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Johannes Brahms's Fünf Ophelia-Lieder Performance history, cultural context, and character study as it pertains to Johannes Brahms's Fünf Ophelia-Lieder: A Performer's Perspective

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Performance history, cultural context, and character study as it pertains to Johannes Brahms's
Fünf Ophelia-Lieder: A Performer's Perspective

Caryn Alexis Crozier

Research Project submitted
to the College of Creative Arts
at West Virginia University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in

Voice Performance

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art song, Ophelia, voice

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ABSTRACT

Johannes Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

Performance history, cultural context, and character study as it pertains to Johannes Brahms's
Fünf Ophelia-Lieder: A Performer's Perspective

Caryn Alexis Crozier

This document aims to contribute research on the lesser known and under researched vocal works by Johannes Brahms, particularly his *Fünf Ophelia Lieder*. This song cycle, while not written to be performed on its own, originally, is a rich technical resource for beginning singers and advanced singers alike. Brahms wrote a simple melody with sparse accompaniment that really allows the performer to focus on language, technique, or dramatic interpretation. This document looks at Brahms's setting of Ophelia's mad scene through many different lenses including theoretical, by analyzing each song musically and dramatically, historical analysis of *Hamlet* and its many iterations, Brahms's performance style and the common styles of the nineteenth century, and a comparison to the settings of Richard Strauss and Hector Berlioz's settings of her mad scene and death. This research will aid performers in their pursuit of a complete performance and will hopefully begin to bring these songs into standard performance repertoire, as well as increase the research on Brahms's lesser known art songs and cycles.

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Thank you, the reader. I hope you fall in love with Brahms's setting of Ophelia as much as I have. Go out and perform it with abandon!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Topic

This document aims to fill the gap in scholarship pertaining to the lieder of Brahms by providing an analysis of his *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*, including cultural context, performance history, and character and musical analysis. This document will look at the different facets of musical interpretation through the overarching perspective of a performer and is to be used as a resource for students and teachers alike in order to give a nuanced performance and to use as a teaching tool for all levels of singers.

There are few scholarly writings that discuss in detail Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*. Many anthologies on Brahms's art song output glaze over or do not mention the work at all. In fact, I only discovered this piece because it is included in *The Lieder Anthology*¹ at the end of the Johannes Brahms section.

This specific set is an anomaly in the complete works of Brahms as it was written at the request of a friend, Josef Lewinsky, for a German production of *Hamlet*. This is atypical for Brahms, as he spent many hours methodically choosing his prose. Brahms, according to his only student Gustav Jenner, had a very specific method of choosing poetry, stating that “once Brahms had decided to attempt a musical setting, he committed the poem to memory, spoke it aloud repeatedly, analyzed its meter, structure, and meaning, and waited for a kernel of melodic inspiration.”²

The set is mostly forgotten because it is the only commissioned work of Brahms's output and it is so simple in form and structure, something Brahms intended for the set as “he was of the

¹ *The Lieder Anthology*, Edited by Virginia Saya, 50-55. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003.

² Hallmark, Rufus. *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century* 1996: 144

opinion that, on the stage, something simple often makes for a greater effect.”³. The songs are quite short and strophic, when multiple verses are present, and were originally performed without accompaniment. The accompaniment provided was written to be used as a tool to learn the songs or for concert performances.

While the set was performed for the Prague Theater’s production of *Hamlet*, there is little research on what happened with the set after the theater ended the production. There is some scholarship stating that the manuscript was lost, which would explain why it is so rarely performed and why there is such little research on the set however, researching the performance history of the set will not only allow for a look into what kind of singer was drawn to the work and what happened to the original manuscript, but also how it was being programmed in recital, as its own entity, or not at all. This leads to the question of: Were other theaters commissioning incidental music for their productions and have those pieces been performed in recital as well? Was this a common occurrence in Germany at the time or was Brahms the only composer who had the privilege to write for a Shakespearean play? These questions will be explored in the document.

The character of Ophelia seemed to be a popular subject for many musicians and artists alike during the 19th century with her psychosis and femininity captivating artists to this day. Along with such composers as Brahms, Berlioz, Chausson, and later R. Strauss, artists such as Delacroix, Preault, Hughes, and Redgrave were also fascinated by Shakespeare’s heroine. I want to explore the fascination with Ophelia that seemed to encompass so much of the 19th century art community. What about Ophelia is still

³ Geiringer, Karl, and George S. Bozarth. *On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies*. Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2006. 389-399

captivating researchers, artists, and audiences of today? I intend to explore these questions through an analysis of Ophelia's psyche, specifically through the scholarship in *Ophelia: A Literary Study of Madness As Seen through the Eyes of Five Romantic Composers*⁴, *The History of Ophelia*⁵, and Judith Wechsler's article on performing Ophelia in the 2002 *Theatre Survey*⁶.

As stated previously, there must have been a trend of theaters trying to modernize their Shakespeare plays by commissioning new incidental music that fit within the 16th or 19th - century musical constructs of the time. Brahms is one composer who was influenced by Renaissance madrigals, specifically in his *Ophelia Lieder*⁷, a topic that will be heavily explored in the research document. Comparing madrigal forms to that of Brahms's Ophelia setting will provide singers with options for their portrayal of the set; if performed at an allegro, the pieces are reminiscent of a madrigal, but if performed adagio (it should be noted that there are no tempi markings in the music) the piece has many distinctly Brahms characteristics.

A character and musical analysis will provide a basis of the research. Since there is a lack of study of Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* it is important to include the most important information about the piece: text translation, thorough musical analysis, and a character analysis. These three

⁴ Higinbotham, Emily, Steve Hyman, Johannes Brahms, Richard Strauss, Hector Berlioz, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Ambroise Thomas. *Ophelia: A Literary Sample of Madness As Seen Through the Eyes of Five Romantic Composers.*, 2003. Print.

⁵ Fielding, Sarah. *The History of Ophelia*. London: Printed for T. Vernor, In Birch Lane, Cornhill, 1787.

⁶ Wechsler, Judith. "Performing Ophelia: The Iconography of Madness." *Theatre Survey*. 43.2 (2002): 201-221. Print.

⁷ Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* will be referred to as *Ophelia Lieder*

components comprise the very basic research that every student should have at their disposal when learning and performing a piece or larger work.

This document aims to fill the gap in scholarship pertaining to the lieder of Brahms by providing an analysis of his *Ophelia Lieder* including cultural context, performance history, and character and musical analysis through the eyes of a performer. There is some research that briefly looks at Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* through comparison, which is partially provided in this document, but none provide the information a performer would need to give a full performance of this piece. My overarching goal is to provide a resource for teachers and students of all levels to use as they delve into Brahms's setting of Ophelia's mad scene. Just as an actor needs to know every aspect of the character and play he/she is performing in, so does a singer need to know everything about their piece, especially if it is, in Brahms's case, written to be performed in the play itself.

Literature Review

Comparing the standard resources used to research composers and specific works, there are very few analyses or essays written about Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder*. Much of the literature found on Brahms's vocal output focus on his major lieder contributions, with in-depth discussions on form, text analysis, motivic materials, and structural analysis, but there is very little scholarship on the *Ophelia Lieder* itself. This set is either given a brief mention in an introductory paragraph or is used as a comparison to Strauss's *Drei Lieder der Ophelie*. Karl Geiringer, who first published the *Ophelia Lieder* in 1933, does write a concise article that focuses on background information, such as why it was composed and includes excerpts of letters written by Brahms about the songs.

In The Songs of Johannes Brahms⁸ by Eric Sams, he examines many of the commonalities between Brahms' lieder, especially the folk-like threads that run through Brahms's vocal and instrumental music. He discusses the motifs that are employed through-out much of Brahms's compositions and goes so far as to track each motif through-out Brahms's lieder. This resource is incredibly helpful in pointing out the cohesions between each lied and tracing Brahms's stylistic traits as it morphs through his lieder.

There are also many dissertations that look at the *Ophelia Lieder*, but only to compare it to other composer's settings of the same text like Strauss, Chausson, Berlioz, and Schumann. This research aids in understanding how German and French composers treated the same text and character arc and allows for a better, more in-depth understanding of Brahms's setting. Jerri Lamar Kantack's dissertation "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia"⁹ and Susan Gale Johnson Odom's "Four Musical Settings of Ophelia"¹⁰ provide such a comparison of the settings of Shakespeare's Ophelia text and, in the case of Susan Gale Johnson Odom's research, look at how she is portrayed through those musical settings. Jennifer Lee Tipton's dissertation "A Document in Death and Madness: A Cultural and Interdisciplinary Study of Nineteenth-Century Art Song Settings on the Death of Ophelia"¹¹ discusses the cultural implications in many

⁸ Sams, Eric. *The Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 2000

⁹ Kantack, Jerri Lamar. "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia." Order No. 9403317 The University of Alabama, 1993. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017.

¹⁰ Odom, Susan Gale Johnson. "Four Musical Settings of Ophelia." Order No. 9128720 University of North Texas, 1991. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017.

¹¹ Tipton, Jennifer Leigh. "A Document in Death and Madness: A Cultural and Interdisciplinary Study of Nineteenth-Century Art Song Settings on the Death of Ophelia." Order No. 3583931 The University of Southern Mississippi, 2014. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017.

of the settings based on the character Ophelia. These dissertations not only provide in-depth comparisons of some of the more popular Ophelia settings, but also delve into her character.

A portion of my research will focus on a character analysis of Ophelia, so it is important to not only look at how she is characterized in music but also to study psychological analyses and modern interpretations of Ophelia. The research of Tynelle Anne Olivas in her dissertation “Who is Ophelia? An Examination of the Objectification and Subjectivity of Shakespeare’s Ophelia”¹² and Cynthia Jolie Dior’s “Ophelia: Becoming the Violet”¹³ provide both a social and character analysis of Ophelia as a literary character and a woman. The *British Journal of Psychiatry*¹⁴ also offers an analysis of Ophelia’s mental state in an article by J. Richards, as does Kimberly Rhodes’s research “Ophelia and Victorian Visual Cultural: Representing Body Politics in the Nineteenth Century”¹⁵, although Rhodes’s work looks at Ophelia’s psyche from a social and cultural point of view within the Victorian Era; the time of Brahms.

