
LGBTQ+ Vocal Literature: Songs for Life

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OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES, society's thirst for social justice, equality, and diversity clearly has been amplified. Greater awareness, visibility, and tolerance have contributed to a more harmonious societal fabric for many. In our own profession, recent presentations, seminars, and workshops at regional and national levels echo this sentiment by offering insightful information on composers, authors, and minority groups, first deemed inconsequential due to societal prejudice, and all attest to our interest to diversify. Conversely, many social injustices and pejorative views regrettably persist, especially in today's polarized social and political climate. One minority group that has made huge strides toward acceptance, yet faces persistent prejudice and discrimination, is the LGBTQ+ community. According to the Center for American Progress, in 2016 one in four LGBTQ+ members reported discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹ A surveillance summary conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concluded that LGBTQ+ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual counterparts.² A comprehensive study of 5,149 LGBTQ+ participants in 2010 unequivocally demonstrates that students, staff, and faculty who identify as LGBTQ+ are at a significantly higher risk for harassment at U.S. colleges and universities than their heterosexual colleagues.³ Such harassment and isolation often result in a greater risk of academic difficulties, school absences, and falling grades.⁴ Is it possible that less overt discrimination and isolation can take on more subtle yet profound forms? How we interact in our personal relationships, where we want to go to school, changing the way we talk and walk, are all decisions that can be governed by the fear of simply feeling different. As voice teachers we train, emphasize, and demand authenticity from students each time they vocalize or step on stage. What might seem an uncomplicated instruction could be a daunting task for an LGBTQ+ student. How can we help our LGBTQ+ friends to find their own voices? One way is by bringing greater awareness to literature that speaks specifically to that community. The purpose of this article is to provide an overview of selected LGBTQ+ classical vocal literature. With unique challenges facing the LGBTQ+ community, the author hopes not only to increase awareness of this body of literature, but also to offer students literature they can relate to, grow with, and be inspired by.

THE AIDS QUILT SONGBOOK AND RELATED LITERATURE

The NAMES Project Memorial Quilt with more than 48,000 3 × 6 foot panels was created in 1987 to honor and become a tangible lasting legacy for those

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that passed away due to Human Immunodeficiency Virus—Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (HIV AIDS). In response, American baritone and teacher William Parker (1943–1993), himself diagnosed with AIDS, personally reached out to composers to compile songs that stimulate dialogue around gay issues and the earth shattering effects of the AIDS epidemic. The premiere of the *AIDS Quilt Songbook* took place at Alice Tully Hall in Lincoln Center on June 4, 1992. The published version of the *Songbook*, containing eighteen songs, appeared in 1993. A second recording, entitled *Heartbeats: New Songs for the AIDS Quilt Songbook from Minnesota*, released in 1995 in Minneapolis, honored Parker’s hope that the Quilt would continue to evolve beyond just the baritone voice into various voices, different ensembles, and genres.⁵

With the untimely passing of the pragmatic composer and AIDS activist Chris DeBlasio (1959–1993), the gay community lost a charismatic speaker against AIDS discrimination. DeBlasio, an openly gay male, actively pursued projects that had some relationship to the gay community, frequently collaborating with the AIDS coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP). Some significant contributions include incidental scores for *Stray Dog Story* (Robert Chesley, 1983), *Night Sweat* (Robert Chesley, 1984), and *Adam and the Experts* (Victor Bumbalo, 1989).⁶ During DeBlasio’s formative years, musical soundtracks and popular music were a constant presence in the DeBlasio household. This exposure left a lasting impression on Chris and greatly informed his lyrical-tonal, theatrical-informed writing in his art song output.⁷ As an artistic response to the AIDS crises of the 1970s and ’80s, DeBlasio created *All the Way Through Evening* (1990), which includes the well known song “Walt Whitman in 1989,” as part of *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. Scored for baritone and piano, with poetry by Perry Brass, the cycle premiered on December 2, 1990, with baritone Michael Dash. DeBlasio, through poetic imagery and various musical devices, is able to generate a unified whole from seemingly unrelated songs. For example, symbolism of life and death is represented in warmth and cold, light and darkness; with the prevailing use of the Lydian mode with its characteristic raised fourth, DeBlasio evokes an exertion against a feeble and diminishing life.⁸ To juxtapose life and death, DeBlasio permeates the score with accidentals, creating a har-

