AMS Capital Chapter Program

13 April 2013

Peabody Conservatory

9:30 a.m. – 10 a.m. Coffee

10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Lowens Award Competition

Session Chair: Ronit Seter

10 a.m. Douglas Buchanan (Peabody Conservatory), “Rhetoric Rethought: *Affektenlehre* in Context”

10:30 a.m. Caitlin Brown (University of Maryland), “Singing Beyond the Classroom, Church, and Home: George Frederick Root’s *The Haymakers*”

11 a.m. Joseph A. Mann (Catholic University), “Both Scholars and Practitioners: The Pedagogy of Ethical Music Scholarship in Thomas Morley’s *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*”

11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Lunch Break

1:15 p.m. – 3 p.m. Afternoon Paper Session

Session Chair: Christina Taylor Gibson

1:15 p.m. Julia O’Toole (Boston University), “Women Composers of Oratorio in the Eighteenth Century: Comparing Oratorios Shared and Set By Both Genders”

1:45 p.m. Bonny Miller (Independent Scholar, Bethesda, Maryland), “Exoticism in the Parlor: Augusta Browne’s 1847 *Grande Marche Arabique*”

2:15 p.m. Stephen Thursby (Peabody Conservatory), "'Steht alles in der Partitur': Gustav Mahler's aesthetics of operatic production and his work with Alfred Roller and Anna von Mildenburg in Vienna"

3 p.m. – 4 p.m. Business Meeting

Julia O’Toole (Boston University), “Women Composers of Oratorio in the Eighteenth Century: Comparing Oratorios Shared and Set By Both Genders”

This paper examines two oratorio stories, *Isacco figura del redentore* and *La decollazione di San Giovanni Battista*, in order to explore similarities and differences between oratorios written by female and male composers of the eighteenth century. Very few scores by female composers exist; however their contribution to the field of oratorio composition can be analyzed and considered alongside their male counterparts.

These oratorios were chosen for review based on availability of either full or substantial partial scores. Attention was given to geographic location and composition period. Priority was given to music with a shared libretto. Composers selected include Camilla de Rossi, Niccolo Jommeli, Joseph Mysliveček, Marianna Martines, Maria Margherita Grimani, Antonio Maria Bononcini, and Friedrich Heinrich Himmel.

Criteria considered include musical and dramatic treatment of the story and characters, text interpretation and setting, form, orchestration and voicing, and technical aspects of composition. Sources used include copied manuscript from the period of composition, previous research by experts in the field of women composers, historical accounts and data about the specific composers and trends of the time, and editions more recently published with commentary for performance use.

The study showed that women composers of oratorio in the eighteenth century created music comparable to males in this arena. Assessments regarding quality, innovation, entertainment and theological value, and musical contribution are not divisible along gender lines. These works have intrinsic value and should be considered for regular performance.

Bonny Miller (Independent Scholar), “Exoticism in the Parlor: Augusta Browne’s 1847 *Grande Marche Arabique*”

Augusta Browne (c. 1820—1882) holds a special place in American history as one of the first successful women composers in the United States. If you imagine a cross between the elegant, Romantic-era Polish pianist and composer Frederick Chopin (1810—1849), and the independent, progressive American author Kate Chopin (1850—1904), the result might resemble nineteenth-century American composer, pianist, teacher, author, and journalist Augusta Browne, who composed 200 songs and piano pieces in addition to completing three books and more than 100 essays, stories, and poems.

