich’s composition signatures: the use of the DSCH motive, which “consists of the notes D Eb C B, or DSCH in German musical nomenclature, representing his initials, Д. Ш., or in German, D. Sch.” Frantic hammering in the postlude of this song leads into allegoric references to creativity in songs no. 6 and no. 7.

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118 Saslow, 78.
119 Ibid., 78-79.
120 Bender, 41.
121 Ibid., 59.
Recontextualized Approach. This bitter text has been transformed into a violent reaction against the woman’s last statement. The context of the original text has been used in order to describe the political and religious connotations of Eve and the daughters of Eve. The man now believes the woman defies the divine order established by god. By confronting him, the woman has dishonored Napoleonic standards of the role of women in society: that of submissiveness and incompetence. In the man’s imagination, the woman has started a war against god’s precepts; she makes "helmets and swords from chalices," and her rebellion closes “every road to virtue.” Since the woman now has officially turned into a threat, the man recurs to the most primitive of his resources: physical violence and intimidation. He pushes her and throw’s her towards the chalk outline, then he leaves enraged.

Poem/Response #5. Malvina Blanchecotte’s “Battles”

Space. Center-stage.

Text.¹²²

Yes, wild! Yes, proud! Yes, like the bird—free!
For this broad spirit to spread trembling wings,
She needs—without limit, and far beyond sight—
The calm silence of infinite, wide-open skies!
No golden necklace chaining her thoughts!
No bruising yoke to cripple her soul!
Poverty—fine! Solitude—yes!
Just the dreaming eternal in her dazzled heart—
And far, far above all the brutal futilities,
The exquisite obsession with pure, perfect things!

Context and Message. In the performance, Blanchecotte’s disconformity with gender stereotypes is used as a response to the man’s violence in the previous number. The woman, who does not believe in reciprocating aggression with more

displays of violence, responds to the man’s accusations with dignity and confidence. The man has attacked her for rebelling against submissiveness, and her answer “Yes, wild! Yes, proud! Yes, like the bird: free!”—reflects her denial of patriarchal social constructions. This woman will not succumb to men’s oppressiveness, threats, and emotional blackmailing. The line “Poverty—fine! Solitude—yes!” aims to describe that, in this new beginning, she is willing to overcome any obstacles as long as she counts on herself. She celebrates her freedom and her capacity to stand for herself with intelligence rather than with violence. The text is preceded and followed by an excerpt of Jacob’s Fantasia (second movement). The cheerful character of this piece celebrates the woman’s decisiveness.

**Song #6. Dante**

*Space.* The mailbox sphere and the areas surrounding it. The man enters carrying a book—presumably, *Vita Nuova* or the *Divine Comedy*. As he sings, he addresses the book. He sits on the chair at the end of the song.

**Text Translation.**

He came down from heaven, and once he had seen the just hell and the merciful one, he went back up, with his body alive, to contemplate God, in order to give us the light of it all.

For such a shining star, who with his rays undeservedly brightened the nest where I was born, the whole wicked world would not be enough reward; only You, who created him, could ever be that.

I speak of Dante, for his deeds were poorly appreciated by that ungrateful people who fail to welcome only righteous men.

If only I were he! To be born to such good fortune, to have his harsh exile along with his virtue, I would give up the happiest state in the world

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123 Saslow, 421.
Original Context. This sonnet (1545-46) is an open praise of Dante. Michelangelo identifies with him because both of them were exiled from Florence. He "knew Dante’s work intimately, as attested by his detailed discussions in Donato Giannotti’s *Dialogi*, . . . [a]t the conclusion of the book, the participants prevail on M[ichelangelo] to recite this poem.”\(^{124}\) The song merges with the following one—which is also inspired by Dante:

In the Michelangelo Suite, the only two songs that are sung together without interruption are no. 6, “Dante” and no. 7 “To the Exile.” The two texts are based on sonnets described by Shostakovich as “ecstatic elegies” on Dante. Together they form the peak of the arch of the suite. Innermost personal confession is intertwined with indignant admonishment, chastising those who persecute the artist. In “Dante” Michelangelo expresses an unconditional reverence for his trecento predecessor, personally identifying with Dante, both of whom were expelled from Florence.\(^{125}\)

Recontextualized Approach. Unsurprisingly, Dante has been subject of numerous heated arguments regarding gender. Many of these arguments comprise Dante’s problematic conception of Beatrice; which has been the subject of multiple feminist readings. From a feminist point of view, Beatrice’s purpose in Dante’s works can be interpreted as follows:

Beatrice has been cited more than once as evidence that the selflessness that the lover attributes to an ideal lady is not so much a manifestation of spiritual nobility as a covert sentence of death . . . [T]he lady dies insofar as the historical woman becomes a cipher on which the patriarchal will of the writer—be he courtly poet or God—can exert itself; in psychological terms the lady is assumed not to heaven

\(^{124}\) Saslow, 421.  
\(^{125}\) Bender, 16.
but into the symbolic structure that the ego sets up to protect itself from its own undifferentiated nature.\textsuperscript{126}

Nevertheless, contrasting arguments have found their way into literature:

Now there are a number of immediate objections to arguments such as this. For one thing, it would seem a costly move—in a general way—to regard the word selfless as merely a missile in some gender battle. Of course, the notion is one that—especially in a post-Nietzschean age—needs to be handled with care. But Dante does show care. In the \textit{Commedia} the poet conducts a sustained investigation into the basis of human individuality . . . Individuals are actually reliant upon a network of dependencies: upon other people and institutions, upon the natural world, and, in his own terms, ultimately upon God. Selflessness for the penitent is a way of recognizing this and certainly cannot be seen as the prerogative of one sex alone.\textsuperscript{127}

Possibly, the most problematic feature of Dante’s conception of Beatrice is based on the fact "that the possibility of perfection is always likely to be disconcerting."\textsuperscript{128} Whether the reader perceives Dante as an anti-feminist character or not, his view of Beatrice had been labeled as misogynistic for the purposes of this performance—mainly, based on the significant disturbances that Beatrice’s first sighting, death, and memory created in Dante.

In this song, and after the previous disappointments, the man turns to Dante’s writings in search for comfort. He praises another male figure who, according to his parameters, has also been disrespected and underestimated by society—or, concretely, by women. He considers than only men are capable of genius and creative processes such as Dante’s, and that women represent both an inspirational force and the source of death. By praising Dante, the man praises himself—he


\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 101-102.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 104.
overestimates his intellect and places himself in a status of human superiority that values the self over the collective. According to him, he is a victim of the femme fatale’s disdain, in the same manner that Dante was undervalued by the Florentines.

Poem/Response #6. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s "Angry young man, slouched at your school desk..." (Second stanza)

Space. As the man sings the last lines of the previous song, the woman enters and sits on an empty seat in the theatre—the performance’s background, illuminated by violet light. From the audience perspective, the woman is located on the left side of the space—the opposite side from which she delivered the first stanza of this poem.

Text.\(^{129}\)

You carry that arrogant ferule so proudly,  
A giant would bend with its erudite weight.  
You make our humble eyelids droop with shame,  
Whip us so hard our small fingers will break.  
Who taught you how to use such harsh weapons?  
How brutal they were, your own Latin masters!  
But love will come anyway, lord of your fate,  
And soften your heart after so many tears.  
   When you can weep,  
You’ll understand us.

Context and Message. Ironically, the only two pieces of this suite that are conceived as a continuum, are interrupted by the only poem that has been fragmented for performance purposes. In this case, Desbordes-Valmore’s poem reflects the woman’s opinion toward the man’s self-praise and arrogance. She emphasizes his lack of humility and his harsh and cruel judgment on women: “You make our humble eyelids droop with shame, whip so hard our small fingers will

break.” The woman recognizes the man’s intellectual influences—such as Dante—as the source of his current patriarchal perception of the world. Under this perspective, these “Latin masters” become a metaphor of the way patriarchy has been culturally assimilated. Nevertheless, the woman still foresees a brighter future for this man—but only if he is capable of opening himself to love and vulnerability. The man leaves after the woman delivers the lines “and soften your heart after so many tears.” The euphonium plays a motif of Glorieux’s “Twilight,” and the woman concludes her intervention with the lines “when you can weep, you’ll understand us.”

**Song #7. To the Banished Exile**

*Space.* The man enters with a suitcase and, throughout the song, traces an arch-shaped path from stage-left to stage-right. At the end, he kneels and begins opening the suitcase. The woman enters toward the end of the song, from stage-right, and observes him.

**Text Translation.**

All that should be said of him cannot be said, for his splendor flamed too brightly for our eyes; it’s easier to blame the people who hurt him than for all our greatest to rise to his least virtue.

This man descended to the just deserts of error for our benefit, and then ascended to God; and the gates that heaven did not block for him his homeland shut to his righteous desire.

I call her ungrateful, and nurse of her fortune to her own detriment, which is a clear sign that she lavishes the most woes on the most perfect.

Among a thousand proofs this one suffices: no exile was ever as undeserved as his, and no man equal or greater was ever born.

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130 Saslow, 424.
**Original Context.** 1545-46, the second sonnet on Dante. A political lamentation over Dante’s unfair exile.\textsuperscript{131} Musically:

The first three phrases of the vocal line of No. 7, “To the Exile,” are unaccompanied and continuing the atonality of the 12-note theme in the postlude of No. 6, “Dante,” wander into chromatically unstable territory. Following text castigating the “dark mob” for its persecution of Dante, an interrupted appearance of DSCH appears in the piano...\textsuperscript{132}

**Recontextualized approach.** This lamentation is performed as the man prepares for exile—in an attempt to create physical distance between himself and his ungrateful femme fatale. The man insists on comparing himself to Dante, and he exalts his own virtues which are similar to the Florentine author’s. His unnecessary and ridiculous sense of martyrdom dictates that, in order to transcend, he must be despised. The line between Dante and this man disappears as the references to Florence turn into references to the woman. According to him, her rejection will become the source of her own detriment, and her apparent blindness will prevent her from contemplating his self-proclaimed greatness.

**Poem/Response #7. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz’s Disillusionment**

**Space.** Stage-center. While the woman describes the effects of disillusionment, the man remains in the background, kneeling next to his suitcase. The woman moves throughout the areas surrounding stage-center, delivering the text to the audience.

\textsuperscript{131} Saslow, 424-425.

\textsuperscript{132} Bender, 59-60.
Oh, my disillusionment, you have come to the extreme that gives me the certainty you are truly disillusionment.

You have lost everything: but not yet, for I believe that losing everything is not a high price to pay.

And you shall not envy the banalities of love anymore, for the victim of disillusionment has no risk left to run.

Having no expectations brings me comfort, and it is a relief not to seek for healing.

I find relief in loss: if I have lost something I dearly treasured, I have also lost fear of losing it.

Having nothing to lose gives me solace and comfort, the traveler with no luggage is not afraid of thieves.

And I don’t even want the wholeness of my freedom, for if I take it as such, it will end up hurting me.

And I don’t want to worry about everything that is uncertain I just want to own my soul as if it did not belong to me.

Context and Message. The role of Sor Juana’s voice in Defatalizing is that of awakening. The woman acknowledges disillusionment as an emotional tool that allows her to analyze her intellectual process with objectivity: she was involved in a

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Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Obras Poéticas, (Buenos Aires: Editorial Molino, 1943), 108-109. Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.
relationship that jeopardized her dreams, dignity, and independence. However, disillusionment—and reality—appeared just in time. The deceptive reality of a destructive relationship almost made her lose everything, yet “losing all is not paying too dear for being undeceived.” The woman then recognizes the inspirational value of disillusionment; she embraces freedom with responsibility and establishes her own rules. At this point, she does not expect anything else from the man, she is free from him, but she is also free from social constructions regarding gender—she has nothing left to lose. As she delivers this text, the man remains almost static in the background—this visual composition embodies a new statement: the man is still a slave of illusory perceptions of reality, and the woman, on the other hand, has embraced responsible freedom and self-knowledge. She locates herself in the reality of the present time—in contrast to the fictional femme fatale, whose vengefulness is often motivated by a torturous past.

The music accompanying the woman is the second movement of John Steven’s Soliloquies, Adagio-molto espressivo. Like the piece’s name suggest, the Soliloquies are played with no accompaniment. Therefore, the three movements of the piece possess a strong, defined identity that carries through their haunting sonority—it is indeed a perfect pairing for Disillusionment.

**Song #8. Creation**

**Space.** The space between the euphonium and the desk sphere—the place where the man kneeled next to his suitcase. Among other things, this suitcase contains a doll and small jars of paint. The man will use these objects to portray his macabre interpretation of “creation.” The woman goes to the desk and observes the man as she types.
If my crude hammer shapes the hard stones into one human appearance or another, deriving its motion from the master who guides it, watches and holds it, it moves at another’s pace. But that divine one, which lodges and dwells in heaven, beautifies self and others by its own action; and if no hammer can be made without a hammer, by that living one every other one is made. And since a blow becomes more powerful the higher it’s raised up over the forge, that one’s flown up to heaven above my own. So now my own will fail to be completed unless the divine smithy, to help make it, gives it that aid which was unique on earth.

Original Context. This sonnet (ca. 1528) touches the subject of loss. Saslow considers that this text could be dedicated to Michelangelo’s dead brother, Buonarroti. This theory is supported by the fact that a prose passage follows this sonnet. The passage is dedicated to “Lionardo” (Lionardo is the name of Buonarroti’s son):

Lionardo. He was alone on earth in exalting virtues with his great virtue; he had no one who would work the bellows. Now in heaven he will have many companions, since there is no one there but those who loved the virtues; so I hope that, from up there, he will complete my (hammer?) down here. At least in heaven he will have someone to work the bellows, for down here he had no companion at the forge where virtues are exalted.135

Thus, the poems first strophe describes god’s guidance in the creative process—concretely, in sculpture. The second strophe recognizes god as a sculptor—as an artist—and references his divine hammer as the force of creation. The third strophe touches the subject of death by narrating that Michelangelo’s inspirational

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134 Saslow, 128.
135 Ibid., 129.
force has gone to heaven. Finally, the last strophe accepts the imperfect nature of the human hammer, which can only be aided by divine intervention. Musically, and according to Bender, “Creation” represents the dramatic climax of the suite:

The text of no. 8 “Creativity” mirrors that of “Rage.” The hammer blows of the sculptor are heard in wide ranging fortissimo chords in the piano introductions using extremes of register. The artist, having pointed out hypocrisy and injustice in others, and confessing his own transgressions, has only one option for redemption, his work. The poem reflects the Neoplatonic ideal that human activity is valid only with Divine assistance. The first two entrances of the vocal line are sung on Bb and Db, the interval of a minor third outlined in the interruption of DSCH in “Rage.”

Recontextualized Approach. Personally, I found this sonnet to be the most difficult to re-interpret. Michelangelo’s deep sense of loss in this specific text made me wonder if this song should be omitted from the final program. Eventually, after several discussions with teachers and friends who are supporters of feminism, I came to the conclusion that the easiest way to reinterpret Michelangelo’s idea of “creativity” was to pair it with “creation”—in other words, the biblical tale of Genesis. A deep sense of dwelling was then transformed into eccentric madness. In this song the man reveals the content in his suitcase: a female Victorian doll, and jars of paint. He places himself at the same level as god and—in the same way a sculptor works on stone—he paints the doll’s face in an attempt to create a perfect, non-rebellious woman. The first strophe now is interpreted through different lenses: the man assumes himself as creator and assures his work’s pace is fueled by divine inspiration. The second strophe reinforces the idea that the man perceives himself as an “extension of god.” For him, the woman has been led astray from the path of righteousness, and it is only by divine intervention—god’s and his own—that she will recognize her faults. He has Eve in his hands, and he is determined to mold her

136 Bender, 61.
according to his wishes; he packs again and leaves the stage feeling satisfied by his new resolution.

Poem/Response #8. Excerpts from Phyllis Trible's chapter "A Love Story Gone Awry," in God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality. (In the performance's program, this text has been called "Eve and the Serpent.")

Space. During the previous number, the woman observed the man from the desk while typing an answer to his misogynistic statements. The woman stands up and takes an apple that has been previously located on the desk. She moves with freedom and addresses the text to the audience from stage-center.

Text.137

At the center of [this] scene . . . is a dialogue between this animal and the woman. . . . [T]he serpent addresses the woman with plural verb forms, regarding her as the spokesperson for the human couple . . . [T]he woman continues to be emphasized in the design of the story while being portrayed as equal with the man in creation . . . The serpent and the woman discuss theology. They talk about God. Never referring to the deity by the sacred name Yahweh, but only using the general appellation God, they establish that distance which characterizes objectivity and invites disobedience. And, indeed, God-the-subject who acts and controls is altogether absent from [this] scene . . . Creation supplants Creator. The serpent poses a question to the woman: “And he said to the woman: 'Did God really say, you shall not eat from every tree of the garden?'” . . .

As the woman relates the actual words of prohibition, she invokes the deity in direct quotation: "From the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, God said, 'You shall not eat from it and you shall not touch it, lest you die'” . . . But this quotation embellishes the original with the phrase "you shall not touch it." The reference to touch completes the appearance of the five senses in the story, and with these words the hermeneutical skills of the woman emerge. Not only can she relay the command of God; she can also interpret it faithfully. Her understanding guarantees obedience. If the tree is not touched, then its fruit cannot be eaten. Thus the woman builds "a fence around the Torah," a procedure that her rabbinical successors developed fully to protect the law of God and to insure obedience to it. . . . The response of the woman to the serpent reveals her as intelligent, informed, and perceptive. Theologian, ethicist, hermeneut, rabbi, she speaks with clarity and authority. Although the divine words of prohibition were addressed to the earth creature, she assumes responsibility for obeying them.

Yet throughout this scene the man has remained silent; he does not speak for obedience. His presence is passive and bland. The contrast that he offers to the woman is not strength or resolve but weakness. No patriarchal figure making decisions for his family, he follows his woman without question or comment. She gives fruit to him, “and he ate.” The story does not say that she tempted him; nor does its silence allow for this inference, even though many interpreters have made it. (The woman then concludes with the phrase “Eat from the three, for knowledge is not a sin” as she holds the apple.)

**Context and Message.** In Defatalizing’s concept, Trible’s text represents the climax of the performance’s plot. Since this recital focuses on nineteenth-century and contemporary perceptions of the daughters of Eve, it seemed necessary to count on Trible’s biblical interpretations as a highpoint of this performance. An excerpt of Steven’s *Soliloquies* (third movement-Vivace) precedes the text. The woman delivers this message to the audience as she holds an apple: she is consciously and enthusiastically defatalizing womankind by emphasizing Eve’s theological curiosity, sense of defiance, and desire for learning. The text is concise and self-explanatory; it represents an energetic response to the man’s desire to re-oppress Eve.

**Song #9. Night (a dialogue)**

**Space.** Stage-center. After the woman delivers the previous text, the man is not capable of accepting the truthiness of her words. He takes the apple, the woman freezes, and he sings as he moves around her.
Giovanni Battista Strozzi:

The Night that you see sleeping in such a graceful attitude, was sculpted by an Angel in this stone, and since she sleeps, she must have life; wake her, if you don’t believe it, and she’ll speak to you.

