THREE MUSICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF *HAMLET'S* OPHELIA

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Music in Musicology

Middle Tennessee State University
May 2020

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Dedicated to Cecilia DeKraai—a wonderful teacher, an immense personality, and a person who adds a special irony to the line “Get thee to a nunnery.”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my advisory committee chair Dr. Joseph Morgan, whose investment in my work and artful guidance offered me a final product of which I am most proud. To my committee members—Dr. Kevin Donovan, I am indebted to you for your patience and understanding in aiding me through my English research experience; and Dr. Jennifer Vannatta-Hall, I would like to recognize your most unwavering support of me throughout the entirety of this degree, as well as this thesis. I would also like to issue a special thank you to the Artists Rights Society for providing permissions to use the image of André Masson's *Ophelia.*

Many of my friends, colleagues, and mentors weathered long nights and incessant questions through my research and writing process: Grover Baker, Bethany Cardenas, Kate Carter, Dr. David Cyzak, Jacob Farmer, Dr. Kathryn Fenton, Caitlin Galo, Sarah Wilfong Joblin, Mikaela Littleton, Kate Radburn, Bryan Sanders, Prof. Angela Tipps, Carli Walker, and many more. I thank all of you for your help and encouragement.

And finally, to my family, my parents, and my sister—your contribution to any of my past and future success is immeasurable. Thank you for your love; I would not be where I am without you.

ABSTRACT

An obedient daughter, a scorned lover, a raving madwoman—each of these epithets is an appropriate description of the character of Ophelia in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Character studies of *Hamlet* range from completely passing over her character to intense psychoanalyses of Ophelia, Hamlet, and even Shakespeare. Outside of criticism, art forms typically capitalize on the aestheticization of Ophelia, focusing on her femininity as the primary aspect of her character to be observed. Musical portrayals tend to be more open to interpretation due the lack of a visual representation. This paper considers analyses of three pieces of music from three different times and places—Hector Berlioz's "La Mort d'Ophelie," Richard Strauss' "Drei Lieder der Ophelia," and Dmitri Shostakovich's "Song of Ophelia" (touching briefly on the music from the 1964 Grigori Kozintsev film *Gamlet*)—as a means to analyze the musical interpretations of Ophelia, as well as the influence from the culture and biography of the spotlighted composer.

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Like a strain of sad sweet music which comes floating by us on the wings of night and silence, and which we rather feel than hear—like the exhalation of the violet dying even upon the sense it charms—like the snow-flake dissolved in air before it has caught a stain of earth—like the light surf severed from her billow, which a breath disperses—such is the character of Ophelia: so exquisitely delicate, it seems as if a touch would profane it; so sanctified in our thoughts by the last and worst of human woes, that we scarcely dare to consider it too deeply. The love of Ophelia, which she never once confesses, is like a secret which we have stolen from her, and which ought to die upon our hearts as upon her own.

–Anna Jameson, *Characteristics of Women*

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In an analysis of the depth of the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the composer Franz Liszt wrote to one of his pupils, "Yes, Ophelia is loved, only Hamlet demands like every exceptional person, the wine of life and will not content himself with the buttermilk."[1] Liszt would go on to write a symphonic tone poem that glorified the heroism and majesty of Hamlet's character while relegating Ophelia to the image of a "silhouette."[2] The contrast between the lush string and brass orchestration representing Hamlet and the thinly-scored upper register of the woodwind choir as Ophelia is stark and out of place. Perhaps his generalization of Ophelia was a byproduct of being spectator to a production starring a dominant, overpowering actor playing Hamlet. Maybe his interpretation was informed by an even more personal association of the characteristics of the two genders.[3]

While a complete analysis of Liszt's *Hamlet* is not featured within this thesis, the basis for this research emerged from the questions raised by an analysis of this very piece—primarily, does Shakespeare's writing of Ophelia inform the ideas presented by composers in music, and do composers superimpose their own biography and environment onto Ophelia as a representation of their ideals? Hamlet might be the hero—

[1] A letter to Agnes Sreet-Klindworth. Joanne Cormac, "Revising Hamlet : The Symphonic Poem in the Theatre," *Studia Musicologica* 54, no. 1 (March 2013): 41, https://doi.org/10.1556/SMus.54.2013.1.4.