monic “pull” toward either death by utilizing flats, or life by applying sharps, to tonal areas or singular chords.⁹ To further accent the narrator’s yearning for human and life kinship, a descending arpeggiated piano figure appears four times in the cycle: “The Disappearance of Light,” “Train Station,” and twice in “Walt Whitman in 1989” (Example 1). By utilizing these unification elements and others, the cycle “reach[es] out to an eternal gay male community—homosexuals past, present and future—in defiance of the despondency inflicted by [this] fatal disease.”¹⁰

Dennis Tobenski’s (b. 1982) song cycle for tenor and piano, *And He’ll Be Mine*, premiered in 2006. It serves as a dedication to those who have lost loved ones to AIDS. The cycle is comprised of seven songs with text by Scottish poet Robert Burns. Written from a woman’s perspective originally, Tobenski deliberately inverts the sexual objective of the text, a common practice of the folksong traditions of Ireland and Scotland, thus creating a gay song cycle.¹¹ The intentional blurring of bar lines, both in voice and accompaniment parts, through the use of slur markings in the opening song, “Braw, Braw Lads o’ Galla Water,” is an illustration of surreptitious love. Tobenski states that this is a common theme that resonates with closeted gay men on the road to their sexual acceptance.¹² Open fifths in the left hand contribute to a serene and spacious setting, so typical of the Scottish Highlands. In an *a cappella* setting of the third song, “Him That’s Far Away,” Tobenski captures the loneliness and isolation felt by many ostracized by family due to their sexuality. To further underscore the isolation, Tobenski first utilizes intervals of a major second, and then moves to augmented minor 2nd later in the piece. “Lament,” which follows “Him That’s Far Away,” portrays an “emotional wasteland—a place of utter shock,” for those that have lost loved ones due to AIDS.¹³ This is achieved with an incessant ostinato figure on C₅ in the right hand of the piano, a 9-tone row in the left, syncopation and slurs across the bar lines, and an overall static musical fabric (Example 2).¹⁴

A relationship between an older man and younger lover is often found in gay culture. To accentuate this playful dynamic, “Bonnie Dundee” stands in stark contrast to the psychological bareness of “Lament.” The emotional high point of the cycle is reached in the penultimate song, “The Gallant Weaver.” Tobenski provides

40

Vocals

Here just a half breath long, Warmth be fore the

Piano

43

Vox.

cold: one last ray calls,

Pno.

45

Vox.

be fore the dis ap - pear - ance of light.

Pno.

Example 1. DeBlasio, “The Disappearance of Light,” from *All the Way Through Evening*, mm. 38–48. Measure 43 illustrates a descending arpeggio of F Lydian in C major. Musical extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved. Published by Classical Vocal Reprints.

an unassuming vocal line employing parallel sixths and seventh chords in the accompaniment to reflect simplicity in the first of four verses. Growing in intensity and intricacy, the second verse foreshadows the vocal line

with octave displacements in the accompaniment. The third verse, reminiscent of a *caccia*, with imitation and moving eighth notes in the accompaniment, propels the verse to its conclusion. The final verse consists of

♩ = 100

Tenor

♩ = 100
p sempre (r.h.)

Piano

mp

6 *p*

Fate _____ gave the word, _____ the ar - row _____ sped, _____ And _____

10

_____ pierced _____ my _____ dar - ling's _____ heart; _____

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Example 2. Tobenski, “Lament,” from *And He’ll be Mine*, mm. 1–13. © Dennis Tobenski, 2005. Musical extract reproduced by permission.

broadly spaced block chords to underscore the lover’s declaration, “I love my gallant Weaver!” The closing song, “John Anderson, My Jo,” is an exultation of the joyous relationship spanning a lifetime together. Void

of all accidentals in both the voice and accompaniment, a lyric vocal line soars over an innocent cradling accompaniment in the left hand and a more complex right hand with frequent use of octave jumps. This gesture,

Nostalgic $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 54$

p legato

I miss you in the

p sonore

Ped.