Michelangelo:

Sleep is dear to me, and being of stone is dearer, as long as injury and shame endure; not to see or hear is a great boon to me; therefore, do not wake me—pray, speak softly.

Original Context. Michelangelo wrote this epigraph—last four lines—around 1545-46. The poem is a “response to a quatrain by the Florentine academician Giovanni di Carlo Strozzi [first four lines] that praised M[ichelangelo]’s sculpture of Night in the Medici Chapel . . . both [quatrain]s were copied and printed together, with M[ichelangelo]’s epigram headed, Buonarroti’s Reply." The political content of the poem refers to “the final establishment of the Medici dynasty, which led to the exile of many of M[ichelangelo]’s Florentine friends in Rome and his own refusal to return to the city.”

In the Michelangelo Suite, this is the song in which Shostakovich recurs most frequently to self-quotation. Structurally, the base of this song is “an open fifth C tonality with inner sections moving through C minor, C major, back to C minor, and closing with a return open fifth C.” The original motif that inspired this modal

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138 Saslow, 419.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.
141 Bender, 65.
transformation was taken from his trio for Violin, Clarinet, and Piano (1949).\textsuperscript{142} Bender suggests that this brief exploration of C major “implies that acclamation by authority is unimportant to the artist, especially an artist who is aware that his death is near.”\textsuperscript{143}

\textit{Recontextualized Approach.} In this song, the man turns into one of the church fathers who condemned Eve. Unable to deal with the woman’s previous, successful intervention, he symbolically blocks her path to knowledge and freedom by taking the apple from her hand. The woman freezes, and the man assumes this effect represents the victory of patriarchy. However, this victory is false and temporary.

As the woman freezes, the man takes over the dialogue. Strozzi’s line’s become his own voice: he mocks the woman and he describes her as a beautiful sculpture that remains deaf and blind to the “natural order of things” (patriarchy). He insinuates the woman’s heart and soul are made of stone.

In the second quatrain, Michelangelo’s words represent the woman’s answer. In the man’s perception, she enjoys her deafness and blindness, and she is insensitive to “the damage and the shame” she provokes in men. Indifference to and rejoicing in male suffering represents one of the most important femme fatale traits in the nineteenth-century. It was considered that the ideals of female emancipation interfered with the natural order of things and the harmony of society.


\textit{Space.} Stage-center. The woman unfreezes and speaks to the audience.

\textsuperscript{142} Bender, 68.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 70.
My black-eyed lover broke my back, 
that hinge I swung on in and out 
and never once thought twice about, 

expecting a lifetime guarantee. 
He snapped that simple hinge for me. 
My black-eyed lover broke my back.

All delicate with touch and praise 
he one by one undid the screws 
that held the pin inside its cup 

and when I toppled like a door 
—his bitch, his bountiful, his whore— 
he did not stay to lift me up.

Beware of black-eyed lovers. Some 
who tease to see you all undone, 
who taste and take you in the game 
will later trample on your spine 
as if they never called you mine, 
mine.

Context and Message. In the performance, after the man has sung his previous number, the woman unfreezes. Her voice is preceded by a musical introduction (Steven’s Soliloquies, first movement: Maestoso-freely) which announces the audience an important message is about to be delivered. She openly shares with the audience one of the experiences that motivated her to pursue emancipation: she identifies herself as a victim of violence. Psychological or physical violence often comes from those who claim to love us. Thus, the woman speaks from personal experience but, symbolically, she also speaks for Eve, for the women in France whose voices were silenced after the post-Revolution years, and for every woman who has been victim of any sort of abuse. She speaks of falsely sweet lovers, patriarchal political authorities, and oppressive societies. As she warns “Beware of

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black-eyed lovers,” she calls for violence awareness—especially, in light of the fact that violence has the potential to act in subtle, almost unperceivable ways. These manifestations of aggression are distinctive of those who fear the ideals of pro-equality movements—people who are not willing to let go of the false security of patriarchy.

**Song #10. Death**

**Space.** Chalk outline and mailbox. After the previous text, the woman sits on the chair, next to the mailbox. The man comes in from stage-left and locates himself within the chalk outline, then he moves toward to the woman. He moves back and forth. At the end, he reveals he is carrying a knife and threatens the woman with it.

**Text Translation.**¹⁴⁵

Certain of death, though not yet of its hour, life is short and little of it is left for me; it delights my senses, but is not fit home for my soul, which is begging me to die.

The world is blind, and bad example goes on overcoming and drowning even the best of habits. The light is extinguished, and with it all valor; error triumphs, and truth cannot sally forth.

Lord, when will come what is awaited by those who believe in you? For every excess delay shortens hope and puts the soul in mortal danger.

What good is your promise of great light to all, if death attacks first, and fixes them forever in the state he finds them in, with no escape?

**Original Context.** A late sonnet, written after 1555. Saslow interprets the last three lines as follows: "[t]he longer you put off the fulfilment of your promise of salvation, the greater the chance that death will overtake me and, finding me still in

¹⁴⁵ Saslow, 490.
a state of sinfulness, will consign me irredeemably to hell.”\textsuperscript{146} Musically, the atonal sequence of eleven notes used during the introduction of “Truth” reappears in the introduction of “Death.” This effect “frames the preceding movements within an arch shape, and gives the eleventh movement the function of an epilogue.”\textsuperscript{147}

\textit{Recontextualized Approach.} As the performance approaches to its end, the man foresees the femme fatale’s success—male destruction. He predicts his own death, and he hopes for it in the midst of a self-provoked misery—staging-wise, he sets himself within the confines of the chalk outline, he is already dead. He laments on the world’s blindness once again, doubting the divinity’s capacity to punish those who defy the natural order of things. Excess—represented by the femme fatale’s addiction to destruction—corrupts the mortal soul, and the man confesses to god that this woman threatens the purity of his soul. What then is the next step? Is the man or the femme fatale the one who is supposed to die? At this point, the performance has achieved its most unrealistic operatic dimension by the portrayal of a specific scene: the man threatening the woman with a knife.

\textbf{Poem/Response #10. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s “Angry young man, slouched at your school desk…” (Third stanza)}

\textit{Space.} The mailbox/chair sphere. The woman remains on the chair, unfearful. She delivers the text to the man as he retrocedes.

\textit{Text.}\textsuperscript{148}

Now you want to write down your intimate dream; We are most fluent to lavish the one we love best.

\textsuperscript{146} Saslow, 490.
\textsuperscript{147} Bender, 30-31.
\textsuperscript{148} Schultz, trans. J. S. A. Lowe, 35.
But if she whom you love doesn’t know how to read,
Your beloved will never make any response.
So left flare within you a tender new flame,
Lighting your heart with its vague, feeble rays.
Let it touch the tips of all pens with its glow:
You will see that the mind illumines the soul.
   When you can love,
   You’ll understand us.

_Context and Message._ The last stanza of Desbordes-Valmore’s poem represents another attempt to have a rational, civilized dialogue with the man. The woman encourages the man to abandon any sort of self-praising and pretentious attitudes in order to achieve peace, love, and ideological openness. She is not willing to participate in his mind games and, once again, she stops his violence chain by not giving in to aggression—she declines to participate in this traditional operatic plot.
The woman tries to encourage dialogue and discussion. She recognizes, that the man is incapable of listening, empathizing, and loving.

As in the previous two stanzas of Desbordes-Valmore poem, the euphonium plays a motif of Glorieux’s “Twilight” before the woman delivers the last lines: “When you can love, you’ll understand us.”

_Song #11. Immortality_

_Space._ Mailbox/chair sphere, stage-center, and chalk outline. The man sings most part of this song next to the chair, threatening the woman with a knife. Toward the end of the song, he moves to the chalk outline and reveals his real intentions: he is determined to commit suicide.
Here my fate wills that I should sleep too early, but I’m not really dead; though I’ve changed homes, I live on in you, who see and mourn me now, since one lover is transformed into the other.

Here I am, believed dead; but I lived for the comfort of the world, with the souls of a thousand true lovers in my breast; therefore, although diminished by taking just one of them from me, I’m not dead.

**Original Context.** This song merges the texts of two poems that belong to a series of forty-eight epitaphs, one madrigal, and one sonnet. Michelangelo wrote this series honor the memory of Cecchino Bracci (deceased at the age fifteen, in 1544), who was the nephew of the author’s friend, Luigi del Riccio.¹⁵⁰

**First Quatrain.** This epitaph was accompanied by a note to del Riccio: "I didn’t want to send this one to you, since it’s very clumsy; but the trout and the truffles would compel heaven.”¹⁵¹ In this note, Michelangelo references the gifts received from del Riccio as a compensation for his work.

**Second Quatrain.** Another epitaph for Bracci. According to Saslow, “[t]o this epitaph M[ichelangelo] appended the first of his postscripts referring to del Riccio’s importunate gifts: When you don’t want any more of these, don’t send me anything further."¹⁵² These two epitaphs embrace the idea that those who have passed away still live on in the souls of those who loved them.

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¹⁴⁹ Saslow, 356 (first quatrain) and 350 (second quatrain).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 339.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 356.

¹⁵² Ibid., 350.
From a musical perspective, "Immortality" serves as an Epilogue that brings the suite to a happy closure—Shostakovich reconciles with death:

It is the extraordinary epilogue, no. 11 "Immortality” which denotes a profound change in Shostakovich's attitude toward death . . . The two quatrains Shostakovich selected ignore those which highlight the fear and suffering of death. Instead the song articulates a gentle acceptance of death, expressing the confidence that the artist's work will continue to live . . . The simple, almost minimalist theme gives a child-like sense of joy to the song. An extended march with repeated F# major chords, along with a reference to the beginning of the song concludes the suite...153

Recontextualized Approach. The man's last intervention can be interpreted in different ways. He delivers this text as if he was simultaneously reading his epitaph and the woman’s. If the woman dies, all the necessary dramatic tools that allow the existence of the femme fatale will come to a successful conclusion: the woman will be punished for her evil deeds. Still, her memory would live in those whom she affected—particularly, this man. If she dies, the femme fatale will also perpetuate her negative connotations through the man’s inner conflict and misery: he cannot leave with her; therefore he has to kill her. Paradoxically, he is also unable to live without her, and this situation leads to another important femme fatale trait: the destruction of men. At the end of the song, the man points the blade toward himself; this is—according to his thinking—the only way to find authentic peace.

153 Bender, 34-35.
Poem/Response #11. Maya Angelou’s “Caged Bird”154

Space. Stage-center. The woman takes the knife from the man, throws it away, and delivers the text to him and the audience.

Context and Message. Maya Angelou’s “Caged Bird” touches the topic of freedom. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the kind of freedom the author is referring to. McMurry’s review on the first volume of the author’s autobiography “I Know why the Caged Bird Songs,” reflects on the metaphorical nature of this bird:

Angelou's caged bird sings also from frustration, but in doing so, discovers that the song transforms the cage from a prison that denies selfhood to a vehicle for self-realization. The cage is a metaphor for roles which, because they have become institutionalized and static, do not facilitate inter-relationship, but impose patterns of behavior which deny true identity... In Caged Bird Angelou describes her efforts to adapt to the role of a young Black girl, the painfully humorous failures, and the gradual realization of how to transcend the restrictions.155

Evidently, the man in the performance does not suffer from the same kind of social marginalization that Angelou suffered, especially in her youth years. Nevertheless, he remains a cage for himself or, in other words, he is a slave of his narrow perception of the world. While reciting this poem, the woman seeks to shake the man’s world by emphasizing his own otherness. She exposes him as vulnerable, culturally suffocated, and patriarchally brain-washed. The man, who remains incapable of fully understanding the message, receives enough information to let go of both his suicidal attempt and harassment/psychological torture toward the woman. He recognizes himself as a caged bird, and redemption happens.

154 To see the complete text of the poem “Caged Bird,” please refer to: Maya Angelou, The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou (New York, NY: Random House, 1994), 194-195. Permission to use the text of Angelou’s works in this treatise was not granted by Random House, the copyright holder.

When the man leaves, the woman is left alone on stage; she decides to grab the apple, and then she leaves. In this case, redemption has been achieved through peaceful intervention, intelligent discourse, emancipation, and freedom—in *Defatalizing*'s anti-operatic performance, no one has to die. Nevertheless, this conclusion is far away from a stereotypical happy ending; as the woman leaves and the euphonium plays one more excerpt of “Twilight,” the audience remains with a sense of inconclusiveness. This effect aims to emphasize the fact that there is still a long way to go regarding gender issues consciousness and, concretely, femme fatale awareness.
CONCLUSION

The purpose of Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype is that of encouraging femme fatale awareness in a twenty-first century society. The assimilation of the femme fatale as a social issue depends on two determinant factors: first, the understanding of this figure as a dangerous threat to society; and second, the necessity of taking a stand to defatalize her. It is only through this defatalization process that this stereotype’s image can transmute from that of a deadly, barren, and evil seductress to that of an independent, intelligent, and capable woman. In other words, a complete defatalization process implies moving away from the stereotype and returning to the human.

By this, I do not mean to state that everything in the femme fatale is negative. Possible positive traits in the femme fatale include intelligence, determination, and the capacity to enjoy and control her sexuality. Nevertheless, none of these traits can be taken as positive if they are triggered by revenge or addressed toward destruction. That being said, this performance’s importance lies in the idea that the stereotypes perpetuated by mass media should be questioned, analyzed, and not taken as a model of living.

As its creator, I always remained aware of this performance’s complexity. The use of metaphors, symbols, devising techniques, and text recontextualization worked in favor of the experimental quality of this otherwise traditional degree recital. Thus, I expected this concept to be incomprehensible at first sight. However, since femme fatale awareness is a message I am concerned about delivering, I used different tools that—according to my thinking—would effectively carry the message without changing the performance concept.

First, I created a brief handout with basic femme fatale information and the description of the whole concept. This handout included notes on different topics: the
femme fatale, the reasons Michelangelo and Shostakovich’s works were selected for this performance, the selection of female writers, and the recital’s primary message. Second, the information regarding the creation of the femme fatale was projected on the same screen as the songs’ translations. This happened as the audience waited for the performance to start.

In general, the two performances of Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype were well received by the audience. We also received a lot of encouragement to get involved in these kinds of multidisciplinary projects more often. Nevertheless, it was easy to realize that those audience members who did not read the handout or the projections did not understand the concept. Defatalizing was performed before I determined that this performance would be an essential part of my doctoral research. Therefore, I did not use formal methods such as surveys or interviews to evaluate the audiences’ responses. Rather, responses were received and interpreted based on conversations with audience members after the performances. I found three of the responses particularly enlightening:

1. From someone who did not read the handout: “It was a very dark concept. I didn’t understand it, but I enjoyed it.” — Naturally, the negative connotation of this reaction lies in the fact that the message was not properly delivered. Still, the performance worked for this audience member as a positive esthetic experience.

2. A later comment, coming from someone who read the handout at home, after seeing the performance: “I was really confused the whole time. But when I read the handout at home it all made sense.” — I was particularly intrigued by this response since it implies that the message was delayed, but eventually received.
Evidently, the subjective nature of this performance and these kinds of responses triggered all sorts of doubts about this performance’s quality.

Nevertheless, they also allowed me to articulate specific questions: “How badly do I want this message to carry through,” “am I willing to sacrifice any elements of this ‘concept’ for a clearer delivery of the message,” and most importantly, “for which kinds of audiences am I performing?” This line of thinking led me to new questions: “Could the performance exist without detailed program notes,” “can it stand on its own and still have the same impact,” “how could I re-stage it in favor of a better delivery of the message,” and “what are other elements that might have prevented the audience’s understanding the concept?”

Although song translations were projected, I consider that the songs’ language might have been a determining factor on the audience’s ability to assimilate the concept. Shostakovich’s cycle was written in Russian. The main reason why I decided not to sing English translations was my desire to portray that the female and male characters speak different ideological languages.

There is another element that might have contributed to the confusion: since Defatalizing’s performance was as an academic requirement, I was only allowed to advertise it as a “Doctoral Recital.” This term evidently creates traditional expectations in prospective audience members. Audience members expected to see
a recital in a traditional setup. By defying the audience’s expectations and
confronting them instead with an experimental performance, it is possible that the
audience’s expectations played a role in the message not being properly delivered to
everyone. For future performances, this issue can easily be fixed by presenting
Defatalizing as a “vocal experiment” instead of advertising it as a traditional recital.

The name of this document is Recontextualizing Music for Social Change.
Clearly, the recontextualization goal was achieved. I believe that the performance’s
potential for social change can be interpreted by responding the questions previously
formulated:

Was the performance’s message effectively delivered? No, the performance’s
message was not understood by all members in the audience—but it was by good
number of them. I strongly believe that one of the purposes of art implies placing a
question in its audience’s mind. I would be artistically pleased if members of the
audience went home with this question, “why did I dislike the male character so
much?” or “why did this performance make me feel uncomfortable?” I agree with the
idea that a message is better delivered straightforwardly; nevertheless, this
particular message carried through for some members of the audience despite its
developmental complexity. And I consider this to be a small victory.

Would I consider sacrificing the “concept” for a clearer message delivery? Yes and
no. This question made me think about three possible performance alternatives
which depend on types of audience:

1. Turn Defatalizing into a lecture recital. Comprehensibility of the recital’s thesis
depended upon whether or not the audience members read the handout.

Thus, it seems a nice alternative to deliver this information verbally before
the performance starts. Perhaps, this format would be better received in an academic environment.

2. Leave the performance as is. Naturally, I would like to revise Defatalizing’s structure. I would like to experiment with staging, spaces, and even the selection of poetry. Nevertheless, I think Defatalizing does not need to be turned into a lecture recital when performed for audiences that enjoy staging experiments. These kinds of audiences can possibly be found in alternative spaces—non-musical spaces.

3. Finding a way of incorporating the handout’s information into the performance. The use of different tools such as projections in-between the characters’ interventions, the insertion of new dialogue, or even new characters, might work in favor of proper message delivery. By incorporating basic femme fatale information into the performance, instead of prior to the performance or in the handout, the audience would probably get a better understanding of the concept.

4. Create a simpler performance on the same topic. There are many different ways in which Defatalizing’s central theme and message can be set to music/words—i.e., using openly anti-feminist songs or creating didactic recitals. A more comprehensible take on the femme fatale can easily be created for audiences who enjoy traditional approaches to vocal recitals or performance. Ultimately, I would like to create as many performance options as possible in order to approach different kinds of audiences, and this topic has enough potential to make it happen.