[2] Franz Liszt, *Symphonische Dichtungen Für Grosses Orchester, Bd. 3* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1885).

[3] Lawrence Kramer, "Liszt, Goethe, and the Discourse of Gender," in *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990). A similar study of Liszt's portrayals of gender can be found in this chapter.

an often-idealized autobiographical version of the composer.[4] However, my aim is to prove that the room for interpretation of Ophelia left in the text by Shakespeare allows her to become the vessel by which composers showcase their own backgrounds. This thesis will include analyses of Hector Berlioz's "La Mort d'Ophelie," Richard Strauss' "Drei Lieder der Ophelia," and Shostakovich's "Song of Ophelia" (and a brief recognition of his preceding themes of Ophelia within the 1964 Kozintsev cinematic adaptation of *Hamlet*).

First, the character of Ophelia must be defined, both in critical textual analysis of Shakespeare's play and then in the representations that would have been prevalent amongst the time periods and regions from which the pieces under study originated—mid-19th century France, early 20th century Germany, and mid-20th century Russia. These samples provide an expanse of interpretations that showcase various political ideologies, artistic periods, and societal structures while representing prominent composers of their respective eras. Each analysis includes discussion of the composers' historical context, specific background for the piece(s), and musical analyses compiled by various critics and scholars[5] through which we can examine how the region, time period, and environment affected each composer's interpretation of Ophelia.

Ophelia

In *Hamlet*, Ophelia's story arc is brief but meaningful. As a love interest to the titular character and daughter to the antagonist's chief advisor, Ophelia appears in only

[4] More information about this concept can be found in this article. Further reading on the subject is listed in the final footnote. Christian Bielefeldt, "Briljantni Labirint: Psihoanaliza, Nemška Muzikologija in Lacanov Ključ h Glasbi," *Musicological Annual* 45, no. 2 (December 1, 2009): 45–54, https://doi.org/10.4312/mz.45.2.45-54.

[5] Supportive scholarship to points made in the analyses will be referenced in the footnotes.

five of twenty scenes, and never on her own. When featured with Hamlet, she always serves as the intermediary between Hamlet and another party. Even separated from Hamlet, Ophelia remains linked to him, usually in references by other characters. Most of her interactions occur with males and are usually characterized by whichever male character with whom she engages—Hamlet, her father Polonius, her brother Laertes, even King Claudius—and his dominance over her circumstances. Because of her seeming dependence on the prominent men in her life, past criticism of *Hamlet* has often failed to appreciate Ophelia's value and integrity as an element of the play.[6]

Ophelia's storyline is simple. She and Hamlet share a romantic relationship, but both her father and brother warn her against him. Polonius then uses this relationship so that he and Claudius may gain advantage over Hamlet. When Hamlet mistakenly kills Polonius and is banished to England, Ophelia goes insane from grief and isolation. Laertes returns from his schooling in France to avenge his father's death and is reunited with Ophelia, only for her to make veiled and biting commentary in her fugue state. This is her last scene before her offstage death, recounted by Gertrude as an accidental drowning that is later called into question as a suicide by the gravediggers.

Critical interpretations of *Hamlet* range from all but ignoring Ophelia's character to close textual studies where the singular focus is on her, particularly within her mad scene. Scholarship related to Ophelia's prominence in the story became more frequent in

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[6] J. M. Nosworthy, "The Death of Ophelia," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1964): 345, https://doi.org/10.2307/2868091. Nosworthy suggests that Gertrude's monologue depicting Ophelia's death was an afterthought using textual evidence—close readings and observations on variances between editions of *Hamlet*—to prove that Shakespeare included the speech after having completed the play.
Sandra Fischer, "Hearing Ophelia: Gender and Tragic Discourse in Hamlet," *Renaissance and Reformation1* 14, no. 1 (1990): 1–10. Makes reference to Ophelia being "shadowy" in comparison to Hamlet. This is less of the author's viewpoint and more of an explanation of why the argument exists.