Browne strove to compose refined music that was engaging, accessible, and marketable. Despite her extensive musical background, Browne complied with the smaller genres of music considered appropriate for women of her era to compose and perform. She incorporated ingenious creative details that helped her works compete in a flood of comparable music by competitors. The appealing sheet music cover for Browne’s piano solo, *Grande Marche Arabique*, signaled the lifelong international flair in her output, including songs and piano pieces with German, French, English, Irish, Scottish, Swiss, Russian, Neapolitan, Polish, and Persian references in their titles. Browne, who emigrated from Ireland as an infant, didn’t travel internationally as an adult, but she remained curious about distant lands and peoples. Rather than focusing on domesticity and children, her subjects often suggest outreach from her parlor to the world. The *Grande Marche Arabique* demonstrates the fad for Orientalism or exoticism in art and literature during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The *Grande Marche Arabique* owed much of its inspiration to Félicien David’s *Le désert: ode symphonie en trois parties*, premiered in 1844 in Paris and performed in New York within a year or two. David emulated Arabian style with half steps and avoidance of the raised seventhin his melodies, and he included the entire chant of the Muslim call to prayer in one section of the programmatic work. *Le désert* made a strong impression on Browne, who described David’s desert music as “curious and exciting” in her July 1847 *Columbian Magazine* essay, “Reveries of a Musician.” Specific elements of exoticism in *Grande Marche Arabique* include military fanfares, drum-roll broken octaves in the left hand, dancelike tunes employing gapped scales with the raised fourth degree, and open chords. Browne’s piano solo embraces almost every item on Ralph Locke’s list of typical devices to convey “the Orient” through musical means (*Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* 2009, 118-121).

Browne also paid homage to Mozart’s beloved “Rondo alla turca” in *Grande Marche Arabique*, expressed through the use of A minor alternating with A major in modified rondo form, duple meter, rolled chords, frequent grace notes and turning ornaments, melodies in parallel thirds and sixths, drone chords in root position, and repeated rhythmic figures in the accompaniment. Browne’s march succeeded in blending European visions of the exotic Middle East in a commercial American setting.

Stephen Thursby (Peabody Conservatory), "'Steht alles in der Partitur': Gustav Mahler's aesthetics of operatic production and his work with Alfred Roller and Anna von Mildenburg in Vienna"

Gustav Mahler's tenure as director of the Vienna Court Opera (1897-1907) was a period of reform and significant artistic achievement. In addition to improving the precision and expressivity of the musicians under his control, he crafted model productions of the works of Wagner and Mozart with stage designer and Secession artist Alfred Roller. One of his leading sopranos was Anna von Mildenburg, who became famous for her portrayals of Wagnerian heroines such as Brünnhilde and Isolde. Mahler always stressed that the music should remain the dominant element in any operatic production, even though he hired a visual artist whose striking use of light and color diverted the attention of some critics from the music. Mahler wanted stage gestures or choices of color and lighting to reflect the spirit of the music at any particular moment. His favorite phrase, according to Roller, was "steht alles in der Partitur" ("everything is in the score").

Focusing on the 1903 Court Opera production of *Tristan und Isolde*, I contend that Roller and Mildenburg were ideal collaborators for Mahler, because both conceived their roles within this production in close consideration of the music. To support this thesis, I examine source materials that have not been thoroughly discussed in the scholarly literature. These include Mildenburg's vocal score for *Tristan* (housed in the Mildenburg Collection in the Austrian National Library), her published guide to interpreting the role of Isolde, and a series of previously unpublished sketches for the production by Roller (housed in the Roller Archive of the Austrian Theater Museum).

The vocal score contains a handwritten note on the title page stating that the markings within were made by Mahler and were intended to help Mildenburg learn the role of Isolde. Markings include simple blocking diagrams and indications of specific stage gestures. Her published ideas on interpreting the role include precise instructions connected with specific bars and even individual notes within the score. Roller's sketches were made in black and white paint on paper and present dramatic, close-up views of specific scenes from Acts I and II. Six of these include short musical excerpts in staff notation, drawn by hand just below the image, clearly indicating the context for those scenes. The sketches are unique among those prepared for this production. Instead of colorful depictions of stage scenes devoid of humans, these show individual characters in dramatic focus. They are the only sketches for the production that include musical notation, most likely in Roller's own hand. The inclusion of musical excerpts would have indicated to Mahler that Roller was intimately familiar with Wagner's score and had an original visual conception of the work closely tied to the music.

These sources deepen our understanding of the close connection between stage demeanor, visual design, and music that existed in the minds of Mahler's collaborators. By employing Mildenburg and Roller for his 1903 *Tristan*, Mahler demonstrated a firm commitment to Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal. All production aspects were to be interconnected, with music as the unifying element.