The scholarship available on Brahms’s *Ophelia Lieder* may be lacking, but through the combination of score study, the research of such scholars as Michael Musgrave and Bernard D.

¹² Olivas, Tynelle Ann. "Who is Ophelia? an Examination of the Objectification and Subjectivity of Shakespeare's Ophelia." Order No. 1595089 University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2015. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017

¹³ Dior, Cynthia Jolie. "Ophelia: Becoming the Violet." Order No. 1396971 Idaho State University, 1998. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017

¹⁴ Richards, J. 2012. “Ophelia in Hamlet - Psychiatry in Literature.” *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 201 (5): 359–59

¹⁵ Rhodes, Kimberly. 2008. *Ophelia and Victorian Visual Culture: Representing Body Politics in the Nineteenth Century*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate

Sherman¹⁶ on the performance style of Brahms's works, Yi-Yeon Park's¹⁷ comparative research of the Ophelia text, and the many writings on the topic of Ophelia's mental state, an analysis of Brahms's work will be achieved so that young singers have a foundation to understand and interpret the work and so more advanced singers have a deeper understanding of the dramatic connection between the character and music.

Methodology

The methodology for this document will begin by forming an understanding of the music and character of Ophelia. This will include a formal analysis of each piece in the set, as well as poetic text translations. An analysis will be provided of Ophelia's character and how her state of mind is portrayed within the melodic and harmonic lines of the music. This will be followed by comparative research on the Ophelia text through examining how other composers treated the same text, specifically in the works of Berlioz and Richard Strauss. I will then look at the performance practice of Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder*, including source materials pertaining to the first performance of the set and any subsequent performances. Research of the cultural context in which the piece was written will include a look at Brahms's Germany, incidental music being commissioned for theater companies at the time, and how the 19th-century viewed the character of Ophelia.

In the analysis portion of this document, I will be analyzing the harmonic make-up of each piece in the set as well as the larger harmonic arc. A larger analysis will include key relations between each piece and an overarching tonal analysis of the set as a whole. I will also

¹⁶ Musgrave, Michael, and Bernard D. Sherman. *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*. Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Print

¹⁷ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. D. Mus: Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2013

include a poetic translation of the text of each piece. This portion of the document will also include a character analysis. This will involve a psychological study of Ophelia and how the melodic and harmonic components of each piece portray her varying levels of madness.

The next portion of the research document will be comprised of information pertaining to the cultural context in which the set was written. This will include the letters written between Brahms and Lewinsky and any other source material, including other letters written about the *Ophelia Lieder*. I will also include research relating to incidental music written for Shakespeare plays during the 19th-century and examine the literature surrounding those pieces; this will include a comparison of those works to Brahms's piece. In the last portion of the document, I will look at the performance practice of Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder*. First, I will research the initial performance of the set, looking at reception and any source material from the original singer. I will then look at what happened to the piece after the first performance; when it was published, who, of note, has performed the set, and a performance analysis to provide options for singers who want to perform the set. These three larger portions of the research document will contribute to the scholarship relating to Brahms's lied output.

Need for Study

Due to the increase in research concerning not just Brahms, but also works by well-known and not so well-known composers, one would assume that attention would be paid to the lesser known compositions; this is not the case with Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*. As stated previously, this song cycle is largely overlooked by the musicological and performance communities presumably because it does not necessarily fit within the typical compositional and poetic constructs of most of Brahms's lied. As stated by Jerri Lamar Kantack¹⁸ in his dissertation

¹⁸ Kantack, Jerri Lamar. "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia." Order No. 9403317 The University of Alabama, 1993. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017. p.29

comparing the works of five composers who set the Ophelia text, “Brahms’s lieder were written in order to create musical worth, not necessarily to serve the text of the poetry.” Brahms was first and foremost a great technician and chose lesser known poems that spoke to him on an emotional level and then “clothed them in matching music.”¹⁹ To me, this is the perfect reason to study the set and provide a comprehensive look at arguably one of Brahms’s simplest and yet challenging song cycles; the set was not necessarily written for musical worth, but to serve the text, unlike many, if not all of his previous lieder.

This work is not only captivating because of its simplicity, but also because Brahms left the performer with plenty of room to interpret each song as they feel the character would. There are very few extra-musical markings within the work which allows the performer to experiment with tempi specifically. The lack of tempi markings allows for the piece to either have the feeling of a madrigal if performed at a faster tempo or a Romantic Era lied that sounds typical of Brahms if performed at a slower tempo. Varying the tempi for each song will allow the performer to portray Ophelia’s madness in many ways, possibly by slowing the tempo down when she is lucid and speeding it up when she is in her mad state, or vice versa.

This set is also a wonderful teaching tool for students who haven’t delved into singing German yet. The songs are mostly syllabic which is helpful when focusing on diction and there aren’t too many wide leaps in the melodic line; helpful for beginning singers who are working on singing legato lines. The set is also great for working on dramatic connection and character portrayal outside of an operatic aria, something an advanced singer can work on.

Brahms’s *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* is a variance within his lieder compositions not only because of its service to the poetry, but also because of its simplicity and vagueness. The folk-

¹⁹ Sams, Eric. *The Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 2000 p. 2

like songs have very little extra-musical markings, the melodic lines are mainly step-wise and syllabic, but the text and emotions are brought out in a stark contrast to all of that. There is so much to uncover in this music that it is surprising to me that there is so little written about it. As previously stated, many books written about Brahms and his lieder specifically, tend to glaze over or forget about his *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*. Eric Sams²⁰ provides a short paragraph on the background of the set and some analysis and the dissertations of Dr. Kantack and Dr. Odom²¹ provide brief comparisons with the other more well-known settings of the Shakespeare text, but there is not a source that provides substantial information about Brahms's composition. My goal with this research project is to offer such a text.

Limitations

There are many problems in such a project, which undoubtedly explains the lack of scholarship pertaining to this set of songs. The first problem is that there are so few books or articles that take an in-depth look at Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* and because of this, many voice teachers and students have never heard of the set. There are many Brahms and lieder anthologies that go into great depth about the more well-known pieces by Brahms, but these books tend to glaze over the less interesting or less performed pieces. In many books, on Brahms in particular, the *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* barely garner a paragraph. These paragraphs serve as a reminder that Brahms wrote a set based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and was written at the request of an actor friend of his. The scholarship on Brahms and his *Ophelia Lieder* rarely explore past a surface look.

²⁰ Sams, Eric. *The Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 2000

²¹ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia*. , 1991. Print

The songs are also under performed not just by elite, well-known singers, but also by students. This collection of songs is a perfect introduction to the German language for younger singers and provide a dramatic challenge for beginning singers as well as advanced singers. The songs are included in *The Lieder Anthology: High Voice*²² which is a great start to introducing the set into standard repertoire, but it is unfortunately buried within a list of Brahms's most popular lied; the songs get overlooked in the search for titles that are more well-known to singers; I am guilty of overlooking them countless times, having never heard of them.

Just as there is limited scholarship and performances of the set, there are also limited professional recordings of the songs. As singers, especially beginning singers, we tend to listen to many different interpretations of a piece as we're learning it and since there are few professional recordings of Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* it is difficult to research performance practice and interpretive ideas. There is so much that can be done musically and dramatically with this piece, but figuring out what would be appropriate, stylistically, or getting creative ideas from other sources is something that is difficult for this piece in particular; something I hope to rectify.

These songs, with their syllabic melodic lines, simple contour, small range, and short duration are perfect for young singers, so it is odd that there isn't more research pedagogically or otherwise. The set is looked-over not only by singers, but also by scholars due to its seemingly simplistic writing, how it came to be written, and that it is not worth much of a mention in any musical or historical anthologies. This is the main and most important limitation of this project, the general lack of any in-depth research on the *Ophelia Lieder*.

²² *The Lieder Anthology*, Edited by Virginia Saya, 50-55. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003.

CHAPTER 2: PERFORMANCE STYLE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Brahms Performance Styles

In a letter to Brahms in 1885, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg wrote of one of Brahms's lied:

*How perfectly the words and music are blended in their deep emotion, their lovely animation! Such loving care has been lavished on every detail, and each tiny variant has its calculated effect in rendering the particular part more impressive.*²³

This statement, while referring to a particular lied, could pertain to any number of Brahms's lieder output. Brahms, according to his only student Gustav Jenner, spent many hours getting to know the text of his songs intimately so that he could accurately set the rhythms and cadences of the poetry to music, saying that "the music must reflect the structure and meaning of the original form, musical and verbal syntax, declamation, word painting, and harmony."²⁴

Form was the first thing Brahms considered when setting a poem to music. Jenner emphasizes that "Brahms believed that the musical structure of a lied should correspond to its text."²⁵ In his folk-song influenced lieder, his Ophelia songs included, a strophic form was used where successive verses are repeated to the same tune. Brahms would then look at punctuation in order to determine melodic contouring and cadences. Jenner wrote:

*Just as the poet, in his purposeful construction, ties his sentences more or less closely together using commas, semicolons, periods, etc., as his external signs, so the musician, similarly, has at his disposal perfect and imperfect cadences in a variety of forms to indicate the greater or lesser degree of coherence of his musical phrases.*²⁶

²³ *The Cambridge Companion to the Lied* ed. James Parsons. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

²⁴ Parsons 185.

²⁵ *Ibid* 186.

²⁶ Parsons 190.

An example of this is seen below in Brahms's first song of the *Ophelia Lieder* (Ex. 2.1) where the song cadences in measure 3 on a half cadence in F major and then cadences in measure 6 on a Bb minor perfect cadence.

Example 2.1 Brahms, "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb vor den andern nun?" from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

I

Andante con moto

1. Wie er - kenn' ich dein — Treu - lieb — vor den an - dern nun?
 2. Er ist lan - ge tot — und hin, tot und hin, Fräu - lein!

An dem Mu - schel - hut — und Stab — Und den San - dal - schuh'n
 Ihm zu Häup - ten ein Ra - sen — grün, — ihm zu Fuß ein Stein.

p

riten.

Other typical characteristics of Brahms's art songs include: common use of third and sixth intervals in the accompaniment and vocal line (see Example 2.2a), conservative use of vocal range with motion largely by conjunct intervals (as seen in Example 2.2b), and accompaniment and rhythmic figurations being used as devices for variety and to support the voice.