Example 3. Hundley, “Evening Hours,” from *Four Songs*, mm. 1–3. © Boosey & Hawkes, Inc, 1985. Musical extract reproduced by permission.

along with the frequent use of hemiolas, underscores the partners tenacity to “climb the hill together.”

BEYOND THE QUILT

The work of American poet, short story writer, and novelist James Purdy (1914–2009) can be described as cutting edge. For the first time in American fiction, Purdy dared to write about homosexuality freely and without apology. For example, in *Eustace Chisholm and the Works* (1967), the reader becomes unambiguously aware of the central role that the homosexual relationship between the two main characters will play. From Purdy’s first book of poetry, *The Running Sun*, American composer Richard Hundley (1931–2018) set “Evening Hours (1975)” as part of a collection of *Four Songs* (1985) arranged for piano and tenor voice. Hundley’s tuneful yet earnest setting of the text is immediately apparent. As so often found in Hundley’s piano accompaniments, there is a dexterity and refined quality that underpins the text. The opening bars, marked with slurs and sustained pedal over static chords, gives the illusion of suspended time, reflecting nostalgia and longing from the lover: “I miss you” (Example 3).

In Example 4, word painting in the form of arpeggiated eighth notes in the B section as well as the extensive use of *staccati* in the accompaniment illuminate the “starlight” motive found in the text, representing the closeness and reality of the lover’s want to remember.

(“But starlight brings your face to me . . . the rain that falls on the garden wall keeps me informed as if you had called.”) With the return to the A section, Hundley employs two further elements to display the lover’s persistent longing, first a wide interval appoggiatura on the word “miss” (Example 5), then an augmentation of the “starlight” theme on the word “you,” both in F# major (Example 6).

Gay Life (2003), a cycle of six songs for baritone and piano by David Del Tredici (b. 1937), illuminates different gay experiences. The genesis of the cycle is a result of Del Tredici’s experience at The Body Electric School’s retreat called “The Dear Love of Comrades.”¹⁵ Del Tredici utilizes a kaleidoscope of poets, including Paul Monette, Wilson Hand Kidde, Tom Gunn, and the revolutionary Allen Ginsberg. Especially notable is the use of extensive piano interludes between each song, which not only link but form an interrelationship between the songs. To “evoke the unalloyed joy of gay men exulting in a safe experience,” the opening rag “Ode to Wildwood,” is evocative of Julie Andrews’s alpine setting of *The Sound of Music*.¹⁶ Major and minor tonalities fluctuate throughout the song, and the rag is reminiscent of Scott Joplin’s writing. “In the Temple” amalgamates spirituality with sensuality. A stepwise conjunct vocal contour, chant-like in character, becomes disjunct as the poet reiterates “the sweet fire in my veins, so hard to tame.”¹⁷ The fourth song, “Personals Ad,” is a sincere and tender “advertisement” of a lover seeking

a) *poco più mosso* (♩ = 60)

star - light brings your face to

poco più mosso (♩ = 60)

p

Ped. *sempre con ped. (legato)*

b) *mp moving ahead to - - a little faster* ♩ = 66

the rain that falls on the gar - den wall

moving ahead to - - a little faster ♩ = 66

mp *p* *poco* *p* *cresc.*

l.v.

Example 4. Hundley, “Evening Hours,” from *Four Songs*: a) D minor 7th “starlight” motive; b) C# minor to F# minor “starlight” motive. © Boosey & Hawkes, Inc, 1985. Musical extract reproduced by permission.