   I believe that the femme fatale stereotype affects both women and men—especially, teenagers—who might be tricked into believing that personal value depends on sexual power. The femme fatale’s unrealistic, hypersexualized
connotations also reinforce the idea that identity depends exclusively on sexual behavior. Through these lenses, my fascination for Eve as the *first other* reflects the necessity of creating performances for social change that encourage the questioning of socially assimilated behavioral standards. My cause therefore originates in femme fatale awareness, but it expands to a more essential human need: that of freely being oneself.
CHAPTER 3
UN-LABELLING LOVE: A SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF ROMANTIC ATTACHMENT IN FOUR SEASONS

Introduction

The social, biological, and psychological effects of love unarguably represent a fascinating field of inquiry that has been subject of intensive analysis, scientific articles, and dissertations. Some psychologists have argued that the stages of love within a monogamous kinship could be labeled in many different ways, this ‘love terminology’ includes concepts such as “being in love,” “passional love,” and “companionate love.” Unsurprisingly, researchers, psychologists, and scientists do not always agree with the terminology used to describe the effects of love in the human body and in the individual and collective psyche; nevertheless, it is possible to trace a somewhat generalized pattern of the way love affects human beings through a scientific approach which describes the physiological effects of love. Falling in love, for example, increases the production of dopamine,\textsuperscript{156} and romantic love is also associated to dopaminergic reward pathways in the brain.\textsuperscript{157}

From my perspective, the biology of love might be one of the surest paths to understand adult pair-bonding and, simultaneously, to the process of un-labelling love. The phrase “un-labelling love” seeks to encourage the emergence of a more humanistic perception of romantic attachment which, by default, is interpreted as an


exclusively heterosexual phenomenon. On these matters, the performance of *Un-Labelling Love* aims to unmark kinship systems through scientific research.

After broadly searching for literature on love, I planned a recital which translated the stages of love into four song-settings that represent the four seasons of the year. The recital follows the story of two characters who experience, in order, falling in love, passional love, relationship complications, and companionate love. Nevertheless, one more element concerning social constructions and biology of love manifests on stage: these characters (a female and a male), who seem to be emotionally involved with each other, eventually defy assumed heteronormative parameters of kinship by revealing at the end of the recital that one of them has a *queer* nature (the term *queer* is used here to mark heteronormative standards). In other words, the main characters present different sexual tendencies but similar love processes—they share biological responses to “romantic love.”

In order to further illuminate the thesis of this recital, I will analyze romantic love from social and biological perspectives. From a social perspective, Western culture understands romantic love as “a compelling emotional attraction to an idealized other”; this kind of romantic attachment has been broadly analyzed through the lenses of different disciplines. Many anthropologists, for example, have argued that romantic love is a Western cultural invention—based mostly on the fact that mass media has managed to perpetuate romantic clichés through the ages. The inevitable question then arises: is romantic love nothing more than a Euro-American invention reinforced by mass-media?

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158 Companionate love may be interpreted as the phase of love that follows romantic love. This phase is defined by a considerable decrease of elements such as passion and sexual drive, and the simultaneous development of a more peaceful and fulfilling relationship which is based on affection rather than attraction.

Romantic love can arguably—and coldly—be interpreted as a massive idealization of reality. It can be achieved by simplifying social constructions and using of dramatic symbols and stereotypes,\textsuperscript{160} it also inspires assumptions such as the existence of a soul mate, being “destined” to fall in love, and the attainability of everlasting monogamous love.\textsuperscript{161} According to Jankowiak and Fisher, the idea of romantic love originated in Europe and, “[u]nderlying these Eurocentric views is the assumption that modernization and the rise of individualism are directly linked to the appearance of romantic notions of love.”\textsuperscript{162} Knox extends that thought to the effects of mass media in the European-inspired American romantic idealism with the following statement: “[l]ove is an experience which most have had or expect to have. Indeed, American culture teaches that, ‘Love is the greatest thing.’ It is an experience to be sought and, when achieved, to be cherished.”\textsuperscript{163}

It is also important to consider that, at least since the invention of the newspaper in the seventeenth century, humankind has been surrounded and influenced by the effects of mass media. Different forms of mass media, such as television, cinema, visual arts, literature, and music have taken a collective new role in our society: that of the “builders” of personality and behavioral patterns. Unsurprisingly, these media-inspired patterns have also altered the way we perceive love, relationships, and even heartbreak.

\textsuperscript{160} Mary-Lou Galician, \textit{Sex, Love & Romance in the Mass Media: Analysis and Criticism of Unrealistic Portrayals and their Influences} (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), X.


By definition, romantic attachment is "ever-lasting, exclusive, and true." Nevertheless, the idea of romantic love was not always socially accepted. In nineteenth-century United States, romantic feelings were considered temporary and vulgar: the sign of moral weakness. Still, romantic love's concept became culturally acceptable and found its way into the twenty-first century through mass media’s cultivation process—that is, mass media’s power to create and reinforce values and patterns through constant repetition. However, mass media does not only perpetuate the idea of romance, it also emphasizes its brief life-span. This contradictory nature of romantic attachment relies on the idea that love is supposed to be eternal, but it is actually hard to keep alive:

People in our times seek romance to give their lives meaning. It often works—for a while. Romance can be captivating. It takes things over, adds depth, and excitement about being alive. Yet what people in our time say about romance, across the spectrum from high culture to mass market magazines and tabloids, is that romance fades; it tends to be short-lived. Authentic romance is hard to find and even harder to maintain. It easily degrades into something else, much less captivating, much less enlivening, such as sober respect or purely sexual diversion, predictable companionship, or hatred, guilt, and self-pity.

Perceiving love—or, in this case, romantic love—as a short-lived, culturally forced interpretation of reality might represent a disappointing eccentricity to those who believe in the romanticized ideals of falling in love. Nevertheless, all is not lost: heated debates on the reality of romantic love fostered research on interpretations of human kinship systems. Some of these studies, for example, have emphasized the

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165 Trachman and Bluestone, 133.

fact that romantic attachment is not exclusive to Western cultures or, in other words, that romantic love is a real, human universal. Such investigations have considered that “humans have evolved the propensity to experience romantic love which can be recognized by a sudden, unrestrained passion resulting in the individual entering into an immediate, if short-term, commitment.” This kind of interpretation, however, inevitably draws our attention to another field of research: that pertaining biological reactions to love.

Biological responses to love comprise this section’s main concern, primarily because the biology of love represents a more objective field of research within a topic that is highly framed by subjectivity. A biological interpretation of love embraces topics such as attraction, courtship, reproduction, and an increased production of substances such as dopamine and phenylethylamine, among others.

Does biology then present a way to interpret love as a non-culturally constructed phenomenon? Jankowiak’s and Fischer’s research, for example, analyzed reports of ethnographers who studied 166 non-Western cultures and found that 147 of them comprise romantic love in some form. Their criteria were based mostly on each culture’s clear differentiation between lust and love, but also on the presence of the following concomitant phenomena: 1) personal anguish and longing; 2) the presence of love songs or folklore that highlight the motivations behind romantic involvement; 3) elopement due to mutual affection; 4) native accounts affirming the existence of passionate love; and 5) the ethnographer's observation that romantic love is present.

This study’s conclusion suggests that romantic love might be considered a biological human universal—or, at least, a near-universal. Nevertheless, the scope of

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167 Jankowiak and Fischer, 150.
168 Ibid., 152.
this paper remains far removed from representing the broad totality of world’s cultures and societies. Though analyzing the whole world’s responses to love remains impossible, we can surely speak from our Western perspective and experience: romantic love is learned.

Whether the reader agrees with interpreting love as a social construction or as a biological phenomenon, love is learned through personal experience. In addition to considering love a cultural construction, it might be possible to examine love from an intimate and private experience that responds to biology. Eventually, the form in which we decide to experience—or not to experience—romantic kinship represents both a personal choice and a mutual—or collective—agreement.

So romantic love exists in many cultures other than those influenced by Western Europe, it is strongly connected to societal expectation, and it arises often as a biological imperative. It is pertinent now to take a closer look at the performance pertaining to this document. Essentially, the recital was created on the basis of a somewhat standardized interpretation of romantic love. Nevertheless, it eventually questions the nature of love and its optical representation, and it argues that people with different sexual identities go through the same biological and psychological processes while feeling love.

Neither this performance nor this document intend to analyze the nature of non-heterosexual tendencies. This performance’s purpose can be reduced to a simple statement: through artistic contemplation, humankind may become more tolerant and informed. Relatedly, the performance does not seek to promote or to attack socially established kinship systems such as marriage—or other kinds of labelled romantic relationships; therefore, the characters’ relationships were referred to as such: simply “relationship,” or “kinship.”
The portrayal of an un-labeled kinship system allows the audience to come to their own conclusions on this matter. But why then is it so important to portray an un-labeled kind of love? A labeling system of human relationships frames the history of sexuality in Western culture. Over the years, heterosexual love has represented the main target of social constructions and cultural expectations of kinship. Nonetheless, these same constructions have crossed the line of non-heterosexual love.

By this, I do not intend to speak against love social constructions, but rather to analyze them from a more objective point of view. Judith Butler’s thoughts on gay marriage might represent a better portrayal of the ambivalent nature of cultural workings regarding love:

Gay marriage obviously draws upon profound and abiding investments not only in the heterosexual couple per se but also in the question of what forms of relationship ought to be legitimated by the state. This crisis of legitimation can be considered from a number of perspectives, but let us consider for the moment the ambivalent gift that legitimation can become. To be legitimated by the state is to enter the terms of legitimation offered there, and to find that one’s public and recognizable sense of personhood is fundamentally dependent on the lexicon of that legitimation.¹⁶⁹

Therefore, Un-Labelling Love seeks not to portray an illegitimate union, but rather to suggest its possible existence. The characters then could be involved in a romantic boyfriend-girlfriend relationship that transcended to marriage, an open relationship, a free union, or any other kind of labeled or non-labeled system of kinship. Thus, this performance encourages the audience to use their imaginations and to feel comfortable arriving at their own conclusions on the characters and their relationships.

The performance’s plot proceeds from an assumption suggested to the audience by heteronormative appearances: the two main characters (singers) are emotionally involved with each other. In the final outcome, the audience discovers that the characters are actually not romantically involved—they merely have shared similar love processes with other people—and their real partners are eventually revealed. However, the assumption that they actually form a heterosexual couple is encouraged by the insertion of a third character who narrates the singers’ love-stages. The narrative takes the form of a seminar wherein the narrator presents himself as a scientist—he has researched human physiological and psychological responses to love. The scientific data for this project have been provided by two research subjects: a female and a male (the singers).

Following is the event’s structure. The narrator gives examples of scientific findings on love; each one of this findings is then exemplified by the research subjects’ behavior—that is, through staged songs. Since the research subjects alternate songs and report extremely similar biological processes, an artistic dialogue emerges; this song exchange inspires the idea that the performers are singing to each other. The stage, however, is divided in three sections: a podium (from where the narrator delivers his text), an armchair and a coffee table on stage right (the woman’s space), and a chair with a desk on stage left (the man’s space)—this division will be more carefully analyzed in following sections of this chapter. In reality as well as in the performance, the characters actually never see each other.

Naturally, this barest allusion to heterosexual romance aims to create expectations in the audience; but these expectations are not met when the sexual identity of one of the characters is revealed. In this way, the performance posits the idea that:
[A] number of kinship relations exist and persist that do not conform to the nuclear family model and that draw on biological and nonbiological relations, exceeding the reach of current juridical conceptions, functioning according to nonformalizable rules.\textsuperscript{170}

For this purpose, the recital comprised an eclectic selection of art songs, featuring gender-neutral poetry. The composers selected for this recital include Barbara Strozzi (1619-1677), Gioachino Rossini (1729-1868), Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Luigi Arditi (1822-1903), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), Richard Strauss (1864-1949), Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), Alma Mahler (1879-1964), Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), Kurt Weill (1900-1950), and Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990). This broad selection of composers from different nationalities, backgrounds, and sexual identities has the purpose of creating a diversified musical and dramatic environment—an environment that is capable of enhancing the audience’s musical experience and highlighting the performance’s message.

In summary, Un-Labeling Love’s message embraces the ethical necessity of assimilating and accepting systems of kinship that challenge the restrictive heterosexual nature of implied sexual categories, and also the perspective that “[q]ueerness, . . . is more than just sexuality. It is the great refusal of a performance principle that allows the human to feel and know not only our work and our pleasure but also ourselves and others.”\textsuperscript{171} Academic music, when relocated from a purely elitist environment to one that is easily accessible, has the capacity of promoting social awareness. In these ways, this performance event amplifies the traditional expectations of a vocal recital.

\textsuperscript{170} Butler, \textit{Undoing Gender}, 102.

Review of Literature

Traditional interpretations of romantic love might be filtered through a scientific point of view: "[s]ince falling in love is a natural phenomenon with obvious implications for the process of evolution, it is reasonable to hypothesize that it must be mediated by a well-established biological process."\(^\text{172}\) *Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons*, features a romanticized approach to the biology of love.

Different scientists have interpreted love stages in different ways; Carlos Yela García, for example, has labeled three basic periods of romantic love:\(^\text{173}\)

Phase 1, "*Being in love.*" This phase includes the first months of the relationship. Since there is not enough information on the intensity of love components from unilateral "being in love" until the establishment of an actual relationship, Yela’s research interprets being in love as a reciprocal phenomenon. This relatively brief period, presents an increase of erotic passion—which reaches its maximum point, intimacy, and a desire to establish a special affective bond. This phase is also characterized by a lack of commitment awareness.

Phase 2, "*Passional Love.*" Passional love begins approximately six months after the relationship has started, and it can last up to four years.\(^\text{174}\) In this period, erotic passion oscillates around its maximum point, but romantic passion continues to increase. Expectedly, commitment and intimacy become considerably more important.

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\(^{174}\) My usage of “passional” here follows Yela’s model. When used in this document, it refers to Yela’s second phase of romantic love.
Phase 3, "Companionate Love." According to Yela’s sample, this phase commences around the 4-year mark, when both romantic and erotic passion begin to fade. The relationship is then based on a deeper concept of mutuality and affection.

This three-phase classification has gained significant acclaim among researchers. Nevertheless, for this performance, the brain processes, body changes, and psychological reactions felt while experiencing love, have been classified in four stages that metaphorically represent the four seasons of the year. Spring thus includes unilateral attraction but also reciprocation awareness and the beginning of a relationship (the beginning of scientific “being in love”). Summer is interpreted as the transition to an established relationship (being in love) and the evolution to passional love. I have inserted Fall as a transitional time between passional love and companionate love—during this period, the performance’s characters experience relationship complications. Finally, Winter is understood as companionate love.

In order to simplify this literature review’s structure, the information gathered on this subject has been classified into these four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Concretely, the love story—or stories—concerning the performance’s main characters have been created as examples of these four developmental love stages.

**Spring**

My use of the term spring references the period of “falling in love” and the beginning of scientific “being in love.” Spring, according to my performance’s parameters, includes two phases of emotional development: that preceding romantic reciprocation (falling in love), and that concerning the first period of reciprocation awareness (being in love). Spring differs from the scientific interpretation of being in love in the sense that, for science, being in love already implies the existence of a
relationship. Therefore, I have selected informational excerpts that might be applicable to pre- or post-relationship circumstances.

According to Marazziti and Canale, human pair-bonding begins with a subjective experience called "falling in love." 175 Since this experience often culminates in the development of a long-lasting relationship, it is considered that its final purpose surpasses mere reproductive needs. 176 Being in love is defined by high passion, attraction, and the desire to create an emotional bond; still, other feelings such as commitment remain unimportant. 177 According to Zeki, romantic feelings activate "overlapping regions in the brain’s reward system that coincide with areas rich in oxytocin and vasopressin receptors. 178

Fisher and colleagues suggest that romantic attachment may derive from mammalian mechanisms of mate choice. 179 They also consider that romantic attachment is psychologically initiated by a specific event:

Romantic love begins as an individual starts to regard another individual as special and unique. The lover then focuses his/her attention on the beloved, aggrandizing the beloved's worthy traits and overlooking or minimizing his/her flaws. The lover expresses increased energy, ecstasy when the love affair is going well and mood swings into despair during times of adversity. 180


176 Ibid.


178 Zeki, 2575.

179 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2174.

180 Ibid., 2175.
Trachman and Bluestone have questioned the "natural, normal, and inevitable" quality of romantic love. From their perspective, romantic love is nothing more than a social assumption. Nevertheless, their studies are extremely helpful in analyzing the cultural workings of love's psychology. According to them, some of the most remarkable features of falling in love in the Western culture include obsessional thinking, feelings of selflessness, and even physical symptoms.\textsuperscript{182} This kind of study naturally defies romantic love as a human universal; nevertheless, some of the signs described by the authors can also be interpreted through a biological point of view.

Since feelings of selflessness and physical symptoms regarding love tend to be pleasant, it is possible that they are associated to the brain’s reward system. In the same manner, mammalian courtship attraction and human romantic love are associated with dopaminergic reward pathways in the brain.\textsuperscript{183} According to Zeki, the rewarding quality of love, euphoria, and feelings of exhilaration are related to dopamine production—a neuro-modulator released by the hypothalamus that is also associated with addiction.\textsuperscript{184}

Among other factors, attraction is triggered by a visual input. Certain areas in the cerebral cortex and subcortical stations are engaged in the sole action of looking at the face of the person we are in love with: "when we look at the face of someone

\textsuperscript{181} Trachman and Bluestone, 131.

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 133.

\textsuperscript{183} Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2176.

\textsuperscript{184} Zeki, 2575.
we are deeply, passionately and hopelessly in love with, a limited number of areas in the brain are specially engaged. This is true regardless of gender.”

The psychological phenomenon of love madness comprises idealization. Love turns into an euphoric state and, according to Stárka, this is due to a set of specific hormones—some of which were not extensively analyzed by other authors in this literature review: “[t]he euphoria during the process of falling in love would then be understandably due to the fact that the dominant hormones are of adrenal origin: dopamine, noradrenaline and especially phenylethylamine”; therefore, love also represents a stressful situation—it has also been demonstrated that stressful situations encourage emotional bounding. The reasons why phenylethylamine has not been broadly studied as a love hormone is because no evidence has been shown so far that proves its involvement in falling in love—its involvement in romantic attachment is just a theory. However, the lowered levels of platelet serotonin transporter that are associated with falling in love are similar to those shown in psychoses and pathological jealousy. The workings of both idealization and jealousy eventually culminate in other psychological phenomena. One of the most notorious feelings is called “separation anxiety”—a phenomenon produced after not being able to see the beloved one for a fairly short amount of time:

The lover suffers 'separation anxiety' when apart from the beloved and a host of sympathetic nervous system reactions when with the beloved, including sweating and a pounding heart. Lovers are emotionally dependent; they change their priorities and daily habits to remain in contact with and/or impress the beloved. Smitten humans also exhibit

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185 Zeki, 2575.


187 Paraphrased in ibid.

188 Paraphrased in ibid., 301.
empathy for the beloved; many are willing to sacrifice, even die for this 'special' other. The lover expresses sexual desire for the beloved, as well as intense sexual possessiveness, mate guarding. Yet the lover's craving for emotional union supersedes his/her craving for sexual union with the beloved. Most characteristic, the lover thinks obsessively about the beloved, 'intrusive thinking' . . . Romantic love is also involuntary, difficult to control and generally impermanent.189

Summer

The love stage that I have labeled as summer comprises two scientific developmental phases of love. First, the scientific "being in love"—the early stages of a romantic relationship. Second, the transition to the phase that researchers have called "passional love."