Example 2.2a Brahms, “Und kommt er nicht meh zurück” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

Con moto

1. Und kommt er nicht mehr zu - rück? Und kommt er nicht mehr zu -
 2. Sein Bart war so weiß wie Schnee. sein Haupt dem Flach - se

poco f

rück? Er ist tot. o weh! In dein To - des - bett
 gleich: Er ist hin. ist hin. und kein Leid bringt Ge -

geh. er kommt ja nim - mer. nim - mer. nim - mer zu - rück.
 winn: Gott helf ihm ins Him - mel reich. ins Him - mel - reich!

Example 2.2b Brahms, “Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee zu sehn” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

II

Sein Lei - chen-hemd weiß wie Schnee zu sehn. ge - ziert mit Blu - men - se - gen. das

un - be - trant - zum Grab muß gehn von Lie - bes - re - gen.

Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder*, while seemingly simple in form and melodic content, is a tour de force for the singer to portray Ophelia. Brahms leaves plenty of room for the singer to interpret the songs musically and dramatically. Edward T. Cone describes the ideal lied performance as:

The legitimate interpretation, the 'faithful' performance for which every singer should strive, is the one in which the two aspects of person and persona fuse... The vocal persona may be of various kind – protagonist, character, etc., but, barring the unlikely possibility that we now ever witness the actual creation of natural song by its composer-performer, the persona is never identical to the singer – Mr. X or Miss Y there on the stage – becomes the 'composer', the experiencing subject of the song.²⁷

²⁷ Van, Rij I. *Brahms's Song Collections*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.: 148

In Brahms's time this was the accepted approach to performing lieder, one in which "the singer becomes the character." This approach was taught by many teachers as they recommended that students pick songs that speak to them on a soulful level, not songs that fit their voice.²⁸ Singers and composers of the 20th century still follow this approach to some extent. Robert Spillman states that "the singer becomes the persona of each song and must be willing and able to open up, become confessional, intimate, vulnerable; he or she must make eye contact – if the text calls for it – with members of the audience in order to communicate sincerely...If a singer likes to move around, he or she should do so."²⁹ Lotte Lehman, a prolific composer of the 20th and 21st century said about Brahms's *Von ewiger Liebe* that even in the interludes "you are still he – you are still seething with revolt, with the desire to break away..."³⁰

According to Friedländer, Brahms's own views on the dramatic element of lieder performance are unclear. Brahms did state to Friedländer that the color of the voice as it portrays the mood is favorable. A combination of vocal color, expression, connection, and gesture are needed for the portrayal of Ophelia. The singer should bring his or her own experiences and understanding to the character, but not rely solely on vocal color, although it is a helpful approach when switching between lucid Ophelia and grief-stricken Ophelia. The singer must connect, in some way, with the character to be able to dramatically and vocally portray Ophelia's madness.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Van. 149

³⁰ Ibid.

Historical Context

Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* was composed in 1873 to the German translation of the Shakespeare text by August Wilhelm von Schlegel. Brahms's good friends, Josef Lewinsky and Olga Precheisen, both actors at the Burgtheater in Germany, requested a setting of Ophelia's songs for Precheisen to perform at the Deutsches Landestheater in Prague³¹. Lewinsky wrote to Brahms on November 18th saying:

*Frl. Precheisen and I urgently request that you fulfill your kind promise and write down the musical expression that seems to you appropriate for the songs of Ophelia. I would add that the Fräulein is rather musical and that her voice is a mezzo-soprano. She is extraordinarily successful in these parlando songs, especially in the deeper register [of her voice] ...*³²

Brahms agreed to compose the songs for Precheisen and on November 29th, 1873 Lewinsky wrote as follows:

*Brahms is a dear fellow. He has kept his word and has composed the Ophelia songs. He has written a piano accompaniment for them so that you may learn them [more easily] ... Do you want to come to Vienna and study with him? Then we would have an opportunity right away. He is not sure whether you'll like the songs; he is of the opinion that, on the stage, something simple often makes a greater effect. But you will surely get used to this and the folk-song manner [in which they are conceived]. Preserve the manuscript well, for it has a high value as an autograph.*³³

Precheisen first performed the songs in 1873 as Ophelia with Lewinsky playing Hamlet. However, Precheisen did not use the songs after her performance, possibly because she didn't receive good reviews, but she kept the music and in 1935 allowed Karl Geiringer to publish the songs for the first time.³⁴

³¹ Geiringer, Karl, and George S. Bozarth. *On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies*. Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2006. 389

³² Ibid. 390

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. 391

According to Karl Geiringer, Lewinsky's letter to Precheisen "contains practically everything that can be said about these songs." Brahms's use of simple, folk-like melodies fit the Old English of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Ophelia's songs are to be performed in the style of Volkslied or "folksong" and were traditionally sung a cappella. Brahms's setting was to be performed a cappella as well, but he did provide accompaniment for study and independent performance; which is how the songs are presented today. The songs are suggestive of the melodic and simple piano accompaniments of Brahms's folk-song arrangements. Geiringer offers a comparison of the first Ophelia song, *Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb* to Brahms's setting of the German ballade *Vom verwundeten Knaben* to fully understand the folk-like piano accompaniments in his Ophelia songs. The songs share a similar accompaniment style that evokes the Volkslied. This can be seen below in Ex. 2.3a and 2.3b.

Example 2.3a Brahms's "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb" from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* mm. 1-3

I

Andante con moto

1. Wie er - kenn' ich dein — Treu - lieb — vor den an - dern nun?
 2. Er ist lan - ge tot — und hin. tot und hin. Frä u - lein!

Example 2.3b Brahms's "Vom verwundeten Knaben" from *Lieder und Romanzen, Op. 14* mm 1-4

Andantino

1. Es wollt ein Mä-d-chen früh auf - stehn
als sie nun in den grü-nen Wald kam,
Knab, der war von Blut so rot,

p

Hamlet Synopsis

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was first performed on board an East India Company ship in 1607, being very popular with the crew. Since that performance, its "success and popularity has continued unabated",³⁵ having been performed in front of King James in 1619, King Charles in 1637, and has "rarely been off the stage throughout the 400 years since it was written."

Most researchers base current editions of *Hamlet* on the three versions of the play. Two of those versions were staged while William Shakespeare was still alive and the third came about after his death. The first version contains 240 more lines than the second version, which was published in 1604 and is more polished than the first. Researchers and actors base modern interpretations mostly on this second version.

The play follows the Prince of Denmark, Hamlet, as he returns home to mourn the death of his father, King Hamlet. Once home, he learns of the marriage of his mother, Gertrude, to his Uncle, King Hamlet's brother, Claudius, who is now the new King of Denmark. Soon after, a ghost appears to guards on their watch and to Hamlet's friend Horatio who believes the ghost to be King Hamlet. He invites Hamlet to wait with him in hopes that the ghost will reappear. When it does, it beckons Hamlet to follow him and reveals that his brother Claudius poisoned him, to which Hamlet vows to avenge his father's murder.

In the meantime, Laertes, son of the King's advisor Polonius, is preparing to leave for France, but before he leaves he tells his sister Ophelia to be careful of Hamlet and his affections, a sentiment Polonius, their father, echoes when he tells Ophelia to stay away from Hamlet. Hamlet, on the other hand, has begun acting very strange which causes King Claudius and

³⁵ www.rsc.org.uk/hamlet/

Gertrude to become worried. Claudius and Polonius ask Ophelia to reject Hamlet's advances to see how he will react; Hamlet quickly figures out what is going on.

After having a troupe of performers put on a play reenacting King Hamlet's murder, Hamlet goes to his mother's room where he hears someone behind a curtain. Hamlet stabs the spy and soon realizes that he has killed Polonius. Ophelia goes mad with grief. Laertes learns it was Hamlet who killed his father and plots with Claudius to kill Hamlet by poisoning the tip of his sword. Should Laertes die in the duel, Claudius will poison a cup of wine to ensure Hamlet's demise. It is at this time that Gertrude enters to announce Ophelia's death.

During the duel between Laertes and Hamlet, Gertrude drinks from the poisoned cup, unknowingly, and dies just as Hamlet is wounded with the poisoned sword, as is Laertes. As Laertes dies, he confesses Claudius' plan to kill Hamlet. Hamlet then stabs Claudius as he too dies, and the play comes to an end.

Of everything that takes place during this play, one of the most memorable scenes is that of Ophelia's mad scene. Ophelia's songs portray her isolation as she tries to process what has happened to her. The chaos of her mind has caused her to rid herself of all societal restrictions as she sings freely about the death of her father.

Due to the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, *Hamlet* was able to make its way to Europe. In 1827 an English acting troupe performed *Hamlet* at the Odéon Theatre in Paris where many artists were in attendance.³⁶

³⁶ Tipton, Jennifer Leigh. "A Document in Death and Madness: A Cultural and Interdisciplinary Study of Nineteenth-Century Art Song Settings on the Death of Ophelia." Order No. 3583931 The University of Southern Mississippi, 2014. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017.

Berlioz, who was in the audience, enjoyed the production so much, saying:

*This sudden and unexpected revelation of Shakespeare overwhelmed me. The lightening-flash of his genius revealed the whole heaven of art to me, illuminating its remotest depths in a single flash. I recognized the meaning of real grandeur, real beauty, and real dramatic truth.*³⁷

In Germany, August Wilhelm Schlegel had been translating Shakespeare plays since 1790 with Ludwig Tieck taking over the work. Schlegel's goal was to adhere to the original text as closely as possible. These translations became the standard edition for German productions³⁸ and the text used by the great German composers of the Romantic era. Yi-Yeon Park, in his dissertation on the German, French, and English vocal settings of Ophelia states that "all of the various states which occur in the human psyche attracted German Romantics, including madness."³⁹ He goes on to state that "the abnormal and insane nature that had been restrained in its expression throughout the Classical period came into the spotlight in the 19th century."⁴⁰ Of course, the character of Ophelia and her mad scene became a favorite text to set to music. The German's especially tried to show her confusion, grief, and inner turmoil rather than draw a picture of her mental state, as was the purview of the French Romantics. This is superbly demonstrated in Strauss's and Berlioz's works.