a prospective companion. Undoubtedly, Gay Pride is a momentous social event each year for the queer community. Pride parades across the United States commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan, a decisive moment for the Gay Liberation Movement, as well as encourage community cognizance for the LGBTQ+ community. Not only does Pride represent unanimity but it also creates a sense of belonging. “After the Big Parade,” with its fanfare and brass band accompaniment encapsulates this sense of pride. But, as Del Tredici reminds us, during the AIDS epidemic, “the celebrations are necessarily bittersweet. The ebullience of the opening march music is tempered by recollection of ‘the Corridors of Death,’ sung to the pained interval of the tritone.”¹⁸ “Here” stands as a deeply personal personification of Del Tredici’s grief after losing his 36 year old lover, Paul Arcomano, to AIDS in 1993. The cycle closes with “Memory Unsettled,” a further contempla-

tion on death, “suggesting that its imminence can inspire acts of potent charity.”¹⁹ Fifteen minutes in length, the song is an homage to Del Tredici’s mother, lost friends, and lovers. “Remember me—We will remember you,” appears as a word ostinato throughout the piece. This text, redolent of Dido’s lament from Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, is skillfully quoted by Del Tredici in his use of Henry Purcell’s (1659–1695) own setting of the text. Del Tredici concludes by introducing a quote of Richard Wagner’s (1813–1883) *Liebstdod* (love death) closing measures, “under which the song’s main themes return in a communion of grief spanning three centuries and as many musical styles.”²⁰

A request by baritone Stephen Salters prompted William Bolcom (b. 1938) to compose the cycle *Old Addresses* in 2002. A composer of great musical scope and variety, Bolcom’s compositional writing indicates strong influences by Darius Milhaud (1892–1974),

Example 5 is a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with the instruction "broadly" and a dynamic marking of "mf". The lyrics are "return - to - Tempo I° ♩ = 54". The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It starts with "broadly (maestoso)" and a dynamic marking of "f". The lyrics "miss you in the" are written above the piano part. The piano part includes a dynamic marking of "mp" and the instruction "sub. p leggiero".

Example 5. Hundley, “Evening Hours,” from *Four Songs*, mm. 38–39. © Boosey & Hawkes, Inc, 1985. Musical extract reproduced by permission.

Example 6 is a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with the instruction "ritard." and a dynamic marking of "mp". The lyrics are "miss you". The tempo is marked "Lento ♩ = ca. 42". The piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It starts with "ritard." and a dynamic marking of "mp". The piano part includes a dynamic marking of "p" and the instruction "Ped.". There is a sixteenth-note figure in the right hand of the piano part marked with a "6" and a slur.

Example 6. Hundley, “Evening Hours,” from *Four Songs*, mm. 50–52. © Boosey & Hawkes, Inc, 1985. Musical extract reproduced by permission.

George Rochberg (1918–2005), and Pierre Boulez (1925–2016).²¹ Unlike Hundley, Bolcom frequently incorporates atonality and extreme chromaticism, even introducing straight jazz elements into his songs.²² For *Old Addresses*, Bolcom utilizes seven different poets to create a “panoramic ‘fan’ of songs.”²³ C. P. Cavafy, the Egyptian Greek poet and a homosexual himself, often alludes to themes of sensual pleasures and homoeroticism in his *oeuvre*. “The Next Table,” the second song in the cycle, captures one of Cavafy’s beautiful homoerotic prowl, “. . . full of the urbane, rueful humor so typical of him.”²⁴ Cavafy’s poem transmutes poetic power

to convey sensuality in a direct and unapologetic way without guilt.

He must be scarcely twenty-two years old.
And yet I am certain that nearly as many years ago,
I enjoyed the very same body.

. . . Ah see, now that he is sitting down at the next table
I know every movement he makes—and beneath his clothes,
Once more I see the beloved bare limbs.

The fifth song of the cycle, “The Embrace” by Provincetown poet Mark Doty, recalls a poignant visit of a deceased lover in a dream. Dotted eighth notes followed by *staccato*

Baritone Voice

(tenuto-staccato: not accented)

You weren't

Piano

p
tranquillo

3

well or real - ly ill yet ei - ther; just a lit - tle

5

tired, your hand - some - ness tinged by grief or an - ti - ci -

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Example 7. Bolcom, “The Embrace,” from *Old Addresses*, mm. 1–6. © Edward B. Marks Music Company and Bolcom Music, 2002. Musical extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

sixteenth notes in the accompaniment are juxtaposed with a *parlando* quasi-recitative vocal style (Example 7). This juxtaposition perhaps alludes to the sleeping lover’s disbelief of the veracity of the dream.