modern gender studies, although a favorable analysis of the strength of her character's love was published as early as 1832.[7] Through the history of scholarship on Ophelia, studies have focused on her relationships with the men in her life. The psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan, known for his Freudian psychoanalysis of Hamlet and Ophelia, emphasized Ophelia's purpose as temptation of Hamlet's desire and his rejection of that desire as distraction. In contrast, Jameson argues that readers and critics assume that Ophelia loves Hamlet though she never confirms that sentiment in her dialogue, whereas the same audience will doubt Hamlet's love for Ophelia in spite of his multiple confessions.[8] Ophelia and Hamlet are often cast as opposites—foil characters. James Marino juxtaposes the two in multiple ways: in terms of obedience, desire, and madness.[9] Where Ophelia obeys her father's orders, Hamlet does not. Where she suppresses her desires, Hamlet contemplates and chases his. Where Hamlet considers death, Ophelia actually dies.[10] The incongruence of their madness is distinctive in that Ophelia's mad scene links directly to her perceived eroticism and femininity by the stage direction Shakespeare gave in the first "Bad" Quarto.[11]

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[7] Anna Jameson, *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical, and Historical* (Cambridge University Press, 1832), 182–209. Jameson includes a beautiful analysis of Ophelia's character, condensing her being into three main principles: modesty, grace, and tenderness. However, even she refers to Ophelia as a "helpless dove" and claims her silence as a means to hide.

[8] Jameson, 201.

[9] James J. Marino, "Ophelia's Desire," *ELH* 84, no. 4 (2017): 817–39, https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2017.0031.

[10] Cherrell Guilfoyle, "'Ower Swete Sokor': The Role of Ophelia in Hamlet," *Comparative Drama* 14, no. 1 (1980): 3–17, https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1980.0001. Supportive scholarship to this idea.

[11] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Anne Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden (London: Arden, 2006), 28. Q1 stage direction read: "Enter Ofelia playing on a Lute, and her haire downe singing." The two elements of this stage direction pertain to her physical appearance and demeanor, both of which were much more structured conventions for females rather than males.

Musicologists tend to be drawn to the mad scene because of the "snatches of old lauds" Shakespeare utilized for her speeches.[12] As Kendra Preston Leonard states in her analysis of the mad scene in Grigori Kozintsev's film, "Music is used to frame these spheres of need and desire."[13] The incorporation of these songs indicates a breach in etiquette in seventeenth century court life. Yet, the songs are defined by the more feminine attributes of Ophelia. In contrast, art featuring Ophelia alone draws from Gertrude's beautiful verse description of her death and demonstrates a blending of elements between both the mad and the death scenes. Generally, mimetic representations of her character rely on those two scenes.[14]

This thesis features three pieces of music— one by Hector Berlioz, which recounts the verse description of Act IV Scene VII; one by Richard Strauss, which uses the songs from Ophelia's mad scenes; and one by Shostakovich, which does neither and utilizes a mimetic poem that laments her lost love. Each piece hails from a different time and place, where critical reception of Ophelia's character was heavily impacted by the translations and adaptations both studied and performed in those periods.

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[12] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins, The Arden (Surrey: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1997), 374. Act IV, Scene VII: 176.

[13] Kendra Preston Leonard, *Shakespeare, Madness, and Music: Scoring Insanity in Cinematic Adaptations* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 54.

[14] Alan R. Young, *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002), 282. Young attributes the fascination of Ophelia's madness in art to "the opportunity to contemplate and contain (notably when madness leads to death) the threatening fantasy of uncontrolled female sexuality."

CHAPTER II: FRANCE—HECTOR BERLIOZ

Post-revolutionary France saw a new regime set in motion by Napoleon Bonaparte, whose conquests and political maneuvers kept France between peace and war in the early part of the 19th Century. The economies of France and Britain strained under the pressures of the war. Napoleon's philosophy of uniting the governing and governed exceeded battle strategy, resulting in the civilians adopting ideas of civil equality and equality of opportunity. Through a re-established monarchy and several decades of bureaucratic transition, the French Republic would not form until well into the 19th Century, with multiple revolutions- two of note taking place in 1830 and 1848.[15]

During this time frame and afterward, Romantic art flourished in Paris through the growth and expansion of salon culture. With artists such as Theodore Gericault and Eugène Delacroix, writers like Victor Hugo and François-René de Chateaubriand, and poets such as Alfred de Vigny, the goal of producing art centered around the extravagant effects that could be achieved- the idea of the sublime captured within the grandiose nature of the landscapes or the expanse of philosophy within the confines of a novel. The dichotomy of the larger world in direct conflict with small and unfettered humanity defined the Romantic approach to art in Paris. Because of musical precedents set by composers from other parts of Europe such as Beethoven and Brahms, Romantic principles in music were employed much the same, with the emphasis on the emotion that could be drawn from, rather than affected unto, the listener.