³⁷ Berlioz, Hector. *Memoirs of Hector Berlioz: from 1803-1865*, annotated and translated by Ernest Newman (New York: Dover, 1966), 66.

³⁸ Williams, Simon. *Shakespeare on the German Stage: Volume 1: 1586-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 150-51

³⁹ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. D. Mus: Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2013.

⁴⁰ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. D. Mus: Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, 2013.

Ophelia Fascination

The character of Ophelia has fascinated writers, painters, and composers since she first appeared on stage. From her first appearance to modern day, “Ophelia has been used to both reflect and challenge evolving ideas about the female psychology and sexuality”.⁴¹ Her innocence in life and death mesmerized the arts community worldwide and her madness has intrigued the leading composers of the nineteenth century and beyond.

Ophelia exists only because of Hamlet; her story revolving solely around her love. She is defined by the men in her life: the daughter of Polonius, sister of Laertes, and romantic interest of Hamlet. Lee Edwards, a feminist critic states that “we can imagine Hamlet’s story without Ophelia, but Ophelia has no story without Hamlet.” Despite her limited narrative, she is one of the most represented of Shakespeare’s heroines in painting, music, literature, and popular culture. “She has moved from the shadows as Hamlet’s female counterpart to a strong feminist heroine”.⁴²

In Shakespeare’s time, Hamlet was the model of “depressive” masculinity associated with genius, while Ophelia’s madness was attributed to lovesickness caused by her bottled-up desires and her loneliness. During the eighteenth century, a time of chasteness, Ophelia’s songs, within Shakespeare’s plays, were censored because they were deemed too risqué. She began being portrayed on the stage as stately and sentimental.⁴³ Her grief no longer drove her to madness, but instead, she became a calm and serene woman. However, the Romantics embraced

⁴¹ Showalter, Elaine. “Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 78.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Showalter, Elaine. “Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985), 78.

her madness and sexuality. French painters such as Delacroix showed, as Elaine Showalter puts it, a “strong romantic interest in the relation of female sexuality and insanity.” His most influential painting, *La Mort d’Ophélie*, portrays Ophelia hanging by a branch over the river with her dress falling from her shoulders. Romantic artists were particularly inspired by Gertrude’s description of Ophelia’s death, seen here:

*There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook.
Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.⁴⁴*

Jennifer Leigh Tipton states in her dissertation on nineteenth century settings of Ophelia’s mad scene:

This return to the natural elements via water is in line with romantic notions of transcendence, which can be interpreted as either glorious or tragic.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Shakespeare, William, and Susanne L. Wofford. *Hamlet: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical and Historical Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Five Contemporary Critical Perspectives*. Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994. Print.

⁴⁵ Tipton, Jennifer Leigh. "A Document in Death and Madness: A Cultural and Interdisciplinary Study of Nineteenth-Century Art Song Settings on the Death of Ophelia." Pd.D diss.: The University of Southern Mississippi, 2014. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017, 25.

Psychiatrists in the nineteenth century, according to Showalter, used Ophelia as a case study in hysteria in sexually turbulent adolescence. Even Sigmund Freud studied the ‘hysteric’ episodes of Ophelia.

*The Victorian Ophelia – a young girl passionately and visibly driven to picturesque madness – became the dominant international acting style for the next 150 years” from 1871 until 1948.*⁴⁶

Ophelia was still studied by psychologists well into the 20th-century. The Ophelia Syndrome was introduced in Mary Pipher’s *Reviving Ophelia*.⁴⁷ Dr. Pipher argues that the same pressures Ophelia the character faces are mirrored in teenage girls today; they are defined by the façade and not by their true selves.

The Ophelia of the 20th-century is often portrayed as a heroine who is rebelling against society. Showalter provides an example of this with Melissa Murray’s political play *Ophelia* (1979). In her version of *Hamlet*, Ophelia runs off to join a feminist guerrilla commune. Ophelia has also been portrayed in young-adult romance novels where she pretends to be mad and fakes her own death in order to survive Hamlet and her controlling father and brother to choose her own path free of male influences.⁴⁸ Her madness has been portrayed in so many ways in history’s attempt to understand her psyche. Her madness and sexuality are the two most prevalent aspects of her character that have fascinated painters, composers, and writers since Shakespeare put her on paper.

⁴⁶ Showalter, Elaine. “Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism,” in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen, 1985).

⁴⁷ Pipher, Mary. *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. Riverhead Books, 1994

⁴⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3: BRAHMS *FÜNF OPHELIA LIEDER*

I. *Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb*

German Text and Poetic Translation⁴⁹

<i>Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb</i>	How should I your true love know
<i>Vor den andern nun?</i>	From another one?
<i>An dem Muschelhut und Stab</i>	by his cockle hat and staff,
<i>Und den Sandalschuh 'n.</i>	and his sandal shoon.
<i>Er ist lange tot und hin,</i>	He is dead and gone,
<i>Tot und hin, Fräulein!</i>	dead and gone, lady!
<i>Ihm zu Häupten ein Rasen grün,</i>	at his head a grass-green turf,
<i>Ihm zu Fuß ein Stein.</i>	at his heels a stone.

The first song in Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* is a combination of Ophelia's first two songs from her Act 4 entrance in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The text, as seen above, is a dialogue between a woman who has lost her love and a stranger whom is met on the road. The tune sung in the play is typically referred to as the "Walsingham" ballad as it is sung to a sixteenth century tune by the same name. Brahms would likely have known of this tune as it was copied down early in the nineteenth century by William Linley and Samuel Arnold from the dictation of actresses who had played Ophelia.⁵⁰ Brahms keeps the tradition of using an old melody with new text by writing his version with heavy influences in folksong.

This song, in Bb minor, is written in a two-part strophic form with verse one asking the question: "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb vor den andern nun?" and verse two answering with:

⁴⁹*The Lieder Anthology*, Edited by Virginia Saya, 50-55. Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 2003.

⁵⁰ Sternfeld, Frederick W, and William Shakespeare. *Music in Shakespearian Tragedy*. Routledge, 2005.

“*Er ist lange tot und hin, tot und hin, Fräulein!*”⁵¹ with the first phrase cadencing on a V chord in mm. 3 asking a musical and lyrical question and the second phrase cadencing in Bb minor (I) in mm. 6 creating a finality to the answer shown in example 3.1. This is a very simple song with the melodic lines consisting of leaps by no more than a third or fourth. It should be noted that this is one of two songs with a tempo marking.

Example 3.1 Brahms, “Wie erkenn’ ich dein Treulieb vor den andern nun?” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures 1-6

1 Andante con moto

1. Wie er - kenn' ich dein Treu - lieb vor den an - dern nun?
 2. Er ist lan - ge tot und hin, tot und hin. Fräulein!

p

Bb m: i 6 i vii V IV i7 II - V 6

4

An dem Mu - schel - hut und Stab Und den San - dal - schuh'n
 ihm zu Häup - ten ein Ra - sen grün ihm zu Fuß ein Stein.

riten.

II V i -

⁵¹ Translation: “How should I your true love know from another one?” “He is dead and gone, dead and gone, lady!”

The text and melodic simplicity of this song supply the singer with a solid foundation to portray the madness in which Ophelia has sunk. She has just lost her father who was killed by her lover and because of this is deep in grief and confused about what to think about Hamlet. She is recalling old songs from her childhood that seem to also have relevance to her current situation. This song can be interpreted at its most basic level as a girl who is mourning her father, but upon further research Ophelia, through her grief, is accusing Queen Gertrude, Hamlet's mother, of a wrong she has committed. Ophelia is finally expressing how she truly feels about the death of King Hamlet and Gertrude's subsequent marriage to his brother, Claudius.

The melody has a lilting manner to it, manifested in the 4/4- and 6/4-time signatures, that could represent a trance-like state. This is also supported by the dotted rhythms at the end of each phrase. If these songs were to be performed within the context of *Hamlet*, as was originally conceived, the performer could experiment with differing tempi within the time signatures to deliver an Ophelia who is lost in her grief and in the past. However, in a recital setting it would be best to follow the *andante con moto*⁵² tempo provided by Brahms and perhaps add some staging to reinforce Ophelia's mental state.

⁵² A musical term meaning "slowly with motion"

II. *Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee*

<i>Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee zu sehn,</i>	White his shroud as the mountain snow,
<i>Geziert mit Blumensegen</i>	larded with sweet flowers,
<i>Das unbetrünt zum Grab muß gehn</i>	which bewept to the grave did go
<i>Von liebesregen</i>	with true-love showers.

This second song in Brahms's set uses Ophelia's third song that consists of one line of verse. The song starts in F major and cadences three measures later in D minor, as shown in example 3.2a. The same can be said for the second phrase, which is also indicated in example 3.2a. The song is also in a two-part strophic form, just as the first song, but although in a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, the song has the feeling of a dirge. Here Brahms is characterizing Ophelia's madness by combining a dance-like rhythm and major key with funereal text and minor cadences. Ophelia is singing about her father's hasty burial; one of the few times in this set that she is possibly lucid.

The melodic line is quite lyrical with the first few measures outlining an F major chord in a dotted rhythm followed by a melodic D minor phrase that is conjunct and scale-like with legato phrasing. Brahms highlights the word "Liebes (love's)" by setting it to the longest melisma in the entire set, six notes in d minor (Ex. 3.2b.).⁵³

The singer could experiment with playing Ophelia as coming in and out of lucidity by singing the first two measures of the phrase with a light and bouncy rhythmic feel while singing the last two measures with a more legato line and slower tempo, as marked, perhaps coloring the voice in the same way. Although it is a short song, there is much that could be done to tell the story.

⁵³ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. Internet resource. Pg. 39

Example 3.2a Brahms, “Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

measures 1-8

II

Sein Lei - chen-hemd weiß wie Schnee zu sehn, ge - ziert mit Blu - men - se - gen, das

un - be - trant - zum Grab muß gehn von Lie - bes - re - gen.

F major D minor V i

F major D minor V i

Detailed description: This image shows the first system of a musical score for measures 1-8. It consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The vocal line has a melisma on the word 'Liebes' in measure 8. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. Roman numerals and chord names are provided for the first system: F major for measures 1-4 and D minor for measures 5-8. A vertical box highlights the final chord of measure 8, which is a D minor triad (V-i).