Prolific art song composer Lori Laitman (b. 1955) composed a vignette in which she addresses racial integration and implicit homosexual love in “Tableau,” scored for countertenor and piano with text by African

Example 8. Laitman, “Tableau,” from *Sable Pride*, mm. 1–4, © Lori Laitman, 2013. Musical extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

American poet Countee Cullen. The third song from the cycle *Sable Pride* (2013), “Tableau” displays a natural speech-like vocal line so characteristic of Laitman’s vocal writing. A simple piano accompaniment with open fifths in both hands underscores the serene image of the two boys walking arm in arm. The left hand utilizes the white keys and the right the black keys, with ranges purposefully overlapping. Not only is this word painting but also representative of the two boys, each of a different race, walking arm in arm (Example 8).

ABA in form, the contrasting B section exhibits a more chromatic syntax, especially on the prolongation of the word “stare.” A descending vocal line is an example of word painting; the onlookers, both black and white, by the lowering of their window shades, express their disapproval of the lovers (Example 9). The tranquility and obliviousness of the boys return in the A section. Of note, Laitman incorporates the title of each poem for each song of the cycle and includes a stage direction for the singer, “to hold his pose, as if becoming a tableau himself, as the piano descends in range, as if pulling back cinematically from the scene.”²⁵

For a look or a touch (2007), a theatrical chamber piece by American composer Jake Heggie (b. 1961), scored for actor, baritone, flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, and piano, and reminiscent of a cabaret bar scene, serves as the only vocal composition to remember

homosexual victims during the Holocaust.²⁶ Powerful words, memories, and elements of love create a transcendent and synergistic experience that serves as a means of remembrance. The two main characters, Manfred and Gad, embody the narrative of 15,000 homosexuals who perished in the Nazi concentration camps, along with those homosexuals chastised after the war. Various vocal styles are incorporated, ranging from crooning in “Golden Years,” to a sustained vocalise in “Silence.”²⁷ A song cycle edition (2013) of five songs from the complete work scored for baritone, chamber ensemble, and piano is also available.

Native Georgian Brian C. Armbrust’s (b. 1978) *Define Me* was premiered in 2018 for Seattle Art Song Society. The cycle is a powerful expression of perseverance against societal prejudice. Armbrust deliberately named the cycle *Define Me*, because, “. . . you can’t. Only I can.”²⁸ “How are the mighty fallen!,” “Slurred,” and “Homosexuality” all reflect society’s often biased and predisposed view on faith, science, and partiality. “Small Town Queen,” is an anthem of solidarity for all queer individuals having faced bullying and derision. Solace and self-acceptance are reflected in “Nurture.”²⁹

The cycle *Behind the Wallpaper* (2013–15), by composer Alex Temple (b. 1983) represents an autobiographic journey of transformation. It deals with topics of isolation (“Midnight Bus”), indifference (“Unnatural”), transgen-

11 *poco rit.* *mf* *slightly faster*
 From low - cred blinds the dark folk stare And here the fair folk

15 *poco rit.*
 talk, In - dig - nant that these two should dare In

18 *a tempo* *rit.*
 u - ni - son to walk.

mp
leg. * *leg.* * *leg.*

Example 9. Laitman, “Tableau,” from *Sable Pride*, mm. 11–20, © Lori Laitman, 2013. Musical extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

der phobia (“Purple Stain”), coming out (“Fishmouth”), but also of finding community (“Spires”).³⁰ Scored for string quartet, amplified voice, and prerecorded sounds, the text lends itself to various compositional styles. “This

American Life” alludes to Steve Reich (b. 1936) textures that represent the “boreness and formalized style of the lyrics,” and chromatic passages reminiscent of Richard Strauss (1864–1949) and Wagner are found in “Purple

a) *Pensif* ♩ = 55

b) (8^{va})

Example 10. Garrett, “Adieu, jusque je vous revoye; a) mm. 1–6; b) mm. 191–198. © Marques L. A. Garrett 2013. Musical extract reproduced by permission. All rights reserved.