According to Burke, falling in love "is proposed to act as a powerful heuristic that we use as our primary determinant for whether or not we want to pursue a long-term mating relationship with a particular individual."190 For two individuals who reciprocate each other’s romantic feelings, the resolution to start a romantic relationship becomes a rewarding and positive experience. The engaging passion experienced by the lovers is mirrored by relaxation of judgmental criteria;191 this phenomenon is favored by specific brain processes:

Studies have shown a depletion of serotonin in early stages of romantic love to levels that are common in patients with obsessive-compulsive disorders. Love, after all, is a kind of obsession and in its early stages commonly immobilizes thought and channels it in the direction of a single individual. The early stages of romantic love seem to correlate as well with another substance, nerve growth factor, which has been found to be elevated in those who have recently fallen in love compared to those who are not in love or who have stable, long-lasting, relationships. Moreover, the concentration of nerve growth factor

189 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2175.

190 Monica D. Burke, "Falling in Love as a Heuristic for Mate Choice Decisions" (PhD diss., University of South Florida, 2007), 1.

191 Zeki, 2577.
appears to correlate significantly with the intensity of romantic feelings.\textsuperscript{192}

Sexual desire manifests during falling in love. According to Fisher and colleagues, human “sex drive evolved to motivate individuals to seek copulation with a \textit{range} of partners.”\textsuperscript{193} This perspective opens the possibility of analyzing biological and physiological responses to sex while experiencing love:

It is noteworthy that sexual arousal activates regions adjacent to – and in the case of the hypothalamus overlapping with – the areas activated by romantic love, in the anterior cingulate cortex, and in . . . other subcortical regions . . . Especially interesting in this regard is the activation of the hypothalamus with both romantic feelings and sexual arousal, . . . [m]oreover, sexual arousal (and orgasms) de-activate a region in the frontal cortex that overlaps the de-activated region observed in romantic love. This is perhaps not surprising, given that humans often take “leave of their senses” during sexual arousal, perhaps even inducing them to conduct [themselves in ways] which they might later, in more sober mood, regret. In fact, this intimacy in terms of geographic location between brain areas engaged during romantic love on the one hand and sexual arousal on the other is of more than passing interest. Judged by the world literature of love, romantic love has at its basis a concept – that of unity, a state in which, at the height of passion, the desire of lovers is to be united to one another and to dissolve all distance between them. Sexual union is as close as humans can get to achieving that unity.\textsuperscript{194}

Dopamine production generates a “feel good” state during pair-bonding, but also during sex. Other hormones involved in falling in love and sex include oxytocin, and vasopressin—also released by the hypothalamus. Both oxytocin and vasopressin are stored in the pituitary gland and discharged into the blood during orgasm.\textsuperscript{195} Some authors have come to the conclusion that these hormones are the major

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{192} Zeki, 2576.
\item \textsuperscript{193} Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2174.
\item \textsuperscript{194} Zeki, 2576.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 2575-76.
\end{itemize}
players in the adult attachment system; the activities of oxytocin and vasopressin are related both to partner preference and attachment behaviors. The effect of oxytocin in romantic love is stronger than vasopressin’s, and it results into a decrease of activity in the amygdala. According to Stárka, “[m]utual caressing leads to an inhibition of adrenergic activity caused by oxytocin, including lower blood pressure, especially in women.”

Amygdala’s deactivation plays an important role in romantic love and sexual activity. According to Zeki, brain areas engaged during romantic love connect with other cortical and sub-cortical parts of the brain: the frontal, parietal and middle temporal cortex, and the amygdala. The amygdala “is known to be engaged in fearful situations and its de-activation, when subjects view pictures of their partners as well as during human male ejaculation, implies a lessening of fear.”

According to Yela, the feeling of “being in love” lasts for approximately six months before it turns into passional love. This period lasts “from the sixth-month mark to around the 4-year point.” During falling in love, erotic passion reaches its maximum peak; the transition to passional love marks the beginning of a period during which erotic passion still oscillates around its maximum point, but romantic passion increases. Other love components such as intimacy and commitment also

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197 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2179.

198 Boer, van Buel, and ter Horst, 119.

199 Stárka, 302.

200 Zeki, 2577.

become more important.\textsuperscript{202} During this stage, the couple experiences feelings of safety as they create a stronger bond. Oxytocin—which supports the functions previously discussed, such as the development of strong pair-bonding—might represent one of the major influential factors in this developmental stage since its production is also related to confidence and trust.\textsuperscript{203}

\textit{Fall}

By definition, being in love and passional love are—psychologically and physiologically—impermanent. As passional love fades, the lovers face a new stage in which love madness transforms into affection and friendship—this new stage is called companionate love. The romantic stage labeled as \textit{fall} does not correspond to any of the love stages approached by Yela. For the purpose of \textit{Un-Labelling}'s performance, I created an imaginary conflict among the characters. In order to allow the audience to come to their own conclusions, the kind of conflict that the lovers faced was not defined and was only referred to as "conflict." Many studies have shown that couples often separate after the four-years period of passional love; this delicate and brief time-span—which determinates whether the relationship will continue or not—has been interpreted as \textit{fall}. In this performance, \textit{fall} is analyzed through a psychological perspective rather than physiological. \textit{Fall}'s interpretation, thus responds to a basic question: "Why does love end?"

According to Fisher, human adult pair-bonds around the world are formed for approximately four years. She also discovered that married couples frequently get


\textsuperscript{203} Paraphrased in Stárka, 302.
divorced during this period, which she called “the Four-year Itch.” These parameters are not official, and the duration of falling in love and passionate love is different for every society. On these matters, Fisher’s four-year itch concept is the result of interpreting information gathered by the United Nations—information on romantic love phases and love standards across different cultures in the world. The United States, for example, represents an exception to the four-year itch:

*We marry for love and to accentuate, balance out, or mask parts of our private selves.* This is why you sometimes see a reserved accountant married to a blond bombshell or a scientist married to a poet. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the American divorce peak corresponds perfectly with the normal duration of infatuation—two to three years. If partners are not satisfied with the match, they bail out soon after the infatuation high wears off.

Since divorce rates considerably decrease after the four-year itch, it is possible to think that couples who are strongly committed to their relationship survive the transition between passionate love and companionate love. This transition is strongly related to the apparition of different responsibilities:

As time goes on, job and family responsibilities accrue and physical energy is invested in a greater number of things. The eros [erotic love] focus begins to give way to a more mutual caring and sharing of responsibilities of family and children. There may be less time, energy, and even desire for the initial and singular focus on each other than was the case earlier in the relationship.

The situation of couples who are not married or who do not have children is, however, considerably different. In any case, it is to be expected that the hormones

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205 Ibid., 111.

that play crucial roles in falling in love and passiona

tle love return to normal levels—
erve growth factor, dopamine, and oxytocin. In other words, love has a
physiological ending. Still, the psychological factors involved in the fading of
passional love represent a more complicated field of study. On this matter, Stephen
Mitchell argues that "it is not that romance itself has a tendency to become
degraded, but that we spend a considerable effort degrading it. And we are
interested in degrading it for very good reasons." 207 These "good reasons" involve a
series of personal interpretations of love. Subjects might live "with a perpetual sense
of being undeserving, unworthy of a love that is at hand but cannot be enjoyed," 208
or they might "long for freedom from the constrains which . . . security places on our
sense of adventure and our thirst for novelty." 209 In many other cases, the fading of
romantic attachment can also be unchained by emotional safety:

From this perspective, the common experience of the fading of
romance over time may have less to do with the inevitable undercutting
of idealization by reality and familiarity than with the increasing danger
of allowing oneself episodic, passionate idealization in a relationship
that one depends on for security and predictability. Intense excitement
about another is a dangerous business; it often is much safer to
surrender to it with a person one cannot possibly spend much time with
or will never see again. Sustaining desire for something important from
someone important is the central danger of emotional life. What is so
dangerous about desiring someone you have is that you can lose him
or her. Desire for someone unknown and unobtainable operates as a
defense against desire for someone known and obtainable, therefore
capable of being lost. 210

208 Ibid., 147.
209 Ibid., 38.
210 Ibid., 114.
These possibilities are applicable to subjects who are considering dissolving a romantic relationship. However, the “abandoned” lover’s side is equally unfortunate. According to Fisher: “[a]s a person begins to realize a beloved is thinking of ending the relationship, they generally become intensely restless. Overcome by longing and nostalgia, they devote almost all their time, their energy and their attention to their departing mate. Their obsession: reunion with their lover.”

Un-Labelling’s perspective does not clarify if the characters portrayed on stage represent either the abandoned lover or departing lover, and it is only implied that they were able to overcome a possible separation. The lessons learned by these characters through this experience, alongside with sympathy and empathy for their significant others’ feelings, worked in favor of the troubled relationship and transcended into companionate love.

Winter

In my terminology, winter is framed by successful problem solving and it is understood as companionate love. According to Fisher:

Love changes over time. It becomes deeper, calmer. No longer do couples talk all day or dance till dawn. The mad passion, the ecstasy, the longing, the obsessive thinking, the heightened energy: all dissolve. But if you are fortunate, this magic transforms itself into new feelings of security, comfort, calm, and union with your partner.

For Yela and other researchers, however, companionate love represents just one of the possible outcomes that a relationship faces after the disappearance of passional love. According to him, the recession of passion as a determinant factor in

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212 Ibid., 86-87.
a relationship’s development, has the possibility to turn into different emotional outcomes: 1) “friendly” love—which results from the merging of intimacy and commitment, 2) love indifference—which means maintaining a relationship because of safety or convenience reasons, with commitment but no intimacy, and 3) the relationship’s dissolution—disappearance of both commitment and intimacy. Therefore, companionate love’s existence depends on both intimacy and commitment, aided by the—now decreased—presence of the passional components.213

It is possible that attachment between mammals and birds evolved into the human needs of sharing parental duties or the desire of spending our lives with someone else.214 This concept of love is similar to the idea of friendship and it is possible that oxytocin—as the “trust hormone”—is one of the most important hormones during this phase.215 Nevertheless, authors such as Knox have stated that, if couples stay together for several years, the conception of their love relationship might be based again on romantic love ideals.216

Through a study of neural correlates, using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), Acevedo and colleagues discovered that “[i]ndividuals in long-term romantic love showed patterns of neural activity similar to those in early-stage romantic love. These results support theories proposing that there might be mechanisms by which romantic love is sustained in some long-term relationships.”217


214 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2178.

215 Paraphrased in Stárka, 302-303.

216 Knox, 154.

The areas are activated during companionate love were found in “the dopamine-rich reward and basal ganglia system, such as the ventral tegmental area (VTA) and dorsal striatum.”\textsuperscript{218}

Unsurprisingly, these areas are also activated during early stages of romantic love. Of course, studies like this oppose the generalized belief that companionate love is a “less intensive emotional experience,”\textsuperscript{219} in any case, it seems that researchers agree with the idea that the return to romantic love ideals increases with time—Knox, Acevedo, Aron, Fisher, and Brown, have come to these conclusions after studying subjects who have been married for approximately twenty years.

In summary, the last stage of love is not as deprived of passion as many authors considered it to be. Arguably, one of the most important traits of companionate love is the achievement of emotional peace and security. On the matters regarding Un-Labelling’s performance, the characters eventually found their way to a both companionate and compassionate relationship. The performance’s message about tolerance, acceptance, and assimilation of non-heterosexual systems of kinship will be analyzed through the next pages of this chapter. The idea that, from a biological and psychological perspective, “we all experience love in similar ways” will be evidentially supported by the scientific information gathered in this literature review.

\textsuperscript{218} Acevedo et al., 145.

\textsuperscript{219} Susan Sprecher and Pamela C. Regan, ”Passionate and Companionate Love in Courting and Young Married Couples,” \textit{Sociological Inquiry} 68, no. 2 (Apr., 1998); 164.
Un-Labelling Love: The Performance

Antecedents

*Un-Labelling Love* emerges from two personal necessities. First is a desire to reconcile biological and anthropological/psychological perspectives on romantic love. Second is the deep urge to deliver a positive message on equality—specifically, regarding sexual identity. In conjunction, these two necessities allow me to approach love as a biological phenomenon that does not require social labels in order to exist or to be legitimized.

*Un-Labelling Love’s* performance concept chronologically coincided with a point of my doctoral studies in which I was working on a parallel research project. This project focused on the analysis of negative messages in love songs and their psychological effects. The search for negative messages was based on the presence of three specific kinds of damaging contents in love songs’ lyrics: 1) the assimilation of harmful emotions—sadness, sense of abandonment, desire of revenge, among others—as an inherent part of love; 2) the perpetuation of gender stereotypes; and 3) the creation of myths regarding romantic love.

It is this final topic—myths on romantic love—that represents one of the major concerns of both that research project and *Un-Labelling Love*. Since my research on love songs was approached from social, psychological, and even anthropological perspectives, it was to be expected that the final result questioned the realistic nature of love myths. Some of the romantic beliefs that I chose to unmask were taken directly from Mary Lou Galician’s list of love myths and stereotypes perpetuated by mass media:²²⁰

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²²⁰ Galician, IX.
1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you.
2. There’s such a thing as “love at first sight.”
3. Your true soul mate should KNOW what you’re thinking or feeling without your having to tell.
4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful.
5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold.
6. The man should NOT be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman.
7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a “beast” into a “prince.”
8. Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately.
9. All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values.
10. The right mate “completes you” — filling your needs and making your dreams come true.
11. In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray.
12. Since mass media portrayals of romance aren’t “real,” they don’t really affect you.

Galician’s studies reduce romantic love to a social construction perpetuated by cultivation processes. Nevertheless, even while Galician’s love myths might seem contradictory to Un-Labelling’s message of understanding love and romantic love as biological phenomena, they actually complement the theoretical background of this
performance. It is pertinent to analyze, for example, two of the myths proposed by Galician through a biological perspective: those concerning the existence of “love at first sight” and the idea that “all you need is love.”

From a scientific perspective, “love at first sight” could be related to the phenomenon of “falling in love,” which, according to previous researches, possibly derives from mammal courtship. On this matter, it is important to relook at Fisher and her colleague’s studies, which suggest that “romantic love begins as an individual starts to regard another individual as special and unique.”

The lover’s temporary perception that “all you need is love,” can arguably be justified by the decreased production of serotonin—which is brought to similar levels than the ones present in patients with OCD. Thus, the relaxed judgmental criteria lovers experience during the first stages of love, could represent one of the reasons why other relationship aspects—such as sharing ethical values—might be overlooked by some subjects.

Regardless of biological perspectives on love, I agree with Galician’s perspectives on romantic myths. Nevertheless, I consider that a multidimensional analysis of love represents the surest path through which all kinship systems can be understood, assimilated, and un-labeled. Therefore, the social interpretations of romantic love are more easily understandable when departing from biology. In other words, a scientific analysis of the biology of love might be the key to decipher the origins of love myths.

I also believe that this kind of analysis enhances the individual’s possibilities of making better decisions regarding pair-bonding. An objective and informed perspective on human attachment could certainly work in favor of healthier and happier relationships. On the same note, scientific perspectives on human reactions

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221 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2175.
to love seemed a safe source to support one of *Un-Labelling*’s most important messages: the societal assimilation of non-heterosexual kinship systems.

In order to elaborate the performance’s script, I consulted more than fifty scientific sources that approached biological, neurobiological, psychological, and anthropological perspectives of romantic love. Since *Un-Labelling Love*’s performance focuses on the possible universality of love interpretations, I first disregarded almost all articles and studies that focused on merely heterosexual or non-heterosexual subjects—studies on heterosexual couples represent a vast majority. This means that researches whose study subjects comprised exclusively “heterosexual couples” or “homosexual women in love” were not taken in consideration to create the script. Sources regarding psychological differences between heterosexual and non-heterosexual couples were disregarded as well. My final selection comprises twenty articles and readings; seventeen of them describe their study subjects with ambiguous terminology such as “couples,” “women in love,” or “men in love.” The three remaining articles used heterosexual couples as research subjects, but I incorporated them as a part of the script because they offered valuable information on companionate love. This love stage has not been broadly analyzed; therefore, my information on it was extremely limited. Ignoring these articles would have considerably diminished the performance’s quality. That being said, the information gathered for this performance is theoretically applicable to any kind of kinship system. As expected, most of these articles focus on “love,” and not on concrete social institutions such as marriage.

*Space*

Before describing the performance’s characters it is pertinent to take a look at *Un-Labelling*’s performance space. Important character relations—or absence of
relations—are framed by the use of specific performance areas. My concern with art for social change inspired me to create a concept that could be easily transported to almost every performance space. This way, *Un-Labelling*’s set was designed as a basic pyramidal structure in a traditional use of performance space:  

![Diagram of set disposition](image)

**Fig. 1. Un-Labelling Love**’s set disposition.

Three of these spaces were defined by lighting (the woman’s, the man’s, and the scientist’s). For obvious reasons, the projection screen area has no illumination and the piano is lit only by a portable music stand light. The spheres created by lighting on the three characters’ areas physicalize the fact that these characters never see each other.

The elements found in the woman’s space include an armchair, a coffee table, and a little chest on top of the table. The man’s space features a chair and a writing desk. Expectedly, the scientist’s space is only equipped with a podium. The minimal number of stage elements supports the concept’s *portability*, but it is also plenty to portray the necessary information on the character’s inner worlds.

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*222 See appendix E for Un-Labelling Love’s ground plan.*
I think that one of the most important differences between *Un-Labelling Love* and traditional settings of vocal recitals is that it surpasses the simple action of staging art song. *Un-Labelling Love* transforms a traditional use of the space into a scientific event. In other words, while a traditional vocal recital aims for the audience’s entertainment and aesthetic pleasure, *Un-Labelling Love* seeks to also encourage learning and *initiation*. As the audience transforms into a group of students who listen to a teacher’s lecture, or a group of other scientists who witness their colleague’s presentation, they become initiated to new territories beyond music—concretely, science of love and the questioning of a reality that assumes kinship is always heterosexual.

*Characters and Performers*

*Un-Labelling Love* requires two singing roles, a spoken role, a pianist, and a supportive mute character. The scientist (spoken role) is the first character to appear. He introduces himself to the audience as an investigator who will expose the findings of his most recent research. His text is delivered from the podium and he uses the projection screen to display images that support his discoveries. Initially, the scientist’s research seems to focus exclusively on four developmental stages of love—spring, summer, fall, and winter. For the last years, he has documented the stories of two research subjects as they experience the whole spectrum of emotions, psychological, and physiological effects involved in romantic attachment. He presents these subjects as “a woman” and “a man” whose love experience will serve as an example of the developmental stages he is about to describe. The use of the ambiguous term “love experience”—when applied to the research subjects—suggests the possible existence of the characters’ romantic involvement, but it does not assure it. This is probably the moment in the
performance where the audience is tricked into believing these two characters are emotionally involved with each other.