Example 3.2b Brahms, “Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

measures 5-8

un - be - trant - zum Grab muß gehn von Lie - bes - re - gen.

Detailed description: This image shows the second system of the musical score, focusing on measures 5-8. It includes the vocal line and piano accompaniment. A vertical box highlights the melisma on the word 'Liebes' in measure 8, showing the vocal line's movement from G4 to A4, B4, and C5. The piano accompaniment continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the first system.

III. *Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag*

*Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag,
Wohl an der Zeit noch früh,
Und ich, 'ne maid, am Fensterschlag
Will sein eu'r Valentin.*

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day,
all in the morning betime,
and I a maid at your window
To be your Valentine.

*Er war bereit, tät an sein Kleid,
Tät auf die Kammertür,
Ließ ein die Maid, die als 'ne Maid
Ging nimmermehr herfür.*

then up he rose, and down'd his clothes
and dupp'd the chamber door,
let in the Maid, that out a Maid
Never departed more.

*Bei unsrer Frau und Sankt Kathrein:
O pfui! was soll das sein!
Ein junger Mann tut's wenn er kann,
Beim Himmel s'ist nicht fein.*

By Gis and Saint Charity:
Alack! and fie for shame!
young men will do't, if they come to't,
By cock they are to blame.

*Sie sprach: eh' ihr gescherzt mit mir,
Gelobt ihr mich zu frein.
Ich brächs auch nicht, beim Sonnenlicht,
Wärst du nicht kommen rein.*

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.
so would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou badst not come to my bed.

The third song in Brahms's set "Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag" is in Bb major, the mirror of "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb" and is in a two-part strophic form with four verses, a true quatrain⁵⁴. Measures 1-12 (Example 3.3a, boxed) are very typical of Brahms's writing style

⁵⁴ A quatrain is a type of stanza consisting of four lines. The most traditional rhyme scheme for a quatrain is ABBA, but in Shakespeare's poem and the German translation by Tieck and Schlegel it takes on an ABAB form.

with a barcarole bass line of tonic and dominant repetitions and extensions of the melodic phrase in the accompaniment.⁵⁵

Example 3.3a Brahms, “Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

measures 1-12

III

Auf mor - gen ist Sankt Va - len - tins Tag, wohl an - der Zeit noch
war be - reit, tät an - sein Kleid, tät auf - die Kam - mer -

Bb M:

⁵⁵ Kantack, Jerri Lamar. "Romantic Musical Characterizations of Ophelia." Order No. 9403317 The University of Alabama, 1993. Ann Arbor: *ProQuest*. Web. 13 July 2017. p.33

5
früh, und ich, 'ne Maid, am Fen - ster - schlag will sein eu'r Val - len -
tür, ließ ein die Maid, die als 'ne Maid ging nim - mer - mehr her -

9
tin, will sein eu'r Va - len - tin, eu'r Val-len - tin. 2. Er
für, ging nim mer - mehr her - für, her - für. 3. Bei

DM C m F M Bb M

In Shakespeare's play, this song is sung to King Claudius, Hamlet's Uncle/Father who interrupts Ophelia to silence her. The song is quite bawdy, in my interpretation, and is something Ophelia may have heard as a child and is now remembering as her emotional state deteriorates. It is up to the singer to decide what tempo to take this song. If sung at a slightly faster tempo than the previous songs, it has a dance or folk song feel to it, much like that of the first song, and juxtaposes an air of innocence with the bawdy text.

Brahms's accompaniment represents the anxiety of Ophelia and the pitifulness of the story. This is represented by the dissonance of a minor 2nd in measures 9 and 21, on the longest note of the song (Ex. 3.3b). The barcarole figuration in the left hand creates a frantic feeling through the slight blurring of the bar lines. In measure 6, the vocal line repeats the beginning of the previous phrase but has a different accompaniment for the next three measures. For those

three measures the vocal line becomes very steady, demonstrated through repeated notes, while the accompaniment becomes much more active, in that it begins to rapidly modulate from BbM-CM-DM-Cm-FM-BbM (Ex. 3.3a-c).⁵⁶ This could signify some lucidity on Ophelia's part or could be portraying her increased agitation, through the accompaniment.

Example 3.3b Brahms, "Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag" from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*
measures 9-12; 18-21

tin. will sein eu'r Va-len-tin. eu'r Val-len-tin. Er
für. ging nich- mer-mehr her-für. her-für. Bei

Measures 18-21

jun-ger Mann tut's wenn er kann. beim Him-mel s'ist nicht fein. beim Him-
bräuchs auch nicht, beim Son-nen-licht. wärs du nicht kom-men rein. wärs du

⁵⁶ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. Internet resource. Pg. 40

Example 3.3c Brahms, “Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentins Tag” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*

measures 6-8

und ich. 'ne Maid. am Fen - ster - schlag will sein eu'r Val - len -
ließ ein die Maid. die als 'ne Maid ging nim - mer - mehr her -

BbM BbM EbM BbM CM

IV. *Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß*

<i>Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß,</i>	They bore him barefaced on the bier,
<i>Leider, ach leider!</i>	Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny!
<i>Und manche Trän 'fiel in Grabes Schoß.</i>	and in his grave rain'd many a tear.
<i>'Nunter, hinunter!</i>	You must sing a-down a-down!
<i>Und ruft ihr ihn 'nunter,</i>	and you call him a-down-a,
<i>Den trautlieb Fränzel ist all' meine Lust.</i>	For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

The fourth song, “*Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß*”, is a funereal dirge referring to Ophelia’s father’s death. It is in Ab major and is the only through-composed song in the set. This song has the “hey, nonny, nonny” text inserted twice between the phrases “*sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß*” and “*und manche Trän 'fiel in Grabes Schoß*” and then again before “*und ruft ihr ihn 'nunter*”. The Shakespearean text of “hey, nonny, nonny” is changed in the Schlegel-Tieck translation to “*leider, ach leider*” and “*‘Nunter, hinunter!*”⁵⁷ Each of these phrases occur on a tritone in mm. 3-4 and mm. 7-8 going from a Gb to a C natural possibly signifying Ophelia’s deep sorrow and foreshadowing her end. These two phrases are the only instances where she truly lets her grief show in full and Brahms musically portrays that through the tritone interval in the measures shown in example 3.4.

⁵⁷ The word for word translation of these phrases being “Unfortunately, alas” and “down, down”

Example 3.4 Brahms, “Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures 3-4 and 7-8 (onset of phrases boxed)

IV

p dolce

Sie tru - gen ihn auf der Bah - re bloß, lei - der, ach

p dolce

Ab M

Bb m

più p

Ab M

lei - der! Und man - che Trän' fiel in Gra - bes Schoß.

7

Ab M

'Nun - ter, hi - nun - ter! und ruft - ihr ihn 'nun - ter. Denn

**The piano accompaniment is missing from here to the end of the song in the manuscript and has been added by musicologist Karl Geiringer (1899-1989).*

Bb m

What is interesting is what occurs in mm. 1-2 and mm. 11-12. The melody and accompaniment are the same, but the words in mm. 11-12 are much more scandalous for a woman of the 16th century to be saying. In measures 1-2, Ophelia is singing about her father's burial, but in mm. 11-12 she sings the phrase "den trautlied Fränzel ist all' meine Lust" which translates in the Shakespearean text to "for bonny sweet Robin is all my joy." This is a fragment of a Robin Hood ballad most likely sung by Maid Marian in the Old Whitsuntide play.⁵⁸ These types of songs, "Bonny Robin", usually refer to lovers, unfaithfulness, or extra-marital affairs.⁵⁹ These innuendos would have been familiar to the 16th century audience.⁶⁰ This text is tacked on at the end of the dirge supporting the duality of Ophelia's madness: her father's murder and Hamlet's love and ultimate desertion. Brahms uses the same melodic line from mm. 1-2 for mm. 11-12 to allow Ophelia to remain innocent. She may just be recalling a portion of a song from her childhood or something she heard at court or is attempting to get the attention of her audience by singing something so audacious for a lady of the court. This can be seen in Example 3.5a-b.

⁵⁸ Seng, Peter J. *The vocal songs in the plays of Shakespeare; a critical history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1967. 149.

⁵⁹ Sternfeld, Frederick W. *Music in Shakespeare tragedy*. London: Dover Publications, 1967. 58

⁶⁰ Tan, Marcus. "A Document in Madness: Ophelia's Music of Insanity" Ph.D. diss.: Trinity College of Dublin, 2008. 8.

Example 3.5a Brahms, “Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures

1-3

IV

p dolce

Sie tru - gen ihn auf der Bah - re bloß. lei - der, ach

p dolce

Example 3.5b Brahms, “Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures

8-15

Nun - ter, hi - nun - ter! und ruft ihr ihn nun - ter. Denn

**The piano accompaniment is missing from here to the end of the song in the manuscript and has been added by musicologist Karl Geiringer (1899-1989).*

traut - lieb Frän - zel ist all' mei - ne Lust.

V. Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück?

Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück?

And will he not come again?

Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück?

And will he not come again?

Er ist tot, o weh!

No, no, he is dead!

In dein totesbett geh,

Go to thy death-bed,

Er kommt ja nimmer zurück.

He never will come again.

Sein Bart was so weiß wie Schnee,

His beard was as white as snow,

Sein Haupt dem Flachse gleich:

All flaxen was his poll:

Er ist hin, ist hin,

He is gone, he is gone,

Und kein Leid bringt Gewinn;

And we cast away moan;

Gott helf' ihm ins Himmelreich!

God ha' mercy on his soul!

The fifth and last song, “Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück” is sung without interruption in the play. Brahms’s setting is in f minor, but alternates between the tonic and mediant Ab major, cadencing in the mediant in mm. 2 and 4 and in f minor in mm. 6 and 10, shown in example 3.6. The song is in a strophic AABBC form with both verses using the complete text from the play.

Example 3.6 Brahms, “Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück?” from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures 1-10

1-10

Con moto V

1. Und kommt er nicht mehr zu rück? Und kommt er nicht mehr zu -
 2. Sein Bart war so weiß wie Schnee, sein Haupt dem Flach - se

poco f

fm Bbm AbM fm Bbm

rück? Er ist tot, o weh! In dein To - des - bett
 gleich: Er ist hin, ist hin, und kein Leid bringt Ge -

AbM DbM gbm Bbm DbM EbM

geh, er kommt ja nim - mer, nim - mer, nim - mer zu - rück.
 winn; Gott helf' ihm ins Him - mel - reich, ins Him - mel - reich!