Stain.”³¹ Other works by Temple that deal with queer relationships include “Second Moon (2016),” and “Diadem”; the latter, with text by R. A. Briggs, focuses on gay desire in medieval Europe.³²

A Love Cycle (2013), by African American composer Marques L. A. Garrett (b. 1984), portrays the composer’s healing process after a traumatic dissolution of romance. The opening “A Love Song,” in A major, with text by Paul Laurence Dunbar, recalls the happiness and thrill of a new relationship. Repeated chords in each measure exhibit this joy. To illustrate the heartbreak of the failed relationship, the second song is intentionally set a tritone away in the key of E^b minor. After hearing Stefano Donaudy’s familiar rendition of “O del mio amato ben” in a recital, Garrett utilized the same text by poet Alberto Donaudy (1879–1925) to express his grief and heartbreak.³³ With simple harmonies and limited melodic range, the composer employs a familiar text by Heinrich Heine “Herz, mein Herz, sei nicht beklommen”

to create an introspective representation of future hope in the third song. The cycle concludes with a setting of “Adieu, jusque je vous revoye” by an anonymous poet. With close pitch intervals (minor thirds, perfect 4ths and 5ths) in the accompaniment at the beginning of the song, augmenting into wider intervals (octaves) at the conclusion, along with greater distance between the pianist’s hands (C₂ in left, and C₆ in right), Garrett exemplifies the resolve to separate in order for each individual to carry on with their own lives³⁴ (Example 10).

VOICES FROM AFAR

Openly lesbian English composer-turned-suffragist Dame Ethel Smyth (1858–1944) epitomized what it meant to be a radical activist for social equality in her time. Her “The March for Women” (1911) became the anthem for the Women’s Social and Political Union. Playwright Bernard Shaw commented on her *Mass in D*, viewed by many as her orchestral masterpiece,

stating, “It was your music that cured me for ever of the old delusion that women could not do man’s work in art and all other things.”³⁵ Smyth’s *Der Wald* (1902) was the first and only opera produced at New York’s Metropolitan Opera by a female composer until 2016.³⁶ “On the Road,” from 3 *Songs* (1913) for mezzo soprano or high baritone and piano, was dedicated to Christabel Pankhurst, a fellow suffragette. Having studied with Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), she infuses the songs with Romantic German lieder aesthetics. In “On the Road,” a protest scene for freedom and justice is underscored by a march-like tempo along with the frequent use of staccati and tremolos in the accompaniment. Strong accents with unexpected perfect 5th and minor 6th vocal leaps further evoke the poet’s frustration with slow institutional change. To symbolize the poet’s resolve and transformation (“We have waited so long we will wait now no more”), the composition begins in C minor but concludes in C major. The song, an anthem for social reform and equality, still resonates today.

South African prolific art song composer, skilled pianist, and music pedagogue, Hubert du Plessis (1922–2011), set eight poems taken from fellow South African I. D. Du Plessis’s poetic volume *Vreemde Liefde* (Strange Love) Op.7 (1951). Scored for baritone and piano, the cycle utilizes twentieth century compositional techniques. Further, judicious leitmotifs are applied not only to unify the cycle but also to give sound to the different idea-associations set forth by the text. Du Plessis employs a declamatory setting of the text reminiscent of Richard Wagner (1813–1883), and exhibits influences of Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) by an inextricable synthesis between the music and text. The title poem “Strange Love,” exemplifies the homoerotic undertone of all eight poems (Table 1).

Due to society’s puritanical views of the time, it is not aberrant that reviews in 1937 and again in 1960, of the volume of poetry by Gerrit Decker, a conservative literature historian, make no mention of the homoerotic undertone of the poems. Well known South African biographer John C. Kannemeyer offers a more perspicacious review on Du Plessis’s poems in 1978 stating, “Die bundle [. . .] gee vir die eerste keer in die Afrikaanse letterkunde die probleem van die homoerotiek” (For the first time in Afrikaans literature the volume relates the difficulties of homoeroticism).³⁷

TABLE 1.