The scientist therefore proceeds to explain and exemplify the stages of love through these characters. The physical disposition of the characters’ spaces suggests unity, but it is not until the end of the performance that the audience learns the singers were never aware of each other’s existence. But how does this exactly happen? As the scientist approaches his conclusions—after his presentation of winter, the last love stage in his research—the characters behind him portray a stereotypically romantic situation within their respective spaces: the woman is getting dressed for a special occasion, and the man—who was doing the same—leaves the stage carrying flowers. The scientist keeps on talking about his findings when a door—located on the woman’s side—opens and allows the audience to see a hand holding a flower bouquet that looks exactly the same as the one the man was carrying. The audience, who is expecting the man to appear, eventually discovers that a fourth character (another man) is the one holding those flowers. The woman welcomes him with an effusive hug and reveals the identity of her true partner.

The scientist then explains to the audience that his research subjects actually do not know each other. As he continues delivering this explanation, another door located next to him opens. The formerly spotlighted man appears and hands his flowers to the scientist as he asks, “are you ready?”

After the scientist has asked his now-revealed partner to give him a minute, he explains to the audience that one of the most important reasons he decided to research this specific topic was to demonstrate that biological love stages are equal for heterosexual or non-heterosexual subjects. With this final scientific finding, the scientist’s role acquires a new dimension: he becomes the other and he speaks from this new perspective. Specifically, the scientist seeks to give a voice to every human
who identifies as non-heterosexual and/or queer. His final message to the audience does not touch subjects such as gay marriage or celebration of diversity. With his last phrase “love is love, there is no need to label it,” he summarizes his most important requests: for acceptance and social assimilation of non-heterosexual kinship systems.

The singing characters for this specific performance were portrayed by a soprano and a bass-baritone. Nevertheless, Un-Labelling's performance flexibility only requires for these characters to be portrayed by a woman and a man; therefore, voice tessituras are easily exchangeable. Likewise, some of the musical selections involved in the recital can be used in other keys, or they can be exchanged for new songs that would easily fit in this narrative.

Performance Structure

This section features a transcription of the performance’s script, with the addition of explanatory comments. The performance of Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons is defined by a basic scheme of delivery of scientific information, followed by visual exemplification. This means that, after the scientist describes his findings on love, the singers perform a staged song whose content supports the scientist’s hypothesis. The singers alternate songs during their journey through the four seasons; each one of these seasons contains four songs—each character performs two songs, and the last song is followed by the scientist’s final conclusions.

The scientist’s texts are often supported by imagery showing love-related hormones and neurobiology concepts. These images are projected on the screen located at stage-center—which also displays the songs’ translations.
(Before the performance starts, the scientist’s space is the only one with lights up; the woman’s and the man’s spaces remain dark.)

Good evening and welcome. Today we will be discussing the different developmental stages of love relationships, from psychological and scientific perspectives.

The physiology and science of love have been subjects of intensive research within the last decade, and there is a good reason for that. As love relationships and conceptions of love change in a twenty-first century society, scientists have joined efforts to discover the brain functions, types of hormones, and cultural features that maintain us attached to the ideals of romantic love.

As an active member of the scientific community, I am not the exception. For the last couple of years, I have analyzed and documented four different developmental stages of love. My research subjects have been a woman (lights go up on the woman’s space, she enters and faces the audience) and a man (lights go up on the man’s space, he enters as if he was looking for something, and he grabs a backpack from the floor. Both characters leave, and the lights on their spaces remain on).

Concretely, their love stories will serve as an example of these four developmental love stages which, for practical purposes, I have labeled as spring, summer, fall, and winter. Of course, these are just generalizations about love, all relationships are different, but a great number of them seem to develop according to these parameters.

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223 In this transcription, the scientist’s text is presented in italics.
Let’s talk about spring. For purposes of this research, spring will be applied to the period of “falling in love,” before each lover is aware that the other reciprocates her or his feelings. Spring will also comprise a brief period after reciprocation awareness, during which partnership starts, but a serious relationship has not yet been established.

(To the audience) Do you remember the first time you fell in love? Can you recall the excitement and the anxiety?

This stage of love, usually referred to as “falling in love” and “being in love” is represented by high passion but a lack of commitment awareness. According to Zeki, romantic attachment activates “overlapping regions in the brain’s reward system that coincide with areas rich in oxytocin and vasopressin receptors.” (An image of the neuroanatomy of the brain’s reward system is projected.)

Fig. 2. Neuroanatomy of the Brain Reward System

224 See Lit. Review, fn. 177.

225 See Lit. Review, fn. 178.

Fisher and her colleagues, consider that romantic attachment may derive from mammalian mechanisms of mate choice. Could this be possible? Let’s put it this way: Courtship attraction is characterized in mammals by increased energy, focused attention, and obsessive following among other features. It is important to notice that some of these features can possibly be compared to human behavior.

Concretely, the female subject of my research presented focused attention and increased energy when falling in love. Psychologically, falling in love happens when a person recognizes another person as special and unique.

(The scientists leaves. The woman enters; she is talking on a cell-phone and sings her song as if she was on a phone conversation. She moves freely around her space.)


I'm a little bit in love
Never felt this way before
Just a little bit in love
Or perhaps a little bit more
When he looks at me
Every thing's hazy and all out of focus
When he touches me
I'm in the spell of a strange hocus-pocus
It's so, I don't know...
I'm so, I don't know I don't know but I know
If it's love then it's lovely
It's so nice to be alive when you meet someone who bewitches you
Will he be my all or did I just fall a little bit, a little bit in love?
It's so nice to be alive when you meet someone who bewitches you

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227 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2175.


Will he be my all or did I just fall
A little bit, a little bit in love?

A Little Bit in Love (from Wonderful Town) by Leonard Bernstein
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(The woman leaves and the scientist enters) According to Trachman and
Bluestone, signs of falling in love include feelings of selflessness, and even physical
symptoms. The male subject of this research reported that, when he first fell in
love, he “felt a little something in his heart.”

(The scientist leaves and the man enters his space carrying his backpack, as if
he was coming back from school. He sits and tries to write—presumably, an
assignment—but he is often interrupted by the idea of love and loses concentration
constantly).

“Spesso per entro al petto,” by Barbara Strozzi. Song text by G. A. Cicognini.
Italian text.

Spesso per entro al petto mi passa un non so che,
e non so dir s'egli è o martire o diletto.
Talor mi sento uccidere da incognito rigor;
sarebbe pur da ridere che fosse il mal d'amor.

Qualor mi s'apresenta di te il bel seren,
mi nasce un foco in sen che piace e in un tormenta.
Mi sento il cor dividere tra il gelo e tra l'ardor,
sarebbe pur da ridere che fosse il mal d'amor.

230 See Lit. Review, fn. 182.

231 Barbara Strozzi, “Spesso per entro al Petto,” in Women Composers: A Heritage of
Text modifications by Mario Vázquez Morillas.

232 Original text “di Clori” was changed to “di te.” The name “Clori” is female, and it
was changed for the pronoun “you” in order to make the song not gender specific.
I più solinghi orrori frequento volontier,
ma sento un mio pensier che dice: “E dove sei?”
Or chi mi sa decidere che sia questo furor?
Sarebbe pur da ridere che fosse il mal d'amor.

English translation.

Sometimes I feel little something in my chest,
and I do not know if it is pain or pleasure.
I feel like an unknowing force is killing me;
how funny it would be if this were the sickness of love

When your beautiful face appears in front of me,
a fire burns in my chest, and I enjoy it but it also torments me.
I feel my heart divided between ice and fire,
how funny it would be if this were the sickness of love

I would voluntarily face the most terrible horrors,
but then I hear my thoughts, saying: “Where are you?”
Who knows exactly what this madness means?
How funny it would be if this were the sickness of love

(The man leaves and the scientist enters) Going back to biology, it is also a possibility that mammalian courtship attraction and human romantic love are associated with dopaminergic reward pathways in the brain.

Therefore, love is a rewarding experience. (An image showing brain activity while viewing pictures of romantic partners is projected.)

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233 The text "E dove è Clori?" was also changed to "E dove sei?" The translation then changes from “Where is Clori?” to “Where are you?”

234 Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.

235 See Lit. Review, fn. 183.
Fig. 3. Brain activity triggered by romantic love’s visual input. “Activity (shown in yellow and red) elicited when subjects viewed pictures of their loved partner compared to that produced when they viewed pictures of their friends. The activity, restricted to only a few areas, is shown in sagittal (left), transverse (central), and coronal sections superimposed on slices taken through a template brain. ac, anterior cingulate; cer, cerebellum; I, insula; hi, posterior hippocampus and the coronal section activity in caudate nucleus (C) and putamen (P).”

In fact, romantic love is triggered by a visual input. Certain areas in the cerebral cortex and subcortical stations are engaged in the sole action of looking at the face of the person we are in love with, and this is true regardless of gender.

The areas involved in the cortex are the medial insula, the anterior cingulate, and the hippocampus. The areas in the subcortex belong, of course, to the core regions of the rewarding system.

(The scientist leaves and the woman enters with mischievous look, holding a picture. Certainly, a picture of the man she is in love with—her attitude suggests the man is not aware that she has this picture. She sings to it as she moves through her space.)

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236 Figure and information from: Zeki, 2576.

237 See Lit. Review, fn. 185.

238 Zeki, 2575.
“Il Bacio,” by Luigi Arditi. Song text by G. Aldighieri.\textsuperscript{239}

Italian text.

Sulle labbra se potessi dolce un bacio ti darei,
tutte ti direi le dolcezze dell’amor,
sempre assisa te d’appresso, mille gaudii ti direi!

Ed i palpiti udirei che rispondono al mio cor.
Gemme e perle non desio, non son vaga d’altro affetto.
Un tuo sguardo è il mio diletto, un tuo bacio è il mio tesor.
Ah! Vieni! ah vien! più non tardare! a me!
Ah vien! nell'ebbrezza d'un amplesso ch'io viva!

English translation.\textsuperscript{240}

If I could only give you a kiss on your lips,
it would tell you all the delights of love,
abiding to speak a thousand joys to you!

Ah, thus it would speak to you along with my heart’s palpitations.
I do not desire gems or pearls, nor do I seek others’ affections.
Your look is my delight, your kiss is my treasure.
Ah! Come! Do not delay! Ah! Come to me!
Let us enjoy love’s life-giving intoxication!

(The woman leaves and the scientist enters.) Hormonally, cortisol levels are significantly higher in individuals who have recently fallen in love, this could relate to the stress generated by social contact. FHS and testosterone levels are lower in men who are in love but higher in women. Thus, falling in love causes important hormonal changes that are specific to each sex.\textsuperscript{241} (An image of testosterone’s structure is projected.)

\textsuperscript{239} Luigi Arditi, \textit{Il Bacio} (New York: G. Schirmer, 1900), 1-11.


\textsuperscript{241} Marazitti and Canale, 934-35.
Finally, during this stage of love, the virtues of the beloved one are exalted, and the flaws are minimized. Also, not being able to see the beloved one for a fairly short amount of time, creates a psychological phenomenon called "separation anxiety."

(The scientist leaves and the man enters. He sits on the desk’s chair and contemplates the moon.)

"Vaga Luna, che inargenti," by Vincenzo Bellini. Anonymous text.

Italian text.

Vaga luna, che inargenti queste rive e questi fiori ed inspiri agli elementi il linguaggio dell’amor;

testimonio or sei tu sola del mio fervido desir,
ed a Lei che m’innamora conta i palpiti e i sospir.

Di pur che lontananza il mio duol non può lenire,

\[242\] Figure by Mario Vázquez Morillas


\[244\] The personal pronoun “lei” means “she.” However, the capitalization of the same pronoun changes the meaning of this word from “she” to the respectful version of “You.”

\[245\] The word “dille” (tell her) has been changed for the generic “di” (tell).
che se nutro una speranza, ella è sol nell'avvenir.

Di pur che giorno e sera conto l'ore del dolor,
che una speme lusinghiera mi conforta nell'amor.

English translation

Lovely moon, you who shed silver light on these shores and on these flowers and breathe the language of love to the elements,

You are now the sole witness of my ardent longing. And this moon recounts my throbs and sighs to you, the one that makes me feel in love.

Moon, go and tell that even distance cannot assuage my grief, and if I cherish a hope, it is only for the future.

Moon, go and tell that day and night, I count the hours of sorrow, and a flattering hope comforts me in my love.

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(The man leaves and the scientist enters.) The love stage that I have labeled as “summer,” comprises two developmental phases of love. First the phenomenon of “being in love,” and second, the transition to the phase that psychologists have referred to as “passional love.” In other words, and according to my criteria, summertime of love starts after reciprocation, and shortly after evolves to passion.

What kind of feelings do we experience when love is reciprocated? A serious relationship’s positive start results in increase of energy and ecstasy, a change of priorities, emotional dependency, and nervous reactions such as sweating and an accelerated heartbeat. The engaging passion experienced by the lovers is mirrored by relaxation of judgmental criteria. In other words, if someone who has fallen in

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247 Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2175.
love looks like they have lost their mind, is because they have; judgments are not applied with the same rigor while being in love.\textsuperscript{248}

Subjects falling in love present features such as perception of an altered mental state and intrusive thoughts and images of the other\textsuperscript{249} (An image of serotonin’s structure is projected.)

It has been demonstrated that the intrusive thoughts about the other in the early stages of romantic love are influenced by a decreased functionality of the serotonin transporter, just like people who suffer from \textit{OCD}.\textsuperscript{251} Therefore, individuals who are in love suffer from a moderate obsessive-compulsive disorder.\textsuperscript{252} Features such as a moderate \textit{OCD} and “idealization” of the beloved one were presented by the male subject.

\textsuperscript{248} Zeki, 2577.


\textsuperscript{250} Figure by Mario Vázquez Morillas

\textsuperscript{251} Marazitti et al., 743.

\textsuperscript{252} Marazitti and Canale, 934.
(The scientist leaves and the man enters. He sits on the chair and writes a love letter—the song’s content.)

“Widmung,” by Robert Schumann. Poem by F. Rückert.\textsuperscript{253}

German text.

Du meine Seele, du mein Herz,
Du meine Wonn’, o du mein Schmerz,
Du meine Welt, in der ich lebe,
Mein Himmel du, darin ich schwebe,
O du mein Grab, in das hinab
Ich ewig meinen Kummer gab!
Du bist die Ruh, du bist der Frieden,
Du bist der Himmel, mir beschieden.
Daß du mich liebst, macht mich mir wert,
Dein Blick hat mich vor mir verklärt,
Du hebst mich liebend über mich,
Mein guter Geist, mein beßres Ich!

English translation.\textsuperscript{254}

You my soul, you my heart,
you my bliss, oh you my pain,
you the world in which I live;
you my heaven, in which I float,
oh you my grave, into which
I eternally cast my grief.
You are rest, you are peace,
you are bestowed upon me from heaven.
That you love me makes me worthy of you;
your gaze transfigures me;


you raise me lovingly above myself,
my good spirit, my better self!

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(The man leaves to deliver his letter and the scientist enters.) According to Zeki, brain areas engaged during romantic love connect with other cortical and subcortical parts of the brain: the frontal, parietal and middle temporal cortex, and the amygdala. The amygdala, which is associated to fearful situations, deactivates when looking at a picture of our beloved one. Therefore, love lessens fear.²⁵⁵ (An image of the amygdala is projected)

²⁵⁵ See Lit. Review, fn. 200.

The female subject declared to have experienced decrease of fear and separation anxiety (at the same time) during this stage of love.

(The scientist leaves. The woman enters, holding a letter, she reads it and her song represents her reaction to it. She sings as she holds this letter).

“L’Invito,” by Gioachino Rossini. Song text by C. Pepoli.\textsuperscript{257}

Italian text.

Vieni, o Ruggiero,  
la tua Eloisa  
da te divisa  
non puo restar:  
alle mie lacrime  
già rispondevi,  
vieri, ricevi  
il mio pregar.

Vieni, o bell’angelo,  
vien, mio diletto,  
sopra il mio petto  
vieni a posar!  
Senti se palpita,  
se amor t’invita...  
vieni, mia vita,  
vieni, fammi spirar!

English translation.\textsuperscript{258}

Come Ruggiero,  
your Eloisa  
cannot stay  
separated from you:  
you’ve already  
responded to my tears,  
come and grant  
my request.

Come, beautiful angel,

\textsuperscript{257} Gioachino Rossini, \textit{Soirées Musicales. La Regata Veneziana} (Milan: Ricordi, 2009), 24-29.

come, my delight,
here on my bosom
come to rest!
Feel my throbbing heart,
when love invites you...
Come my life, come,
make me die!

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(The woman leaves and the scientist enters.) Naturally, sexual desire manifests during “falling in love”; it is possible that mammalian sex drive evolved into the search of mating partners. Of course, this is a much less romantic perspective of love, but the biological and physiological responses to sex are worthy to be analyzed (An image of dopamine’s structure is projected.)

![Dopamine Structure](image.png)

**Fig. 7. Dopamine**

*Love euphoria is associated with high concentrations of dopamine, a hormone released by the hypothalamus that also generates a “feel good” state during sex.*

*Other hormones involved in falling in love and sex include nerve growth factor, oxytocin, and vasopressin. Both oxytocin and vasopressin are stored in the pituitary*.

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259 See Lit. Review, fn. 193.

260 Figure by Mario Vázquez Morillas.
gland and discharged into the blood during orgasm. Both research subjects presented a high concentration of dopamine after sexual activity.

(The scientist leaves and both characters enter on stage, the man holds a glass of wine and the woman holds a rose. As the man sings, the woman sits on her armchair, she looks happy and she sighs as she contemplates her rose. When it is her turn to sing, the man sits on his chair and drinks his wine. This staging aims to suggest the possibility that the characters are actually listening to each other, even when this does not occur.)


German text.

Laue Sommernacht; am Himmel stand kein Stern; im weite Walde suchten wir uns tief im Dunkel, und wir fanden uns.

Fanden uns im weiten Walde in der Nacht, der sternenlosen, hielten staunend uns im Arme in der dunklen Nacht.

War nicht unser ganzes Leben nur ein Tappen, nur ein Suchen? Da: In seine Finsternisse, Liebe, fiel Dein Licht.

English Translation

Mild summer night, there are no stars in heaven, we sought each other in the wide forests, deep in darkness, and we found each other.

Found each other in the wide forests

261 See Lit. Review, fn. 195.


263 Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.
in the night, no stars in heaven,  
in amazement, we held ourselves in each other's arms  
in the dark night.

Was not our whole life  
just a fumble, just a search?  
Yes: in the midst of its darkness,  
the light of love came.

“Vocalise-étude,” by Maurice Ravel—This vocal piece does not have a text, the  
woman interprets the piece as she contemplates the rose. She moves freely through  
her space.

(Both characters leave and the scientist enters.) According to Yela, the feeling  
of “being in love” lasts for approximately six months before it turns into passional  
love. During this stage, dopamine returns to its original levels, but passion  
remains high. The couple experiences feelings of safety as they create a stronger  
bond, and it is believed that oxytocin is one of the major factors in this  
developmental stage.