DbM em7 EbM DbM Cm CM7 fm

This song is also a dirge and employs the same techniques used to convey Ophelia's grief that he has used in previous songs in this set. This can be seen in example 3.7 where measures 1-2 repeat exactly in measures 3-4 creating an echo effect that also conveys some of Ophelia's unraveling. She is repeating phrases possibly trying to grasp at reality. Brahms also uses the second tempo marking of the set, the first being in "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb". The *con moto* marking adds more to the air of Ophelia's craziness; she is now singing about her father's death, repeating phrases, and the song has movement to it, not funereal as the text would suggest.

Example 3.7 Brahms, "Und kommt er nicht mehr zurück?" from *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* measures 1-7

Con moto

V

1. Und kommt er nicht mehr zu - rück? Und kommt er nicht mehr zu -
 2. Sein Bart war so weiß wie Schnee, sein Haupt dem Flach - se

poco f

4

rück? Er ist tot, o weh! In dein To - des - bett
 gleich: Er ist hin, ist hin, und kein Leid bringt Ge -

CHAPTER 4: COMPARISONS TO R. STRAUSS AND BERLIOZ

Brahms is not the only composer of the 19th century to set songs to the text of Ophelia's mad scene. Many composers such as, Schumann, Saint-Saëns, Chausson, Berlioz, and Strauss also set the famous scene. This section will focus on two of the more well-known settings, Strauss's *Drei Lieder der Ophelia* and Berlioz's *La mort d'Ophelie*. These settings will be compared to those of Brahms and will look at how each composer chose to portray Ophelia's extreme grief and madness through translation choices and melodic and harmonic content in order to aid in the understanding of Ophelia as a character and to bring depth to the dramatic and musical portrayal of Brahms's setting. As previously stated, it is important for a performer, when researching a piece, to know if other settings of the text and/or topic exist. Berlioz's setting of Gertrude's description of Ophelia's death provides a context for what happens after Ophelia leaves and how that is described within the play. Berlioz's setting gives the performer a glimpse into Ophelia's psyche and her relationship with Queen Gertrude.

As stated in the previous chapter, Brahms's setting was for a specific purpose, the stage. His songs were sung in place of Shakespeare's original Ophelia songs in a German production of *Hamlet*. Therefore, the songs are folk-like in nature and are broken up into the five individual songs so that they may each fit within the theatrical scene. Brahms employs nostalgia through these songs in the form of folk-like melodies and a strophic structure to create Ophelia's character. He uses melodies with a narrow compass to reflect her anxiety and melancholy. Karl Geiringer states that

In spite of their conciseness, due to their employment in the drama, and the simple accompaniment, consisting principally of chords, they evoke the sinister atmosphere of the tragedy. In the whole melancholy cycle only the third song, which assumes the role of a soothing

*trio, strikes a somewhat brighter note. In this piece, with its dance-like, rocking accompaniment, and the tender, simple melody, the composer's individual note is clearly audible.*⁶¹

Through Brahms, the songs become a reminiscing of an earlier time in Ophelia's life, a sort of fleshing out of her character, representing the regression of her mind. In Brahms's songs, Ophelia remains harmless, sweet, tragic, and pitied.

Richard Strauss's *Drei Lieder der Ophelia*

Richard Strauss's *Drei Lieder der Ophelia* are the first three songs in his Op. 67. The songs are set to Karl Joseph Simrock's translation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as opposed to the Tieck-Schlegel translation used by Brahms. He set the text of all of Ophelia's songs, just as Brahms did, but he did not separate them into five individual pieces. Instead, his first song is a combination of "Wie erkenn' ich dein Treulieb" and "Sein Leichenhemd weiß wie Schnee zu sehn", his second song is the "St. Valentins Tag" and the third song is a combination of Ophelia's fourth and fifth songs, with some dialogue from the play inserted. Compared with Brahms's setting, Strauss's use of dissonance, syncopation, and chromaticism that is apparent in many of his compositions provides a stark contrast to the musically simple melodies that mark Brahms's Ophelia setting. It is interesting that Brahms and Berlioz chose to set such a tragic scene to beautiful, almost simplistic sounding music and Strauss chose to really bring out the grief and tragedy in his setting.

All three composers used different translations, but Berlioz chose to describe Ophelia's death through the eyes of Queen Gertrude rather than portray her madness through her songs as Brahms and Strauss chose. Berlioz uses text-painting in his accompaniment to symbolize the stream and quick modulations to create tension as Ophelia nears her death. In Brahms's setting,

⁶¹ Geiringer, Karl. *Brahms: His Life and Work*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961. 249-250

as stated previously, the songs are simple and with limited range, so the text will fit the poetic strophes. Everything else was left open to the creative juices of the performer. She would supply the madness, loneliness, anger, and grief that is needed. While Strauss provided everything the singer and listener needs to know about Ophelia's psyche within his accompaniments Berlioz, in true French Romantic fashion, paints the scene of Ophelia's death through the eyes of Gertrude with water illustrations. All three composers use some text painting within their settings to symbolize Ophelia's death and/or madness: Berlioz through his water figuration, Strauss through his use of chromaticism and a cappella sections, and Brahms through his simplicity.

In the first song of Strauss's *Drei Lieder der Ophelia*, "Wie erkenn' ich mein Treulieb", there is a text difference between the Simrock and the Tieck-Schlegel translations. Simrock changed the word *dein* (your), found in the Tieck-Schlegel translation used by Brahms, to *mein* (mine), as shown in example 4.1. The song, due to this one-word change, suddenly becomes more personal rather than the telling of a story as in Brahms's setting. However, Ophelia's madness becomes much more prominent as she answers her own questions in the Simrock translation.⁶²

⁶² Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. 46.

Example 4.1 Strauss and Brahms translation differences in “Wie erkenn’ ich mein Truelieb”

Richard Strauss, Op. 67 № 1
Ophelia (im Wahnsinn)

Gesang *Leicht bewegt*

Piano *p*

Wie er-kenn ich mein
Treu - lieb vor an - dern nun?
An dem Mu-schel-hut und

I

Andante con moto

1. Wie er - kenn' ich dein — Treu - lieb — vor den an - dern nun?
2. Er ist lan - ge tot — und hin. — tot und hin. Fräü - lein!

The first song begins with a rhythmic ostinato, almost drone-like figure in the left hand of the accompaniment and in the second measure, seen in Example 4.2a, the “right hand begins a wandering chromatic melody that is echoed by the vocal line and is an effective tool for blurring

tonality, giving the song an unstable harmonic base.”⁶³ This ostinato in the left hand portrays the instability of Ophelia’s mind through its syncopated rhythm and the instability of the chord itself. This is in stark contrast to Brahms’s relatively sparse accompaniment throughout the entirety of his setting, as seen in Example 4.2b.

⁶³ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia*. , 1991. Print 52.

Example 4.2a Strauss, “Wie erkenn’ ich mein treulieb” measures 1-20

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Drei Lieder der Ophelia

(Shakespeare, „Hamlet“)

Erstes Lied der Ophelia

Wie erkenn ich mein Treulieb vor andern nun

Richard Strauss, Op. 67 No 1

Ophelia (im Wahnsinn)

Gesang *Leicht bewegt*

Piano

Wie er-kenn ich mein

Treu - lieb vor an - dern nun? An dem Mu-schel-hut und

Stab und den San-dal - schuhn. ... Er ist tot und

lan - ge hin, tot und hin, Fräulein! Ihm zu Häup - ten

Example 4.2b Brahms, “Wie erkenn’ ich mein treulieb” measures 1-3

I

Andante con moto

1. Wie er - kenn' ich dein - Treu - lieb - vor den an - dern nun?
2. Er ist lan - ge tot - und hin - tot und hin. Fräu - lein!

Through his use of syncopation Strauss blurs the bar line, giving the song a sense of weightlessness and unpredictability. This continues through-out the piece until the accompaniment and melodic line have some coherence in mm. 51-54 in E major on the word *liebesschauern* (love-shower) set up by an A major chord in measure 50 on the words *o weh* (oh woe), as seen below in Example 4.3.

Example 4.3 Strauss, “Wie erkenn’ ich mein treulieb” measures 45-56

The musical score for Strauss's "Wie erkenn' ich mein treulieb" measures 45-56 is shown. The score is in E major and 3/4 time. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Sie gehn zu Gra - be naß, o weh! — vor Lie - bes - schau - - - ern." The piano part has a constant chromatic motif in the right hand. The score is marked with "sf" (sforzando) and "express." (espressivo). There are two boxes labeled "A M" and "E M" indicating tonal shifts.

This section is the only one marked by a clear tonality, E major. The definitive tonality on the word *liebesschauern* could suggest, according to Park, that Ophelia's madness can be cured by love.⁶⁴

The constant motif that is echoed through-out this first song that adds to the disoriented feeling first occurs in measure 2 (Ex. 4.4a-b). This chromatic melodic figure in the right hand of the accompaniment only stops during the E major section in mm. 50-54. It occurs again in m. 62 during the postlude. This motif seems to keep a tonal center from being established and prevents a final cadence at the end of the postlude adding to the utter madness of Ophelia. The constant

⁶⁴ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. 49.

repetition of the figure gives the listener a peak into Ophelia's mind and how warped and fun-house mirror like everything is for her. The final dissonance never resolves, symbolizing her inner conflict by refusing to allow harmonic rest.⁶⁵

Example 4.4a Strauss, "Wie erkenn' ich mein treulieb" measures 1-6

Richard Strauss, Op. 67 N°1

Ophelia (im Wahnsinn)

Gesang *Leicht bewegt*

Wie er-kenn ich mein

Piano *p*

⁶⁵ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia*. , 1991. Print 55.

Example 4.4b Strauss, “Wie erkenn’ ich mein treulieb” measures 62-76

The second song, “Guten Morgen, ‘s ist Sankt Valentinstag”, is set in 3/8 meter with the indication, *Lebhaft* (lively). The voice and piano begin together with a very frantic feeling due to the quick jumping between major and minor tonalities in the accompaniment as seen in example 4.5a. The octave jumps in the accompaniment symbolize the fragmented and confused state that Ophelia’s mind is in. She is telling a very bawdy story, but in the manner of someone who is in a manic state. Similar to Brahms’s treatment of this text seen in example 4.5b.