<p>If I have to reveal this strange love of mine As ek my vreemde liefde bloot moes lê, [as ek məj 'freʰmdə 'lifdə blo:t mus lê:]</p> <p>How would the pious guardians of love respond? Wat sou die vrome skenders van die skoonheid sê? [vat søu di 'fro:ʰmə 'skendərs fan di 'sko:ʰnhəjt se:]</p> <p>Would they with holy indignation Sou hul, met heilige verontwaardiging, [søeu hʰel met 'həj]ləxə fəʰənt'va:rdəxɪŋ]</p> <p>Point befouled fingers towards God Besoedelende vingers Godswaarts steek, bə'sudələndə 'fɪŋərs 'xətsva:rts steʰk]</p> <p>And after the cleanse of self-justification En na die selfregverdigende reiniging [en na: di 'sælfræx 'færdəxəndə 'rəjnxɪŋ]</p> <p>Come to avenge their honor? Hul eer aan my kom wreek? [hʰel e:ʰr a:n məj kəm vrəʰk]</p> <p>Or would a sparkle from this fire that burns within me Of sou 'n sprank van hierdie vuur wat in my gloei [ɔf søu ə sprəŋk fan 'hirdi fy:r vat in məj xlu:]</p> <p>Alter their understanding Ook hulle aanraak, sodat hul verstaan [o:ʰk 'hʰelə 'a:nra:k 'so:ʰdat hʰel fəʰ'sta:n]</p> <p>Love’s proclivity for transfiguration? Die liefde neem 'n duisend vorme aan? [di 'lifdə ne:ʰm ə 'døysənt 'fərmə a:n]</p>
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Leitmotifs that appear throughout the cycle serve to unify the songs and articulate various themes in the texts.³⁸ The work premiered on March 5, 1952 in Cape Town by baritone Bruce Anderson and pianist Christie Feros. Interestingly, reviews from 1952 praised the performance; however once again no references are made to the underlying homoerotic vein of the cycle.³⁹ Due to the aforementioned conservative view on religion and family structure by most South Africans during this time, the cycle stands as a landmark for gay expression against societal discrimination and bigotry. Additionally,

“Verlange en Bevestiging” (Longing and Affirmation) from *Vier Herfsliedere* (Four Autumn Songs, 1943–44, revised 1978) was composed during Du Plessis’s formative student years at Stellenbosch University. Scored for tenor or soprano and piano, the cycle reflects the poet’s struggle and acceptance of his homosexuality.⁴⁰ According to South African scholar Heinrich van der Mescht, Du Plessis questions the emergence of his same sex attraction in “Verlange” (Longing), the first song of the cycle, “Is dit my minnaarsfantasie wat groei in krag . . . ?” (Is my infatuation fantasy growing in strength?).⁴¹ Du Plessis portrays an awareness of our mortality in “Gebed” (Prayer), a frequent theme in his *oeuvre*, and “Herinnering” (Reminiscence) reveals his attraction toward a female student. Juxtaposing heterosexual and homosexual love, the final poem reveals Du Plessis’s acceptance of his homosexuality, “Één liefde is deel van my liefde nou: ‘n Gloed van skarlaken oorweldig die blou” (One part of these loves divines my love now, a fervor of pink now overshadows the blue).⁴²

LGBTQ+ students have become an intrinsic part of our vocal studios, campus communities, and society at large. Although a minority group, these students deserve literature that speaks directly to the unique challenges they face. Continued educational efforts must be coordinated to help increase the visibility and accessibility of LGBTQ+ members. By offering appropriate vocal literature suggestions, the author hopes to inform and offer alternative repertoire that might assist singers in finding their authentic selves.

NOTES

1. Sejal Singh and Laura E. Durso, “Widespread Discrimination Continues to Shape LGBT People’s Lives in Both Subtle and Significant Ways,” Center for American Progress; <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/news/2017/05/02/429529/widespread-discrimination-continues-shape-lgbt-peoples-lives-subtle-significant-ways/> (accessed February 3, 2019).
2. Laura Kann, Emily O’Malley Olsen, Tim McManus, et al., “Sexual Identity, Sex of Sexual Contacts, and Health-Related Behaviors Among Students in Grade 9–12—United States and Selected Sites, 2015.” *MMWR Surveillance Summaries* 65, No. 9:1–202; <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/ss/ss6509a1.htm> (accessed February 4, 2019).
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