Passional love transitions into companionate love after approximately four  
years. In this research, this transitional period has been defined as “fall.” Sadly,  
romantic love and passional love are impermanent, both psychologically and  
physiologically. So, what happens to the lovers when reality finally hits?

According to Fisher, human adult pair-bonds are formed for approximately  
four years. She also discovered that married couples frequently get divorced during  
this period. These parameters are not official, and the duration of falling in love

264 Maurice Ravel, Pièce en Forme de Habanera: Vocalise pour Voix Élevées avec  

265 See Lit. Review, fn. 201.

266 See Lit. Review, fn. 203.

267 See Lit. Review, fn. 204.
and passionate love is different for every individual. Nonetheless, there is a fact that can be taken for granted: only couples who are strongly committed to their relationship survive the transition between passionate love and companionate love.

This research’s study subjects experienced relationship problems between the third and fourth year of their relationship. These personal problems will not be discussed, in fact, I will leave them to your imagination. (To the audience) Those of you who have been involved in long-term relationships, can you recall some of the problems you experienced after love euphoria was over? Just think about it for a moment.

In both subjects, relationship problems resulted into decreases of nerve growth factor, dopamine, and oxytocin. This translates into despair, mood swings, and sadness.

(Once again, both characters enter on stage as the scientist leaves. The woman sings first, she is sitting on the armchair. While she sings, the man pensively sits by his desk; he stands up when it is his turn to sing. As he sings, the woman remains seated on her armchair and closes her eyes.)

“Es regnet,” by Kurt Weill. Poem by J. Cocteau.268

German text.

Ich frage nichts. Ich darf nicht fragen,
denn du hast mir gesagt: "Frage nicht!"
aber kaum höre ich deinen Wagen.
Denke ich: Sagen, oder nicht sagen?
Er hat alles auf dem Gesicht.

Glaubst du denn daß nur der Mund spricht?
Augen sind wie Fensterglas.
Durch alle Fenster sieht man immer,
schließt du die Augen ist es schlimmer.
Meine Augen hören etwas,

etwas anderes meine Ohren.
Für Schmerzen bin ich denn geboren.
Laß mein Gesicht am Fenster, laß;
die Sonne darf jetzt nicht mehr scheinen!
"Es regnet," sagt das Fensterglas.
Es sagt nur was es denkt!
Laß uns zusammen weinen.

English translation.269

I don't ask. I should not ask,
because you told me: "Do not ask!"
But as soon as I hear your car,
I think: should I say it or not?
It's all on your face.

Do you think that only the mouth speaks?
Eyes are like windows.
Through the windows, you can see everything,
if you close your eyes, it's worse.
My eyes hear something,
something that my ears cannot hear.
I was born for pain.
Let my face lie on the window;
the sun shall no longer shine!
"It's raining," said the window.
It just says what it thinks!
Let us weep together.

"Reflets," by Lili Boulanger. Poem by M. Maeterlinck.270

French text.

Sous l'eau du songe qui s'élève
mon âme a peur, mon âme a peur.
Et la lune luit dans mon coeur
plongé dans les sources du rêve!

Sous l'ennui morne des roseaux.
Seul les reflets profonds des choses,
des lys, des palmes et des roses
pleurent encore au fond des eaux.

Les fleurs s'effeuillent une à une

269 Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.

sur le reflet du firmament.
Pour descendre, éternellement
dans l'eau du songe et dans la lune.

English translation.  

Under the rising water of the dream,  
my soul is afraid, my soul is afraid.  
And the moon shines in my heart  
plunged into the well-springs of the dream!

Under the mournful boredom of the reeds.  
Only the profound reflection of things,  
of lilies, of palms, and of roses,  
still weep at the bottom of the waters.

The flowers drop their petals one by one  
on the reflection of the sky  
In order to sink eternally  
under the water of the dream, and into the moon.

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(Both characters leave and the scientist enters.) Certainly, real-life problems  
are not exclusive of this "fall" season. The relationship’s success greatly depends on  
how those involved in it choose to resolve their issues.  

Human nature is sympathetic and empathic, and these features can work in  
favor of the troubled relationship. Both research subjects admitted that the first step  
to try to overcome their issues was the realization that they actually wanted to work  
things out.

(The scientist leaves and the woman enters. She opens a little chest, located  
on top of her coffee table, and rediscovers the love letter she received during  
Rossini’s “L’Invito.” She sings with hope as she holds this letter.)

271 “Reflets,” The LiederNet Archive, trans. Korin Kormick, accessed October 10,  
“Allerseelen,” by Richard Strauss. Poem by H. von Gilm zu Rosenegg.\textsuperscript{272}

German text.

Stell auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,
die letzten roten Astern trag herbei,
und laß uns wieder von der Liebe reden,
wie einst im Mai.

Gib mir die Hand, daß ich sie heimlich drücke
und wenn man's sieht, mir ist es einerlei,
Gib mir nur einen deiner süßen Blicke,
wie einst im Mai.

Es blüht und funkelt heut auf jedem Grabe,
ein Tag im Jahre ist den Toten frei,
komm an mein Herz, daß ich dich wieder habe,
wie einst im Mai.

English translation.\textsuperscript{273}

Place on the table the fragrant mignonettes,
bring inside the last red asters,
and let us speak again of love,
as once we did in May.

Give me your hand, so that I can press it secretly;
and if someone sees us, it's all the same to me.
Just give me your sweet gaze,
as once you did in May.

Flowers adorn today each grave,
sending off their fragrances; one day in the year are the dead free.
come close to my heart, so that I can have you again,
as once I did in May.

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http://www.lieder.net/

(The woman leaves and the man enters. He is holding a cup of coffee and looks
up as he sings to the stars.)

20-22.

\textsuperscript{273} “Stell auf den Tisch die Duftenden,” \textit{The LiederNet Archive}, trans. Emily Ezust,
=6191

144
“Mein Schöner Stern,” by Robert Schumann. Poem by F. Rückert.²⁷⁴

German text.

Mein schöner Stern! ich bitte dich,
o lasse du dein heitres Licht
nicht trüben durch den Dampf in mir.
Viemehr den Dampf in mir zu Licht,
mein schöner Stern, verklären hilf!

Mein schöner Stern! ich bitte dich,
nicht senk' herab zur Erde dich,
weil du mich noch hier unten siehst.
Heb' auf vielmehr zum Himmel mich,
mein schöner Stern, wo du schon bist!

English translation.²⁷⁵

My radiant star, I beg you,
oh do not let your bright light
be dimmed by the mists in me.
Rather help transfigure the mists in me
into light, my radiant star!

My radiant star, I beg you,
do not descend to earth
because you see me down here, still.
Lift me up to heaven,
my radiant star, there where you are!

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(The man leaves and the scientist enters.) Successful problem solving results into companionate love or, according to my terminology, winter time. Winter does not mark the end of the relationship; it rather represents its maturity. Our research subjects survived fall.


Possibly, attachment between mammals and birds evolved into the human needs of sharing parental duties or the desire of spending our lives with someone else. Nisa, a !Kung Bushman woman of the Kalahari Desert, Botswana, reported: "When two people are first together, their hearts are on fire and their passion is very great. After a while, the fire cools and that's how it stays. They continue to love each other, but it's in a different way—warm and dependable."  

This concept of love is similar to the idea of friendship. Nevertheless, authors such as Knox have stated that, if couples stay together for several years, the conception of their love relationship might be based again on romantic love ideals. Oxytocin levels remain high during companionate love. (An image of oxytocin’s structure is projected.)

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276 See Lit. Review, fn. 214.

277 Quoted in Fisher, Aron, and Brown, 2178.

278 See Lit. Review, fn. 216.


During the early stages of companionate love, the male subject presented feelings such nostalgia and a stronger sense of mutuality.

The scientist exits and the man enters. He is dressed in a formal outfit, as if he was celebrating a special occasion. As he fixes his shirt’s neck, he stops and reflects on his love story.)

“Le ciel en nuit, s'est déplié,” by Nadia Boulanger. Poem by É. Verhaeren.281

French text.

Le ciel en nuit, s'est déplié
et la lune semble v eiller sur le silence endormi.

Tout est si pur et clair,
tout est si pur et si pâle dans l'air
et sur les lacs du paysage ami.
Qu'elle angoisse, la goutte d'eau
qui tombe d'un roseau
et tinte, et puis se tait dans l'eau.

Mais j'ai tes mains entre les miennes
et tes yeux sûrs, qui me retiennent,
de leurs ferveurs, si doucement;
et je te sens si bien en paix de toute chose
que rien, pas même un fugitif soupçon de crainte,
ne troublera, fût-ce un moment,
la confiance sainte
qui dort en nous comme un enfant repose.

English translation.282

The night sky is unfolded
and the moon seems to be silently sleeping

Everything is so pure and clear,
everything is so clear and pale in the air

___________________________________________


282 Translated by Mario Vázquez Morillas.
and on the lakes of this friendly landscape.
Such anxiety, a water drop
that falls from a reed
and jingles, and then falls silently in the water.

But I have your hands in my hands
and the certainty in your eyes, holding me,
with their fervor, so gentle;
and I see that you feel good, in peace
that nothing, not even a fleeting hint of fear,
will disturb, even for a moment,
the holy confidence that sleeps within us,
just like as a child rests.

(The man leaves and the scientist enters.) The female subject, on the other hand, stated that she "finally understood that there are no such things as a soul mate and predestined love." She also said that love "is a personal decision that involves deep caring, mutual hard work, and lots of hope."

(The scientist exits and the woman enters. She is carrying her journal and, as she sings and reads, it looks like she is recapitulating her love story. She is also dressed-up.)

"Au bord de l’eau,” by Gabriel Fauré. Poem by R. Sully-Prudhomme.283

French text.

S’asseoir tous deux au bord d’un flot qui passe,
le voir passer;
tous deux, s’il glisse un nuage en l’espace,
le voir glisser;
à l’horizon, s’il fume un toit de chaume,
le voir fumer;
aux alentours si quelque fleur embaume,
s’en embaumer;
entendre au pied du saule où l’eau murmure,

l'eau murmurer;
ne pas sentir, tant que ce rêve dure,
le temps durer;
mais n'apportant de passion profonde
ou'à s'adorer,
sans nul souci des querelles du monde,
les ignorer;
et seuls, tous deux devant tout ce qui lasse,
sans se lasser,
sentir l'amour, devant tout ce qui passe,
ne point passer!

English translation.²⁸⁴

To sit together beside the passing stream,
and watch it pass;
if a cloud glides by in the sky,
together to watch it glide;
if a thatched house sends up smoke on the horizon,
to watch it smoke;
if a flower spreads fragrance nearby,
to take on its fragrance;
under the willow where the water murmurs,
to listen to it murmuring;
for the time that this dream endures,
not to feel its duration;
but, having no deep passion
except adoration for one another,
without concern for the world's quarrels,
to ignore them;
and alone together, in the face of all wearying things,
unwearyingly,
to feel love, unlike all things that pass away,
not passing away!

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(The woman exits and the scientist enters.) As you can imagine, we are

getting closer to the end of this presentation, but, before getting to my conclusions,

let's take a look at the love developmental stage where our research subjects are at

right now. A couple of days ago, I asked them if they could summarize their love experience in a couple of lines, and this is what they say:

(The man enters and the scientist leaves. He is carrying a flower bouquet.)


German text.

Wenn ich mit Menschen - und mit Engelzungen redete
und hätte der Liebe nicht,
so wäre ich ein tönend Erz oder eine klingende Schelle.
Und wenn ich weissagen könnte und wüste alle Geheimnisse
und alle Erkenntnis und hätte allen Glauben,
also daß ich Berge versetzte,
und hätte der Liebe nicht, so wäre ich nichts.
Und wenn ich alle meine Habe den Armen gäbe
und ließe meinen Leib brennen
und hätte der Liebe nicht,
so wäre mir's nichts nütze.
Die Liebe ist langmütig und freundlich;
die Liebe eifert nicht; die Liebe treibt nicht Mutwillen;
sie blähet sich nicht;
sie stellet sich nicht ungebärdig;
sie sucht nicht das Ihre; sie läßet sich nicht erbittern;
sie trachtet nicht nach Schaden;
sie freuet sich nicht der Ungerechtigkeit;
sie freuet sich aber der Wahrheit;
sie verträget alles, sie glaubet alles,
sie hoffet alles, sie duldet alles.
Die Liebe höret nimmer auf, so doch die Weissagungen aufhören werden,
und die Sprachen aufhören werden, und die Erkenntnis aufhören wird.
Denn unser Wissen ist Stückwerk,
und unser Weissagen ist Stückwerk.
Wenn aber kommen wird das Vollkommene,
so wird das Stückwerk aufhören.
Da ich ein Kind war, da redete ich wie ein Kind
und war klug wie ein Kind und hatte kindische Anschläge;
da ich aber ein Mann ward, tat ich ab, was kindisch war.
Wir sehen jetzt durch einen Spiegel
in einem dunklen Worte,
dann aber von Angesicht zu Angesicht.
Jetzt erkenne ich's Stückweise;
dann aber werde ich erkennen,

gleich wie ich erkennen bin.
Nun aber bleibt Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe, diese drei;
aber die Liebe ist die größte unter ihnen.

English translation.\textsuperscript{286}

I could speak with the tongues of men and angels,
but if there's no love in my words,
I would become a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
I could have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries
and all knowledge, I could have enough faith
to move mountains,
but if I do not have love, I am nothing.
I could bestow all my goods to feed the poor,
and I could give my body to be burned,
but if I do not have love,
it would give me nothing in return.
Love is patient, and love is kind;
love does not envy; love does not praise itself;
and it is not arrogant;
it is not ambitious;
it does not seek its own benefit, it does not enrage;
and it does not hold grudges;
it does not find joy in injustice;
it rejoices in the truth;
it suffers everything, believes everything,
hopes for everything, and bares everything.
Prophecies could be proved wrong, languages could cease,
and all knowledge could be vanished, but love will never fall apart.
We know in part,
and we prophesize in part,
but when that thing which is perfect comes [love],
than that which is only partially perfect will disappear.
When I was a child, I spoke as a child,
and judged things as a child, but when I became a man,
I put away childish things.
For now we see the world
through a mirror, darkly;
but we will finally see things face to face.
I might know things only partially;
but then I shall learn the way I am known.
And now it only remains faith, hope, and love,
but the greatest one of these three is love.

(The man leaves and the woman enters. She is carrying her journal again, and she reads aloud her final conclusions on love.)

“Zueignung,” by Richard Strauss. Poem by H. von Gilm zu Rosenegg.\(^{287}\)

German text.

Ja, du weißt es, teure Seele,
daß ich fern von dir mich quäle,
Liebe macht die Herzen krank,
Habe Dank.

Einst hielt ich, der Freiheit Zecher,
hoch den Amethysten-Becher,
und du segnetest den Trank,
Habe Dank.

Und beschworst darin die Bösen,
bis ich, was ich nie gewesen,
heilig, heilig an's Herz dir sank,
Habe Dank.

English translation.\(^{288}\)

Yes, you know it, dearest soul,
how I suffer far from you,
love makes the heart sick,
have thanks

Once I, drinker of freedom,
held high the amethyst beaker,
and you blessed the drink,
have thanks

And you exorcised the evils in it,
Until I, as I had never been before,
blessed, blessed sank upon your heart,
have thanks

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\(^{287}\) Strauss, 3-4.

Now, as our subjects prepare for their anniversary dinner, let’s talk about some of our findings... (The woman’s real partner enters on stage. She hugs him, receives the flowers he carries, and leaves with him).

(To the audience, pointing at the singer’s spaces) Wait, did you think they were together? That’s probably my fault. I did say I based this research on a love story, but I never said who was involved in it. That leads us to our first conclusion:

Love is different for everyone and, at the same time, it is the same. (Pointing at the woman’s space) Her love story could be your love story, (pointing at the man’s space) and his love story could be your love story as well. (The lights of the woman’s and the man’s spaces go off) Some stories have a tragic ending, some others have different timing. But we all share psychological and physiological responses: we all were influenced by the love myths created by mass media, we all learn from heartbreak and problems, we all experience an increase in dopamine, oxytocin, and vasopressin levels when falling in love. Love is different for everyone and, still, it could be defined as a universal—or at least, nearly universal—phenomenon.

(The man enters and hands his flowers to the scientist. He asks him: “Are you ready?” and the scientist replies “Oh! Are those for me? Just give me a minute.”)

(To the audience) I’m sure you weren’t expecting that! This takes us to my second conclusion:

One of the most important reasons why I did this research involves the understanding of sexual tendencies. None of the sources I consulted makes a difference between heterosexual and non-heterosexual love, and I couldn’t find any proves on hormones or brain processes working differently in women and men with non-heterosexual tendencies.
So, why are we still labeling love? It is shocking that discrimination based on sexual tendencies still represents a problem in a twenty-first century society. Non-heterosexual populations in different parts of the world, from a very early age, still face problems such as bullying, family rejection, physical violence, and problems regarding the most essential human rights—like the right to freely be oneself. There’s no such thing as “homosexual love” or “heterosexual love.” Love is just love, and we all are capable of feeling it. Love is just love, and there’s no need to label it.
CONCLUSION

*Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons*

was created in order to deliver a simple message: kinship is not always heterosexual, and there is no significant difference whatsoever in the physiological responses that love produces in heterosexual or non-heterosexual individuals. The straightforwardness of this message has been conceived as a first step to create other performances on the same topic in the future.

Since *Un-Labelling Love*’s structure and performance depends on the audience’s preconceptions of romantic attachment, I would like to emphasize that *Un-Labelling Love* promotes the awareness of human (biological and psychological) similarities. Rather than presenting psychological differences between people with different sexual identities and the way they perceive love, the performance and the final revelation aim to challenge the audience’s preconceptions.

Thus, *Un-Labelling* aims to highlight the idea that difference in sexual identity exists and that it must be socially assimilated. A scientific approach to this seemingly complicated social reality appears to be friendly and objective enough in order to create a performance that is informative, aesthetically enjoyable, and that enhances the possibility of social change. What are then the next steps to follow?

My first personal challenge implies moving *Un-Labelling Love* from the safe environment of academia to the real world’s unpredictable reception. Initially, it took me a long time to realize that one of the reasons the performance had been so warmly welcomed was based on the type audience who witnessed it. In general, Arizona State University’s School of Music represents a safe environment to present the existence of different kinds of sexualities, to talk about them, and to coexist with people whose standards of living differ between each other’s. The arts represent a field of study/work that generally welcomes and assimilates these differences.
Therefore, it is not surprising that *Un-Labelling*’s audience—mostly a group of music students that comprised non-heterosexual people, and heterosexual people supportive of coexistence—was overtly encouraging of the message and the performance in general. The audience’s most encouraging reactions were both enthusiastic and emotional.