Example 4.5a Strauss, “Guten Morgen, ‘s ist Sankt Valentinstag” measures 1-11

Zweites Lied der Ophelia
Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag

Richard Strauss, Op. 67 No 2

Lebhaft 1

Gesang *Ophelia*

Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Va - len - tins - tag, so früh vor Son - nen - schein. Ich jun - ge

Piano

6

Maid — am Fen - ster - schlag will Eu - er Va - len - tin sein. Der

Example 4.5b Brahms, “Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentinstag” measures

Auf mor - gen ist Sankt Va - len - tins Tag, wohl an — der Zeit noch
war be - reit, tät an — sein Kleid, tät auf — die Kam - mer -

p

The constant dynamic shifts are another distinctive attribute of this song. There are very little “middle dynamic” markings throughout, besides the occasional crescendo and decrescendo. Strauss continually uses either a *p* or *f* marking throughout the song and combined with the rapid major/minor shifts and octave leaps in the accompaniment provides a dramatic look at the manic side of Ophelia’s grief.⁶⁶ This is something we do not see in Brahms’s setting of the text. Instead, Brahms focuses on the juxtaposition of Ophelia’s innocence versus the suggestive song she is singing. Odom suggests that Shakespeare uses this song as a mirror that Ophelia holds up to the other characters, forcing them to examine the wrongs they have done her.⁶⁷ Strauss does the same thing with the major/minor juxtapositions and by abruptly changing dynamics without text motivation. The song affects the emotions of the listeners however, Ophelia seemingly does not comprehend what she is saying. This is more of a crazed stream of consciousness for Ophelia in the play and in Strauss’s setting.

The postlude returns to the leaping motion of the first measures with three sudden measures of rest in mm. 69, 71, and 73, as seen in example 4.6. These whole measure rests are another instance of the instability within Ophelia. Strauss jars the listener out of hearing the expected motif with these silent sections. Strauss musically interprets the reactions that would come from King Claudius and Queen Gertrude upon seeing Ophelia singing such an unbecoming song.

⁶⁶ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. 53.

⁶⁷ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia*. , 1991. Print 58.

Example 4.6 Strauss, “Guten Morgen, ‘s ist Sankt Valentinstag” measures 63-76

Strauss's third song of the set, “Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß” combines both of the dirge texts with the “bonny sweet Robin” text. The three text changes are marked “with strong musical changes which illustrate abrupt changes in Ophelia’s demeanor.”⁶⁸ These strong musical changes are the same motif each time and are indicated with *sehr rasch und lustig* (very quickly and merrily) and *wieder langsamer* (again slowly), as seen in example 4.7a-c.

⁶⁸ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia*. , 1991. Print 58.

Example 4.7a Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 13-19

woh! mei-ne Tau - - - be!

pp *f*

sehr rasch und lustig

Mein jun-ger fri-scher Han-sel ist's,

p

Detailed description: This musical score excerpt covers measures 13 to 19. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment in 3/4 time, key of B-flat major. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'woh! mei-ne Tau - - - be!' and continues with 'Mein jun-ger fri-scher Han-sel ist's,'. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo) and *f* (forte). A tempo instruction 'sehr rasch und lustig' (very fast and lively) is placed above the vocal line for measures 14-15. The piano part includes various ornaments and articulations, such as triplets and slurs.

Example 4.7b Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 20-23

der mir ge - fällt - und kommt er nim-mer-mehr?

wieder langsamer (tempo primo)

f *dim.*

Detailed description: This musical score excerpt covers measures 20 to 23. It continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics 'der mir ge - fällt - und kommt er nim-mer-mehr?'. A tempo instruction 'wieder langsamer (tempo primo)' (again slower (first tempo)) is placed above the vocal line for measures 21-22. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings of *f* (forte) and *dim.* (diminuendo). The piano part features various chords and melodic lines, with some measures marked with a '2' indicating a second ending or a specific fingering.

Example 4.7c Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 35-37

The opening dirge text spans the first 15 measures in Eb minor in a repeating 6 bar phrase that ends with the phrase, “*fahr wohl, fahr wohl, meine Taube*” (farewell, farewell, my dove). This phrase is taken from Ophelia’s spoken text from the play and is immediately followed by the first musical shift in mm. 16-17.

The “bonny sweet Robin” song begins in measure 15 with a new dotted rhythm motif in Ab major that separates the dirge from the more risqué text. In this section, Strauss inserts an a cappella section in measures 17-19, seen in example 4.8, on the text “*Mein junger frischer Hansel ist’s*” (It is my young, fresh Hansel). The use of the a cappella section affords a feeling of vulnerability to Ophelia and the listener, as well.

Example 4.8 Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 13-19

The musical score for Example 4.8 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with the lyrics "wohl, meine Tau - be!" and the piano accompaniment. The piano part includes dynamic markings *pp* and *f*, and a section marked "sehr rasch und lustig". The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics "Mein jun-ger fri-scher Han-sel ist's" and the piano accompaniment, which includes a *p* marking. The score is in Eb minor, 3/4 time.

After the “bonny sweet Robin” text ends in measure 21, the second dirge text “*Und kommt er nimmermehr*” begins with a return to the original tempo and Eb minor key. Ophelia has returned to mourning her father and lost love. The musical material is the same as the first dirge text from mm. 26-34, until measure 35 when the music returns to the waltz of the “bonny sweet Robin” section. This time there are four distinct a cappella phrases, seen in example 4.9. These small a cappella phrases are echoed by the accompaniment making it seem as if Ophelia is talking to the piano or possibly to herself (Ex. 4.9).⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet*. , 2013. 57.

Example 4.9 Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 38-45

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1: The vocal line begins with the lyrics "weiß wie Schnee, sein Haupt". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *dim.*.

System 2: The vocal line continues with "wie Flachs da-zu. Er ist hin,". The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *p*.

System 3: The vocal line concludes with "er ist hin, kein Trau-ern bringt Ge-winn:". The piano accompaniment concludes with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *dim.* and *pp*.

The last section begins in m. 46 with the same chordal material from m. 21. The song ends with a definitive Eb major chord in the left hand that ends not only the song, but the entire cycle. This chord is traditionally used to represent peace or heaven⁷⁰ and “amplifies the finality of Ophelia’s madness as well as symbolizes her last exit in the play.”⁷¹

Although Strauss uses blurred tonality and shifts between major and minor keys to signify Ophelia’s grief and madness throughout the entire cycle, he does give her a glimmer of hope by ending the entire cycle in a definitive major key (Ex. 4.10).

Example 4.10 Strauss, “Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß” measures 50-55

The musical score for measures 50-55 of Strauss's "Sie trugen auf der Bahre bloß" is shown. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics "Dar-um bet ich! Gott sei mit euch!". The piano accompaniment (bottom staves) includes markings such as "immer ruhiger", "espress.", "sehr langsam", and "pp". A box at the bottom right indicates the final chord as "Eb M".

⁷⁰ Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet.*, 2013. 59.

⁷¹ Odom, Gale J. *Four Musical Settings of Ophelia.*, 1991. Print 58.

Hector Berlioz's, *La mort d'Ophélie*

Hector Berlioz and many other French composers chose the Ernest Legouv translation of Queen Gertrude's act IV monologue on Ophelia's death. Berlioz composed his *La mort d'Ophlie* in 1842 and published the song in 1848 in the collection *Album de chant de la gazette musicale*.

La mort d'Ophélie

Text by William Shakespeare, French translation by Ernest – Wilfrid Legouvé

*Auprès d'un torrent Ophélie
Cueillait, tout en suivant le bord,
Dans sa douce et tendre folie,
Des pervenches, des boutons d'or,
Des iris aux couleurs d'opale,
Et de ces fleurs d'un rose pale
Qu'on appelle des doigts de mort. Ah!*

Beside a stream, Ophelia
gathered along the bank,
in her sweet and tender madness,
some periwinkles, some buttercups,
some opal colored irises.
and some of those pale pink flowers
The one calls dead-men's finger. Ah!

*Puis, élevant sur ses mains blanches
Les rians trésors du matin,
Elle les suspendait aux branches,
Aux branches d'un saule voisin.
Mais trop faible le rameau plie,
Se brise, et la pauvre Ophélie
Tombe, sa guirlande à la main.*

Then lifting in her white hands
the mornings happy treasures,
she hung them on the branches,
On the branches of a nearby willow;
but, being too frail, the branch bent,
it broke, and the poor Ophelia
Fell, her garland in her hand.

*Quelques instants sa robe enflée
La tint encor sur le courant
Et, comme une voile gonflée,
Elle flottait toujours chantant,
Chantant quelque vieille ballade,
Chantant ainsi qu'une naïade
Née au milieu de ce torrent.*

Some moments, her robe spread-out
and bore her on the current,
and like a swelling sail,
she floated still singing,
singing some old ballade,
singing like a naiad
Born in the midst of that stream.

*Mais cette étrange mélodie
Passa, rapide comme un son.
Par les flots la robe alourdie
Bientôt dans l'abîme profond;
entraîna la pauvre insensée,
Laissant à peine commencée
Sa mélodieuse chanson. Ah!*

But this strange melody
Faded quickly like a passing sound;
the dress weighed down by the waters
soon into the deep abyss;
dragged down the poor mad-girl,
leaving hardly begun
Her melodious song. Ah!

Berlioz's *La mort d'Ophélie* follows the basic form of the poem with four balanced strophes that are linked to each other by the crying of Ophelia which serves as the refrain. This refrain consists of a sequence of appoggiaturas and is played by the piano and voice between each strophe, seen in example 4.11. As stated above, there are two characters portrayed in this piece: Queen Gertrude who is telling the story of Ophelia's death and Ophelia's voice singing snippets of melodies. This is somewhat echoed in the Brahms setting through the "*Leider, ach lieder*" text (Ex. 4.12) Measure 28 begins with the right-hand accompaniment playing the melody of Ophelia's refrain and is shortly followed in measure 29 with Ophelia herself singing.

Example 4.11 Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 26-30

The musical score for Example 4.11, Berlioz's *La mort d'Ophélie*, measures 26-30, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 26-28) shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "-pelle des doigts de mort." and "Ah!". The piano accompaniment features a sequence of appoggiaturas. The second system (measures 29-30) continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment includes a sequence of appoggiaturas. Dynamics include *pp*, *ppp*, and a crescendo.

Example 4.12 Brahms, “Sie trugen ihn auf der bahren Bloß measures 1-6

The musical score for Brahms' "Sie trugen ihn auf der bahren Bloß" measures 1-6 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5, then a half note D5. The piano accompaniment consists of broken chords in the right hand and a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand. The second system (measures 4-6) continues the vocal line with a half note D5, followed by quarter notes C5, Bb4, and A4, then a half note G4. The piano accompaniment continues with broken chords and a steady eighth-note bass line. The score includes dynamic markings *p dolce* and *piu p*, and a "1 V" marking above the first system. The lyrics are: "Sie tru - gen ihn auf der Bah - re bloß. lei - der. ach" and "lei - der! Und man - che Trän' fiel in Gra - bes Schoß."

The song, in Bb major and 6/8 time evokes a lullaby, creating a serene and calm atmosphere. This is aided by the barcarole rhythm in the accompaniment that symbolizes the stream in which Ophelia drowns as the vocal line gently floats above the sixteenth note broken chords (Ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13 Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 1-7

LA MORT D'OPHÉLIE

BALLADE

Poésie de ERNEST LEGOUVÉ
d'après SHAKESPEARE

TRISTIA
Op. 18 – N° II.
(1848)

And^{te} con moto quasi all^{to} (♩.=63) *p* sempre a mezza voce

CHANT

PIANO

Au - près d'un tor -

- rent O - phé - li - e Cueil - lait,

In m. 20 Berlioz begins to modulate to F minor (Ex. 4.14) at the mention of the pale purple flower (*et de ces fleurs d'un rose pale*) and is fully established in that key as Gertrude states that the flowers are called the fingers of death (*qu'on appelle des doigts de mort*), foreshadowing Ophelia's impending death.⁷²

⁷² Park, Yi-Yeon. *A Study of German, French and English Vocal Settings of Ophelia from Shakespeare's Hamlet.*, 2013. 65.

Example 4.14 Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 20-26

F minor

Et de ces fleurs d'un ro - se pâ - le Qu'on ap -

-pelle des doigts de mort.

Ah!

The second strophe, beginning in m. 49, continues with more frequent modulation on the text describing her death. Berlioz modulates to F major in m. 53 and then Ab major in m. 59, with G minor as the dominate tonality creating an anxious or unbalanced feeling (Ex. 4.15a).⁷³ The accompaniment changes drastically as Ophelia's death is described in m. 67. The melodic line, which has become more rhythmically dense and fragmented, is accompanied by eighth note chords consisting of minor thirds and major seconds. This comes to a climax on the word "Tombe (fell)" as the accompaniment and voice hold a dominant 7th chord in D minor (Ex. 4.15b). The tension is resolved in m. 77 with the establishment of tonic.

⁷³ Park 65.

Example 4.15a Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 49-60

The image displays a musical score for measures 49-60 of Berlioz's *La mort d'Ophélie*. The score is written for voice and piano. The lyrics are in French. The key signature is F major, indicated by two flats (Bb and Eb). The tempo/mood is marked *poco cresc.* (poco crescendo). The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a prominent, rhythmic pattern in the right hand, often with arpeggiated chords, and a more active bass line. The vocal line is melodic and expressive, with some measures featuring a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The lyrics are: "Puis, é - le - vant sur ses mains blan - ches", "Les ri - ants tré - sors du ma - tin,", and "El - le les sus - pen - dait aux bran - ches, Aux". The score is annotated with "F major" and "Ab Maior" (likely a typo for F major) in the left margin.

Puis, é - le - vant sur ses mains blan - ches

Les ri - ants tré - sors du ma - tin,

poco cresc. El - le les sus - pen - dait aux bran - ches, Aux

poco cresc. *p*

F major

Ab Maior

Example 4.15b Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 69-77

le ra - meau pli - e, Se bri - se, et la pauvre Ophé -

- li - e Tom - be, sa guir - lande à la main.

pp poco rit.

poco rit.

pp

p

Ped, una corda

AM7

A new idea is established in the third strophe. The vocal melody has the same material and the left hand continues the water figuration, but the right hand of the piano now has ascending octave leaps that continue until m. 94 where Gertrude says: “and, like a sail swelling she floated, still singing...” (Ex. 4.16a). This is employed in the Strauss and in the barcarole of Brahms’s piece as well (Ex. 4.16b-c). The water motif returns to the right hand in m. 98 as Ophelia floats away.

Example 4.16a Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 82-97

Quel . ques ins .

p *pp*

* tre corde

- tante sa robe en - flé - e — La tint en -

- cor sur le cou - rant, — Et, comme —

u - ne — voi - le gon - flé - e, Elle flot.

Example 4.16b Strauss, “Guten Morgen’s ist Sankt Valentinstag” measures 1-11

Zweites Lied der Ophelia
Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag

Richard Strauss, Op. 67 No 2

Lebhaft
Ophelia

Gesang

Gu-ten Mor-gen, 's ist Sankt Va-len-tins-tag, so früh vor Son-nen-schein. Ich jun-ge

Piano

Maid — am Fen-ster-schlag will Eu-er Va-len-tin sein. Der

Example 4.16c Brahms, “Auf morgen ist Sankt Valentinstag” measures 1-3

Auf mor-gen ist Sankt Va-len-tins Tag, wohl an — der Zeit noch
war be-reit, tät an — sein Kleid, tät auf — die Kam-mer-

The fourth verse begins to climax as Ophelia is dragged down into the water by her heavy dress. The climax begins in m. 116 at the pianissimo marking and builds in volume until the forte marking in m. 130 on the word “l’abîme (abyss).” A fermata is held over a rest in m. 131 and the line is continued without the water figuration (Ex.4.17).

Ophelia’s lament follows, first heard in the right hand of the accompaniment and then picked up by the voice, continuing until mm. 155-158 as Ophelia disappears and the accompaniment ends in a definitive Bb major cadence. Similar to the major cadence of Strauss’s piece, both he and Berlioz give Ophelia a peaceful and hopeful exit (Ex. 4.18).

Example 4.17 Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 129-140

dans — l'a - bi - me pro - fond En-trai.

.na la pauvre in-sen - sé - e, Laisant à pei - ne com - men - cé - e Sa

mé.lo.di.eu.se chan.son. —

poco *sf* *p* *pp*

Ped. unicorde

Example 4.18 Berlioz, *La mort d'Ophélie* measures 154-159

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by a melodic phrase starting on a half note G4, moving stepwise up to a dotted half note E5, and then descending. The piano accompaniment starts with a rest, followed by a series of chords and moving lines. The second system continues the vocal line with a melodic phrase starting on a half note D5, moving stepwise up to a dotted half note G5, and then descending. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines. The score is marked with *ppp* (pianissimo) and *poco rit.* (poco ritardando). The key signature is B-flat major, and the time signature is 4/4.

ppp *poco rit.*

ah!

ppp *poco rit.*

ppp

Bb M

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Brahms's *Ophelia Lieder* is simple in scope but is rife with performance possibilities. The set, different than anything Brahms had and would write, was composed specifically for a German production of *Hamlet*. The songs were meant to be performed sans accompaniment, but one was provided, the one seen in Chapter 3, for learning purposes and for performance outside the scope of the play. The accompaniment, although stark, assists in the drama of the story. It allows for the singer to fully focus on the varying colors the voice can give to Ophelia's feelings and mental state. Due to the lighter accompaniment, the syllabic setting of the text, and the small range, this piece of work makes for a perfect introduction to the German language for younger singers of any voice type. For the more experienced singers, this piece offers a formidable challenge in portraying the intricacies of Ophelia's winding thoughts and emotions.

Comparing Brahms's work to those of his contemporaries gives singers and scholars a deeper understanding of how composers were treating the texts the same or differently and allows for a more comprehensive understanding and performance. Richard Strauss set Ophelia's songs from the play, just as Brahms did, using a slightly different translation that, along with Strauss's use of dissonance and silence, paints a more sinister picture of Ophelia's mental health, while also giving her the peace she deserves right at the very end of his work. Brahms's work is simpler melodically and harmonically than Strauss's, but both provide different glimpses into Ophelia; like looking at two different sides of a coin. Berlioz chose to set the popular French translation of Queen Gertrude's monologue that describes Ophelia's death. He inserts Ophelia's singing between each verse of Gertrude's description and uses a continual water motif to signify Ophelia's drowning. Brahms and Berlioz treat Ophelia's madness completely differently, at face value. Yet, Berlioz gives Ophelia a calmness and etherealness that Brahms saw in her as well.

Each composer treats Ophelia and her mentality in very different ways, but they each give her a peace in her madness and provide small motifs that give the singer and audience little glimpses into her mind.

Knowing the story of *Hamlet* and all of its iterations through-out history is not only important in giving an insightful and researched dramatic performance, but it also provides the performer, audience, and scholars with different facets of how Hamlet and Ophelia are viewed by those in Shakespeare's time, those in Brahms's time, and those in the following centuries up to present day. The differing societal views of Ophelia, whether that be from a feminist, Victorian, or psychological lens around her character make her more tangible, especially for a performer who is singing such transparent songs with little accompaniment and simple melodies, as Brahms's setting. Providing a historical background within this document creates the world within which Ophelia lives and gives her a life outside of the music, much in the same way comparing Brahms's contemporaries gives the accompaniment and melodies a new meaning.

I hope that through this research of not only Brahms's composition, but also his performance and compositional styles, a comparison of similar works using the same text and inspiration, and a look into the 19th century's allure with Ophelia, singers and teachers will be able to give a more honest and complete performance of Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder* by using this document as a performance and pedagogical resource and that it will, in turn, become a staple in the repertoire of universities and professionals worldwide. With such little research pertaining to Brahms's *Fünf Ophelia-Lieder*, I also hope that this project will inspire more scholarship of not only this set, but more of Brahms's lesser known work and their performance, pedagogical, and historical value.

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