However, it was not until I tried to schedule a performance of *Un-Labelling Love* in a different university that I realized this ‘simple’ concept could also be perceived as problematic. It would not be prudent to reveal all the details regarding why this project was considered too dangerous to be performed at this specific place. Therefore, I will only focus on the new questionings that emerged after this judgment occurred.

First at all, this situation made me wonder if *Un-Labelling* was exclusively meant to be performed for people who tolerate diversity. Theoretically, adopting this determination would contradict the original purpose of the performance, which assumes the idea that *Un-Labelling*’s message should be delivered to, virtually, everyone. I remain aware that getting to everyone represents an unrealistic achievement when analyzed through the lenses of societal workings. Understanding that assimilation and acceptance work both ways made me realize that this message cannot simply be forced on people who do not wish to listen to it.

I eventually came to the conclusion that the easiest way to promote and perform *Un-Labelling* love involves the inclusion of some kind of notice/warning about its content. Naturally, I originally considered this measure to be unnecessary in a twenty-first-century society, but the fact that the performance’s concept was considered “too daring” outside its original setting made me realize the message needs to be delivered regardless of requirements such as the addition of a content disclaimer.
Under this perspective, I think *Un-Labelling Love* should be performed, almost exclusively, for two kinds of audiences: First, people who might be attracted to the performance despite a possible disclaimer, that is, potentially conservative audiences who might be open to assimilating the final shocking revelation and thus receive the message. Second, audiences who are supportive of non-heterosexual kinship systems and who wish to find new information that supports the idea of equality. In this case, *Un-Labelling* provides scientific insights that emphasize the thought that, from a biological perspective, love is equally—or at least, similarly—experienced by people with different sexual identities. I think *Un-Labelling* represents only an introduction to the subject of sexual identity whose objective is promoting utopianism and collective awareness—in other words, conveying hopes of a better world.

That being said, my next steps involve the creation of performances that eventually question the widely held interpretation of marriage as a form to legitimize kinship. From this perspective, *Un-Labelling Love* merely represents the starting point of a series of performances that encourage—like Judith Butler proposes—a deep political and critical analysis of these social constructions. Thus, my personal interpretation of this performance acquires a new dimension that seeks to promote the idea that legitimacy or illegitimacy of kinship must not be defined by sexual practices. The necessity of un-labeling love therefore surpasses an exclusively optimistic utopian ideal; it becomes defying, threatening, and anarchistic.

Nevertheless, this performance’s concept was carefully designed so that every partaker could elaborate her or his own conclusions on the topic without threatening personal perceptions of kinship. I do think this non-threatening approach to the audience’s needs encourages social change.
The modifications I would like to consider for future performances of *Un-Labelling* comprise the possibility of changing some vocal selections within each season—in order to create a more contrasting musical and staged environment. Many of the songs used in specific seasons present similar emotional moods and, even when *Un-Labelling* seems to flow effectively, it would be a positive change to create new emotional contrasts. These contrasts would also enhance the possibility of creating a more dynamic staging; especially, in light of the fact that—according to my perception—the performance became often static.

From a musical perspective, I think *Un-Labelling* love also promotes the audience’s interest in lesser known composers—specifically, females. I consider that cultivating interest in female composers represents an important tool that will allow audiences to reevaluate their perception of musical beauty. On this matter, the changes I would like to make in the vocal selections aim to balance the songs’ composers to an equal number of females and males. The main reason why this did not happen in the original performance was based on time constraints. In other words, most of the repertoire in *Un-Labelling*—both the soprano’s and mine’s—had been previously learned. This gave me enough time to prepare a scientific review of literature on the science of love and thus focus on the final message.

In general, this performance represented a successful experiment. It is to be expected that future difficulties and challenges will only become evident when *Un-Labelling* faces less homogenous audiences. However, I remain optimistic about its reception, based on the idea that positive messages tend to encourage positive responses—especially, when this specific message embraces liberation from social constraints and promotes the acceptance of individuality.
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APPENDIX A

DEFATALIZING THE FEMME FATALE: PROGRAM
DEFATALIZING THE FEMME FATALE
The voice behind a stereotype

Mario Vázquez-Morillas, bass-baritone
Jennifer Bindel, piano
Jennifer Strickland, actor
Ben Marquardt, euphonium

Evelyn Smith Music Theatre | April 24th and 25th, 2013 | 7.30 pm

Program

1. Twilight by Françoise Glorieux

2. “From Dmitri Shostakovitch’s “Suite on Poems of Michelangelo”
   *Poetry, quotes, and prose

I. Истина (Truth)
   I. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s response to the young Paul de Molènes’s misogynist article. Les femmes poètes (1842). First Strophe

II. Утро (Morning)
   II. Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou (excerpt)

III. Любовь (Love)
   III. I can only know that the past is beautiful...
   Virginia Woolf’s quote

IV. Разлука (Parting)
   IV. By hook or by crook...
   Virginia Woolf’s quote

School of Music
V. Гнев (Wrath)

V. Battles by Malvina Blanchecotte

VI. Данте (Dante)

VI. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s response to the young Paul de Molènes’s misogynist article, Les femmes poètes (1842). Second Strophe

VII. Изгнанику (Exile)

VII. Dissillusionment by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz

VIII. Творчество (Creation)

VIII. “Eve and the Serpent,” text by Phyllis Trible

IX. Ночь/Диалог (Night/A dialogue)

IX. The Masochist by Maxine Kumin

X. Смерть (Death)

X. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s response to the young Paul de Molènes’s misogynist article, Les femmes poètes (1842). Third Strophe

XI. Бессмертие (Immortality)

XI. Caged Bird by Maya Angelou
(excerpt)

3. Romantic Waltz by Francoise Glorieux

*Euphonium selections include excerpts from the following works: Twilight, Promenade, Romantic Waltz (Francoise Glorieux), Fantasia (Gordon Jacob), and Soliloquies (John Stevens).
APPENDIX B

DEFATALIZING THE FEMME FATALE: HANDOUT
Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype

Brief origins

The concept of the femme fatale found its genesis in mass culture during the second half of the nineteenth century. Women’s movements during this period fought against political, sexual, and intellectual repressiveness. Caricaturists illustrated parodies of women fighting for equal rights in printed media such as journals and magazines. The femme fatale stereotype has been portrayed in literature earlier than it was in other printed media, but she was not considered a type until the mid- and late-nineteenth century.

The idea of women clamoring for equality, turned into the creation of the femme fatale. The femme fatale stereotype opposed the submissive expectations a woman was supposed to fulfill during post-Revolution France. It also represented the fear of its creators during times in which women rebelled against sexual repressiveness and clamored for rights such as political freedom, equality of treatment, and control of their own sexuality. Thus, the idea of female emancipation, the emergence of feminism, and femme fatale portrayals in popular culture and literature eventually turned into the creation of exotic female characters in painting and sculpture. These characters featured attributes such as:

- Seductiveness
- Charm and sexual appeal
- Barrenness
- Inaccessibility
- Irresistibility

In general, the femme fatale represented the source of men’s misery. In other words, any woman who showed the most minimal desire for equal treatment was considered evil or a “daughter of Eve.”

Why Shostakovich and Michelangelo?

The song cycle that has been chosen for this performance (Suit on Poems by Michelangelo, by D. Shostakovich) was not conceived under sexist parameters. Shostakovich’s songs are representative of the composer’s late style. He felt attracted by Michelangelo’s philosophical ideas, and the pieces reflect the feelings and insights that the composer was going through toward the end of his life.

Michelangelo was a man way ahead of his time; his poetry contains political, social, and artistic value. Some of the poems that Shostakovich decided to use for this cycle refer to religious, political, and life concerns; some others are merely the poet’s writing exercises (i.e. No. 2: “Morning”). Thus, this song cycle relates to subjects such as death, the artist’s function in society, justice, and love, but it has been recontextualized for purposes of this performance.

There are plenty of openly antifeminist art songs out there which could have been helpful to the creation of this performance concept. Nonetheless, the use of this kind of material could have been misunderstood as an aggression towards specific writers or composers. It is not the intention of this recital to attack a specific artist, but rather to create femme fatale awareness. This way, the conflict within Michelangelo’s poetry has been transformed into rage against women.

The performance presents two characters:

- A male character. He blames his former significant other for his misery—he considers her to be a seductive, dangerous agent. He created a femme fatale in his head, exactly the same way poets, writers, and visual artists in the nineteenth century did.
• A female character. She has decided to put an end to a psychologically violent relationship and thus finding herself. This way, she is a representation of those women who rebelled against the social standards established during the Victorian period. Her search for freedom and equal rights are read by the male character as a manifestation of evilness.

The writers

Every song in this performance has been paired with a feminist poem, text, or quotation. The writers that had been selected for this purpose are not only limited to women who witnessed French women’s movements (i.e. Marcelline Desbordes-Valmore and Augustine-Malvina Blanchecottee). Texts by women from different times, countries, and social contexts have been chosen in order to give a voice to those women who realized that society had faced—and still faces—problems defining the role of women in society. These texts clamor for equality, not for superiority, and they represent the insights of women who understand feminism as an elemental part of humanism and fair treatment for everyone.

The message

Even when the idea of a femme fatale was originated in the nineteenth century, its stereotype has found its way to our times through visual culture (printed media, TV shows, movies, and art). The femme fatale has not only been assimilated and accepted by our society, it is also praised and celebrated as a figure of power, danger, and sensuality. Society does not tend to think about the negative connotations of this stereotype, which reduces women to sexual objects, sources of men’s misery, and non-realistic standards of beauty.

It is somehow shocking that, in the twentieth-first century, the role of women in society is often reduced to two different images: submissive or hypersexualized—the first one of these images responds to primitive standards established during Napoleonic France and the Victorian period, the second one was created as a response to the emergence of feminism and the clamoring for equal rights.

On the other hand, the acceptance and praising of the femme fatale figure has the potential to place a dangerous thought within youth’s minds: many young women (and even young men), who are still finding their own identities and forging their personalities tend to admire the femme fatale stereotype as it is imposed by visual culture. We are surrounded by predesigned behavior patterns which are imposed to us through advertising and entertainment, and the femme fatale is not the only figure that has been force into our minds.

This way, the messages that this multidisciplinary performance intends to deliver is utterly simple: the stereotypes that had been forced into our society affect our behaviors and mold them into established standards. However, one of the most inherent and significant human rights is that of freewill; thus, choose to be yourself.
APPENDIX C

DEFATALIZING THE FEMME FATALE: GROUND PLAN
APPENDIX D

UN-LABELLING LOVE: PROGRAM
UN-LABELLING Love
A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment
in Four Seasons

Nina Cole, soprano
Thomas Strawser, narrator

Mario Vázquez-Morillas, bass-baritone
Xuelai Wu, piano

Evelyn Smith Music Theatre | November 25th, 2013 | 7:30 pm

Program

1. Introduction
2. Spring
   A Little Bit in Love
   Spesso per Entrà al Petto
   Il Bacio
   Voglia Luna che Inargenti

3. Summer
   Widmung
   L’Invito
   Lieve Sommersonna
   Vocalise-étude

4. Fall
   Es Regret
   Reflets
   Allesseelen
   Mein schöner Stern

5. Winter
   Le Ciel en Nuit, s’est Déplié
   Au Bord de L’eau
   Wenn ich mit Menschen und mit Engelszungen redete
   Zwei Elegien

6. Conclusions

ASU Herberger Institute
FOR DESIGN AND THE ARTS
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Music
APPENDIX E

UN-LABELLING LOVE: GROUND PLAN
APPENDIX F

WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS DURING THE FRENCH REVOLUTION
The following chart traces some of the most remarkable events in the history of feminism in France during the French Revolution. Topics related to inflation, unemployment, and hunger, were of concern to Third-Estate women; on the other hand, topics such as education and divorce represented bourgeois women’s fields of interest.\textsuperscript{289}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1789 | French Revolution starts, and women were present in the attack on the Bastille.  
The pamphlet *Requête des dames à l'Assemblée Nationale de 1789* demanded the abolition of masculine privileges. The *Pétition des femmes du Tiers-État au Roi* (Petition of the Third-Estate Women to the King) demanded women’s right to have a job, better education, and the right of not being forced into convents or to the streets. Olympe de Gouge’s *Le cri du sage par une femme* supported female participation in assemblies. The petition *Motion en Faveur du Sexe* demanded economical emancipation and, in the booklet “Griefs et plaintes des femmes mal mariées,” the *Moniteur* criticized marriage laws and demanded legalization of divorce. Sophie Rémi de Courtenai’s *Argument des Pauvres aux Etats Généraux* claimed women’s right to propose radical solutions to the problems France was facing.  
On October 5\textsuperscript{th}, Paris suffered a critical lack of bread, and working class women marched to Versailles with the purpose of bringing back the King and thus placing national government under the surveillance of Parisians, while asking a solution to the bread issue. The women invaded the palace and forced the royal family to come to the capital.  
The journal *Etrennes Nationales des Dames* demanded representation of women in the National Assembly and the establishment of divorce. |
| 1790-92 | The newspaper *L’Impatient*, founded by Olympe de Gouges, appears in France. Other short-lived papers emerge. Women’s clubs appear and they also start merging with men’s. |
| 1790 | In March, Mme Mouret presented an improvement plan for women’s education to the Assembly.  
In *Motion de la Pauvre Javotte* (Poor Javotte’s Motion), de Gouges demands that all masculine privileges are abolished. But these efforts are later abandoned. |

\textsuperscript{289} The timespan and content that comprise this chart has been collected from: De Beauvoir *The Second Sex*; Racz, “The Women’s Rights Movements in the French Revolution”; and Rendall, *The Origins of Modern Feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860*.  

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Still, in this year, the right of the first born and masculine privilege are eliminated.

The government returns to an Old Régime system of workhouses and public works, this allows women (but also children and old men) to work on textile projects. Nevertheless, female workers suffered severe exploitation.

In November, the “Société Fraternelle des patriotes de l’un et l’autre sex” admitted women to full membership and as officers.

In a speech to the “Cercle Social” (December), Mme Etta Palm van Aelder denounced the laws that degraded wives and mothers to a secondary existence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1791</td>
<td>De Gouges proposes a “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen” (written in 1790), claiming the right to freedom and security, and resistance to oppression. A group of women condemn the tyrannical nature of marriage in a petition to the National Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Van Aelder presents a petition to the Legislative Assembly with the bourgeois women’s demands: education for girls, political freedom, equal rights, and divorce, among others. She worked on setting up schools for poor girls. She also asked the Assembly to admit that women lived in a state of degradation and to grant them their natural rights.</td>
</tr>
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In March, the “Société Fraternelle des patriotes de l’un et l’autre sex” becomes the “Société Fraternelle des patriotes des deux sexes.” In the same month, van Aelder called for associations between women and the new government; she also denounced the provision that allowed men to accuse their wives of adultery, punishing them with up to two years of prison. Pauline Léon proposed to the National Assembly that women had the right to bear arms.

In September, Mouret makes an offer to the National Assembly: to educate for free twenty-four orphan girls whose parents had perished during the revolution.

In February, Lequinio (a deputy from Morbihan) denounced the slavery in which women lived. Divorce law is established, marital ties become less strict.

Another law declares of age all persons who are twenty-one, including women (this was another one of van Aelder’s demands).

1792 marks a considerable increase in Parisian women’s involvement in political action. During the counter-revolution, foreign invasion and military defeat crisis, a group of Parisian women asked the Assembly for permission to defend the capital. In Lyons, women took control of the government for three days, they raided shops for bread, meat, soap, and other kinds of overprized merchandise.
1793

In January, Van Aelder leaves for Holland, after being under political suspicion.

After demands of equality in education, equality is reasonably reached at primary schools.

The Société des Républicaines Révolutionnaires (Society of Republican and Revolutionary Women) is created. This is considered the first important feminine society during the Revolution (mostly, because it represented the interests of the working class). Among many other causes, they advocated for womanhood’s dignity and fair treatment for prostitutes.

The group also helped to overthrow the power of the Girondist party, which had organized anti-Jacobin insurrections. This society pioneered female emancipation, and they were even encouraged by characters such as Leclerc.

Rose Lacombe, actress and president of the Society of Republican and Revolutionary Women, forces the doors of the Conseil Général. After reactions of characters such as Chaumette and Amar, women are banned from entering the Conseil. Later, women clubs are dissolved.

Robespierre’s Reign of Terror starts. In the past, the Républicaines had supported the Law of Suspects (against the enemies of the Revolution), but during the terror, the law turned against them, and they were accused of conspiring against the Republic. Lacombe was arrested, but eventually released.

De Gouges perishes on the scaffold. 1793 marked a terrible defeat in women’s rights matters.

1794

After the group of the Républicaines is dissolved, Babouvists support political equality. French Utopians, Fourier, and the Saint-Simonians embrace feminism.

A new law makes divorce easier, requiring only proof that a couple have been living apart for six months.

1795

Classes in primary school are divided according to sex. Female teachers receive only two thirds of the salary earned by male teachers. In education matters, women’s situation was not considerably better than it was during the Old Régime.
APPENDIX G

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF FEMALE WRITERS
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648?-1695), the so-called “tenth muse,” has received this title acknowledging “that she, a mere mortal, was like Sappho in antiquity, worthy of the company of the nine goddess of the arts, the muses.” 290 Sor Juana, a Mexican nun of the Order of St. Jerome, has also been recognized as the “First Feminist of the New World.”291 As a devotee of learning, she had no real interest in becoming a nun, but the idea seemed more appealing than marriage. The reclusive environment of a convent thus created an intellectual space. Sor Juana was able to freely dedicate herself to reading, studying, and writing. By the age of fifteen, she was already considered “the most learned woman in Mexico.”292 Sor Juana was an iconic character of her time, and she has reacquired this status in the twenty-first century through a new wave of fascination for her works. Her writings show her unquestionable talents for self-creation and self-invention. According to Luciani:

Sor Juana’s self-fashioning through literature can be situated within other kinds of cultural productions in the seventeenth-century New Spain . . . one find traces in her self-fashioning of negotiations among a number of authoritative institutional discourses. The most important of the latter are those of the Catholic Church and the viceregal court, each marked by internal discrepancies and contradictions, and sometimes openly antagonistic each toward the other. Other cultural practices that shaped Sor Juana’s self-fashioning would include the dual patronage systems of court and the Church, the ephemeral nature of viceregal administrations, conduits and barriers of literary production, publication and trade between Spain and her American colonies, social organization and control in New Spain based on the caste, class, and gender, and so on.293

290 Pamela Kirk Rappaport, introduction to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Writings (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 5.

291 Stephanie Merrim, ed., Feminist Perspectives on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 7.

292 Dorothy Schons, “Some Obscure Points in the Life of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz,” in Feminist Perspectives on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, ed. Stephanie Merrim, 39.

293 Frederick Luciani, Literary Self-Fashioning in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Cranbury, NJ: Lewisburg/Bucknell University Presses, 2010), 17.
However, one of the most fascinating things about Sor Juana is that, in the middle of these negotiations of institutional discourses, she was able to create a voice of her own that has been praised due to her uniqueness. The writer openly defies male appropriation of control and fixed sexual roles. She also questions faith and religion. Her works include poetry, liturgical contributions, dramas, comedies, treatises, and letters. Her surviving literature was compiled in three volumes: *Inundación Castálida* (1689), *Segundo volumen de las obras de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (1692) y *Fama y obras pósthumas del Fénix de México* (1700).

**Marceline Desbordes-Valmore** (1786-1859) represents the perfect example of determination in the middle of incessant hardships. Having experienced the deaths of her cousin and her mother during her youth, and the deaths of five of her six children in later years, she was able to overcome tragedy through a successful career and admirable strength. The deepness of her poetry gained her the admiration of figures such as Charles Baudelaire, and she was able to successfully publish her own works from 1819 to 1843. According to Schultz:

Only recently has Desbordes-Valmore been credited with important formal innovations traditionally attributed to male poets . . . Like most Romantic poets, she avoided traditional fixed forms and furthermore explicitly rejected the sonnet as a masculine genre whose stringent regularity allowed for displays of technical brilliance but was ultimately confining.\(^{294}\)  

Desbordes-Valmore’s most significant works include *Élégies, Marie et romances* (1819), *Poésies* (1830), *Les Pleurs* (1833), *Pauvres Fleurs* (1839), *Bouquets et Prières* (1843), *Poésies Inédites* (1860), and *Poésies en Patois* (1896).\(^{295}\)

\(^{295}\) Ibid., 9.
Malvina Blanchecotte (1830-1897) was an autodidact poet raised in a working-class family. During her childhood years she taught herself English, German, and Latin. Personal problems forced her to raise her son by herself and to work as a seamstress until her writings became successful. Nevertheless, she always suffered financial struggles and remained socially marginalized.296

She received the respect of writers such as Béranger and Lamartine, she was also aided by George Sand. Her works include Rêves et Réalités (1855), Nouvelles Poésies (1861), and Les Militantes (1875). The poem used for this performance comes from her series of Battles, “Battles (LXXIV)” is “replete with images of liberating ascension, is reminiscent of Baudelaire’s ‘Elévation’ . . . Blanchecotte’s soaring spirit throws off the yokes of poverty and gender conformity.”297

Hermione Lee describes Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) as “one of the most professional, perfectionist, energetic, courageous and committed writers in the language.”298 She also embodies one of the central figures of feminist literary criticism in English-speaking countries. According to Marcus:

Her feminism no longer seems anachronistic or irrelevant in the face of Fascism and war, as it did to many of her male (and some of her female) contemporaries; her writings of the 1930s make a crucial link between the oppression of women and the authoritarian structure of Fascist societies. Many elements of her work have been central to feminist theory and politics of the later twentieth century: her explorations of the gendered relationship between the private and the public sphere; her model of the mother-daughter relationship as a paradigm for a female literary tradition; her accounts of men’s and women’s different relationships to their culture.299

297 Ibid., 151.
As self-declared egotist, Woolf values the connection between the self and the act of writing. Her writings are deeply—and invasively—personal, she also reveals important concerns about the wait she writes and the actual purpose of her writing. She is “an autobiographer who never published an autobiography.”


Estess has described **Maxine Kumin** (1925-2014) as an “increasingly refined, non-suicidal poet. The main value in both her life and her poetry is preservation.”

Kumin’s prolific writing has resulted in the publication of several books of poetry, novels, a collection of short stories, children’s books, and books of essays which include her famous *Women, Animals, and Vegetables*. Her vast collection of awards includes the Poets’ Prize (*Looking for Luck*), and the Pulitzer Prize (*Poems of New England*). She worked as Consultant in Poetry for the Library of the Congress and was Poet Laureate of New Hampshire. She also became Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

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300 Lee, 5.


Kumin’s writing style has been praised for its confidence, strident quality, boldness, courage, and lyrical power—qualities that increased over the years. In an interview with Kumin, Chad deNiord referenced the social and personal circumstances that have worked as a creative source for Kumin:

So, if one read your poems as voice-finding ventures from the start he sees fascinating dialectic throughout your career between rebellion and conformity, between your Catholic upbringing and Jewish heritage, between received forms and free verse . . . between your chthonic strength as a woman with extraordinary life force and the mystery of the awaiting darkness, between your anger and resentment toward American patriarchy and your hard-won liberation from it as a successful poet with a courageous feminine voice.303

Kumin’s writings embrace compassion. The topics of her poems are inspired by social issues, national politics, animal rights, human torture, and environmental pollution. The inclusion of her poem “The Masochist” in the structure of Defatalizing was determined by its openness and honesty. “The Masochist,” a poem about violence, encourages women to unmask the obscure workings of patriarchy.

Maya Angelou’s (1928-2014) contribution to the world does not only lie in her remarkable role as a writer, dancer, singer, actress, songwriter, poet, director, editor, producer, and teacher. Her impact as a social, cultural, and intellectual phenomenon is mostly defined by her deep understanding of philanthropy, compassion, and collectivity. A childhood full of humiliation, adversities, and psychological violence allowed her to understand the contradictory and unfair systems that rule social coexistence; especially, those regarding explicit racism. It is not surprising then that Maya Angelou became a believer of social causes. After dedicating a couple of years to dance, singing, and acting, Angelou became Northern coordinator of Martin Luther

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King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This position was followed by a long stay in Africa during which she worked as editor, writer, and teacher. Her return from Africa resulted into many years of productivity—acting, composing, and producing, among other activities. Angelou’s most famous and influential writings include her poems and autobiographies; the first one of them *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was conceived after the author’s realization that “not enough had been written for young black girls in the United States.” Nevertheless, the book reached a broader audience than the one the author was expecting; in her own words “I saw it was not just for black girls but for young Jewish boys and old Chinese women.” Maya Angelou then became aware of her importance and influence on all social others who have experienced the struggles of difference and/or marginalization. She became a voice for the oppressed.

**Phyllis Trible** (born 1932) represents an international authority on feminist interpretations of biblical texts. By the time she earned her PhD at Union Theological Seminary/Columbia University (1963), women still remained seemingly invisible in the faculty. She has taught at such institutions as Forest University and Andover-Newton Theological School; she became Professor of Old Testament at Union, and was the first woman to teach Sacred Literature at Baldwin. In 1998 she became dean at the Wake

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306 Quoted in ibid.

Forest School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, NC. In her own words, Trible realized that the theology that informed her life “was inadequate for addressing the concerns of students”\textsuperscript{308} and also dissatisfying. She states: “Using feminist hermeneutics, I have tried to recover old treasures and discover new ones in the household of faith.”\textsuperscript{309} Trible has published several articles, reviews and columns for different publications. However, two of her most important contributions to feminist literature comprise her books \textit{God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality} and \textit{Texts of Terror}. According to the author, “[t]he two volumes share a feminist perspective, a literary critical methodology, and the subject matter of female and male in the Hebrew scriptures.”\textsuperscript{310}

\textsuperscript{308} Trible, \textit{God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality}, xv.

\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., xvi.

APPENDIX H

COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS
A LITTLE BIT IN LOVE,” SONG TEXT

November 3, 2014

Mario Vasquez Morillas
Arizona State University

RE: A Little Bit in Love (from Wonderful Town) by Leonard Bernstein

Dear Mr. Vasquez Morillas:

We hereby grant you gratis permission to include excerpts from the above referenced work in your dissertation for Arizona State University.

We do require that you include the following copyright notice immediately following the excerpts:

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With kind regards,

BOOSEY & HAWKES, INC.

[Signature]

Elisa Bhame
Assistant, Copyright & Licensing

The author’s mailing address has been omitted.

192
"IL BACIO," SONG TRANSLATION

Re: Permissions inquiry

Grant Lewis
Para Yo
CC: Stan Eby

nov 4 a las 4:01 AM

Yes, you have my permission to use the translation as long as proper attribution is given. Best wishes as you complete the final requirements for your doctoral work.

Stan's new email address (I'm sending him a cc) is stan.eby@gmail.com.

On Tue, Nov 4, 2014 at 1:46 AM, Mario Vazquez <mario.vm@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Stan and Grant,

My name is Mario Vazquez-Morillas and I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Luigi Arditi's "Il Bacio" in my dissertation, "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your work via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!

Mario Vazquez-Morillas

Permission

Stan Eby
Para Yo

nov 4 a las 4:31 AM

You have my permission to use our translation of Arditi properly attributed.

Best wishes to you,

Stan Eby

Permission

Stan Eby
Para Yo

Hoy a las 4:35 AM

Ha, it's early.

You have my permission to use our translation of "Il bacio" with proper attribution.

Best wishes,

Stan Eby

Responder, Responder a todos o Reenviar | Más
“VAGA LUNA CHE INARGENTI,” SONG TRANSLATION

Re: Copyright Inquiry

Antonio GULIANO
Para Yo

Dear Mario,

Congratulations on your pursuit for your doctorate in music. Absolutely, you may use it. No forms necessary. I wish you all the best and Godspeed in your education and career.

Antonio

PRO DEO ET PATRIA!

Yo
Antonio Guliano
Cel: (703) 346-8446
Email: AntonioGuliano.UK@amyTenor.com
www.antonio.guliano.com

“WIDMUNG” AND “ALLERSEELEN,” SONG TRANSLATIONS

Re: New Inquiry

Dear Mario,

You may have my permission - please make sure to use the copyright symbol and the url http://www.finder.net/ as the source. As for the people who don't have e-mail addresses:

Stan Eby - stan.eby@gmail.com

Sean Henry - I haven’t heard from him since 2010. I searched for his name and “University of Kansas” and found this pdf:


(That is really him - his middle initial is P. in my emails). So you would need to contact his next-of-kin:

Antonio GULIANO <antonio.guliano.userwtenor@gmail.com>

Best wishes from Toronto,

Emily
DELear Mario,

I have no objection against you using the translation of "L'Invito". If you have one spare sample of your thesis, I would be happy to get it. Reading the text again after 12 years I forgot how incredibly easy it is in plain Victorian era.

Best,

Johann

Del: mario_vm@yahoo.com
Date: 04/11/2014 - 07:45 (00)
A: jgartisch@bluewin.ch
Objet: Copyright Inquiry

Dear Johann,

My name is Mario Vazquez-Morillas and I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Rossini's "L'Invito" in my dissertation. "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your work via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!

Mario Vazquez-Morillas

---

"REFLETS," SONG TRANSLATION

---

Korin Kormick
Para Yo

Dear Mario,

Thank you for your request. You are quite welcome to reprint the translation. No forms are required, but please include the statement "© 2004 by Korin Kormick, reprinted with permission" in your citations. Best of luck with your dissertation!

Cordially,

Korin

Date: Tue, 4 Nov 2014 18:14:41 -0600
From: mario_vm@yahoo.com
Subject: Copyright Inquiry
to:kormick@hotmail.com

Dear Korin,

My name is Mario Vazquez-Morillas and I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Lili Boulanger "Reflets" in my dissertation "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your translation via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!

Mario Vazquez-Morillas
"MEIN SCHÖNER STERN," SONG TRANSLATION

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Copyright Inquiry

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SHARON KRÉBS
Farrah Yo

Dear Mario,

Thank you so much for asking my permission. You may indeed use my translation. There are no forms to complete and this email serves as your permission. If you need any other German to English translations, just let me know -- I’m pretty quick :-)

All the best for your dissertation.

Sharon

----- Original Message ----- 
From: "Mario Vazquez" <mvm@yaho.com>
To: "Sharon Krebs" <sharon.krebs@shaw.ca>
Sent: Monday, November 4, 2014 10:44:01 PM
Subject: Copyright Inquiry

Dear Sharon,

My name is Mario Vazquez-Morillas and I’m a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Schuman’s ”Mein schöner Stern” in my dissertation, "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your work via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!

Mario Vazquez-Morillas

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"A BORD DE L’EAU," SONG TRANSLATION

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RE: Copyright Inquiry

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Peter Low
Farrah Yo

OK Mario,

Provided my name is acknowledged as translator, you have permission. The poem is good, the song is good, the translation is not bad.

Good wishes,

Peter Low

From: Mario Vazquez [mvm@yaho.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 04, 2014 7:44 PM
To: Peter Low
Subject: Copyright Inquiry

Dear Peter,

My name is Mario Vazquez-Morillas and I’m a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Fauré’s “Au bord de l’eau” in my dissertation, “Recontextualizing Music for Social Change.” Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your work via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!

Mario Vazquez-Morillas
"ZUEIGNUNG," SONG TRANSLATION

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Copyright inquiry (4)

Larry Snyder
Para Yoo

Mario,

Yes, please feel free to use the our translation. Of course we would appreciate your crediting our work appropriately in the dissertation.

Thank you.
Larry

---Original Message Text---
From: Mario Vasquez
Date: Mon, 3 Nov 2014 22:44:03 -0800

Dear Lawrence,

My name is Mario Vasquez-Morillas and I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University. I would like to request for your permission to use your translation of Strauss's "Dedication" in my dissertation. "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Please let me know if this is possible and if I need to complete any forms. I had access to your work via the LiederNet Archive.

Thank you!
Mario Vasquez-Morillas

---

OXYTOCIN’S STRUCTURE IMAGE

---

service

Re: Copyright Inquiry
To: 2011.10.30 a.m.
Para: Mario Vasquez

Dear sir,

You can use the structure image.

-- Original --

From: "Mario Vasquez" <mario_vm@yahoo.com>
Date: Fri, Nov 21, 2014 09:24 PM
To: "service@guidechem.com" <service@guidechem.com>
Subject: Copyright Inquiry

Hi!

I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University and I'm contacting you because I want to use your website's content in my dissertation "Recontextualizing Music for Social Change." Concretely, I would like to use the Oxytocin structure image featured in this link: http://www.guidechem.com/inference/dic-33.html. Please let me know if it is possible and if any forms are required.

Thank you!
Mario Vasquez Morillas
IMAGE OF THE BRAIN’S LIMBIC SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTING THE AMIGDALAE

CONFIRMATION of AGREEMENT

Date: Nov. 28, 2014

Client: Mario Vázquez Morillas

Description of Work: Licensing of Geras Healthcare Productions illustration of the brain showing the limbic system and featuring the amygdalae

Grant of rights:
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Signature:

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Company: Geras Healthcare Productions
Date: Nov. 28, 2014

Authorized signing authority: Mario Vázquez Morillas
Company: Arizona State University
Date: Nov. 28, 2014

The authors’ mailing addresses have been omitted.

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MAYA ANGELOU’S POEMS

Your permission request submitted on 11/03/2014 / Request ID# 899162

Fieldman, Sherri
Para Yo

Dear Mario Vazquez Morillas,

Thank you for your below request to include Maya Angelou’s poems “Phenomenal Woman” and “Caged Bird” in your doctoral dissertation. We would be happy to assist you with permission if your dissertation were not being published. Unfortunately, we do not grant blanket or exclusive rights for use of our content within published works and we cannot grant requesters the right to license our content to third parties. Therefore I am sorry to say permission is hereby denied to include the two Maya Angelou poems in your dissertation for publication in ProQuest’s database.

If you can confirm that your dissertation will not be published or uploaded to ProQuest’s database, or if it be published, you are able to provide specific publication details including format(s), print run/user quantity for each format, sale price, publication date, number of pages and distribution territories, then please reply with this information and I will be happy to update your existing request #8991 and reconsider.

Otherwise, if you would like to cancel your request and remove the two poems from your dissertation, kindly confirm.

I look forward to hearing from you either way.

Best regards,

Sherri Feldman
Permissions Administrator
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I’ve gotten married! Please note that I will be changing my last name to Hinchey in early 2015.

JAMES M. SASLOW’S TRANSLATIONS OF MICHELANGELO’S POETRY

James Saslow
Para Yo

Dear Mr. Vázquez Morillas,

Yale U Press probably hasn’t answered because there’s no need to request copyright permission in the context of a scholarly dissertation. As you note, it is not being formally published, so quotation from other scholarly works is considered “fair use” for academic purposes. If anyone at your institution is requiring you to obtain permission, he or she is in error, and in any case I would grant permission if it were necessary, without fee.

Best wishes with your project.

J. Saslow

James M. Saslow
Professor of Art History, Theatre, and Renaissance Studies
Queens College and the Graduate Center, CUNY
Dept. of Art, Kpler Hall 267
Queens College
65-30 Kissena Blvd.
Queens, NY 11367-1957
james.saslow@soc.cuny.edu
+1 718 997 4820, 4803
OFFICE HOURS: FALL 2014
Tuesday 11:30-12:30 or by appointment
In December of 2014, Mario Vázquez Morillas completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in vocal performance at Arizona State University, where he studied with Jerry Doan and Gordon Hawkins. His secondary cognate studies were in stage directing and gender issues in music. While at ASU, he has performed roles such as “Guglielmo” in *Così fan tutte*, “José Tripaldi” in *Ainadamar*, “Orgon” in *Tartuffe*, and “Rapunzel’s Prince” in *Into the woods*. He also participated in the American Premiere of the Serbian Opera *Na Uranku*, singing the role of “Aga Redzep.” As a strong advocate of gender equality, Mario has dedicated his doctoral studies to creating multidisciplinary performances for social change and gender issues awareness in the twenty-first century. The two clearest examples of this creative tendency are the performances *Un-Labelling Love: A Scientific Study of Romantic Attachment in Four Seasons* and *Defatalizing the Femme Fatale: The Voice behind a Stereotype*.

Mario holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City and a Masters in Opera Performance from ASU. Roles performed in Mexico City include “Colline” in *La Bohème*, “Frank” in *Die Fledermaus*, First and Second Witch in *Dido and Aeneas*, “Plunkett” in *Martha*, “Zurga” in *Pécheurs de Perles*, “Don Pasquale” in *Don Pasquale*, “Figaro” in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and “Manuelo,” for the international staged premiere of the Mexican opera *Anita*, by Melesio Morales—an important collaboration of the National Conservatory for the celebration of 200 years of Mexican Independence.

As a stage director, he created an experimental concept for *Le Nozze di Figaro* in collaboration with the National School of Theatre (Mexico City, 2010). He has also directed pieces such as Menotti’s *The Medium* (Opera Revolution, 2012), the theatre project *The Icarus Within* (ASU, 2013), the opera *Don Pasquale* (Hermosillo Opera Company, 2014); and several opera scenes in Mexico City and Arizona. Other vocal experiments of his authorship include staged versions for Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder* (2012) and Mussorgsky’s *Songs and Dances of Death* (2009).

Based on performance theories by authors such as Richard Schechner and Jacques Lecoq, among others, Mario has developed acting workshops for singers (2013 and 2014). These workshops have successfully complemented the singers’ artistic formation and have resulted into the creation of new performance concepts. Future engagements include the recital *Quilt Songs: American Songs in the Age of AIDS*—a benefit concert with international prize-winning soprano Susan Hurley (Phoenix—December, 2014); the first season of the vocal experiment *Mozart meets La Llorona* (Mexico City, Ápeiron Teatro—February 2015); and Xavier Montsalvatge’s opera for children *Puss in Boots* (Mexico City, Teatro Prieto—2015).