[15] "France" in *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. Updated April 1, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/place/France

Hector Berlioz led the elite of French Romantic composers, providing extensively for the repertoire of programmatic literature of the era. Through compositional techniques such as thematic transformation, Berlioz altered musical form to fit an external narrative, which would later inform the progression to a more episodic musical structure.[16] Some of these external narratives originated from already existing source material, including inspiration from the plays of William Shakespeare. With operas based on *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing*, it comes as no surprise that Berlioz would also explore the musical implications of *Hamlet*. His focus, however, would manifest much more personally than were it simply a reflection of his affinity for the literature.

In the late 1820s, Berlioz pined after Irish actress and socialite Harriet Smithson. His first occasion seeing her perform ignited an intensely obsessive infatuation. Through rejection and anonymity, his desire grew, resulting in desperate letters to his friend Ferdinand Hiller with such lamentations as "Always tears, sympathetic tears. I see Ophelia shedding them, I hear her tragic voice, the rays from her sublime eyes consume me."[17] Berlioz first watched Smithson perform as Ophelia in *Hamlet* on September 11, 1827 in Paris.[18] Because of his eagerness for continued exposure to her talents, he purchased tickets to watch her as Desdemona in *Othello* and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. His fascination for her (and a penchant for escapism via opium use) sparked inspiration

[16] Hugh Macdonald, "Transformation, Thematic," in *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28269. Thematic transformation is defined in Grove Music Online as "the process of modifying a theme so that in a new context it is different yet manifestly made of the same elements."

[17] Hector Berlioz and Humphrey Searle, ed. *Hector Berlioz: A Selection from his Letters.* (New York: Vienna House, 1973), 26.

[18] John R. Elliot, "The Shakespeare Berlioz Saw," *Music and Letters* LVII, no. 3 (1976): 292, https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/LVII.3.292.

for what would become a keystone for programmatic literature in the Romantic Era, his *Symphonie Fantastique*.[19]

Smithson performed with an English acting troupe, and despite entertaining a largely French audience in Paris, the company gave their performance in English. Hector Berlioz's initial impressions of Smithson's performance transcended the language barrier, which seemed to be a consensus among the more artistic individuals who attended the showings of that production. In fact, her interpretation of Ophelia's mad scene brought spectators to tears, some even having to leave due to convulsions from sobbing. Despite the memorable performance given by Smithson, the rest of the production was not as well received, favoring Romantic interpretations of Elizabethan texts and ornate set designs that put the focus on the environment rather than the plot and eliminated the need for verse description.[20]

The passion between Berlioz and Smithson fueled a tumultuous union. After they married in 1833, the attraction fizzled, with growing resentment and jealousy in Smithson and boredom in Berlioz. Smithson began to lose hold of that star that attracted Berlioz to her, unable to captivate audiences in larger venues because of her smaller presence.[21] This conflict ultimately ended in infidelity and separation. Within the years following their divorce in 1844, Berlioz wrote "La Mort d'Ophelie," a vocal work that originated for solo voice and piano. Eventually, he scored the piece for soprano and alto chorus with orchestral accompaniment. A correspondence from Berlioz to his poet friend Ernest

[19] Hugh Macdonald, "Berlioz, (Louis-)Hector," in *Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51424.

[20] Elliot, "The Shakespeare Berlioz Saw," 294.

[21] David Cairns, *Berlioz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Legouvé implies his excitement about setting Legouvé's text to music: "I want you to hear what I composed last week on your charming verses about the Death of Ophelia... If you like the music, I shall instrument the piano accompaniment for a pretty little orchestra and will have it played at one of my concerts."[22] The lyrics depict Gertrude's verse description of Ophelia's death, which one might interpret as Berlioz seeking closure or coming to terms with his relationship with Smithson.

France's relationship to Ophelia was not so tumultuous. During the Enlightenment, the primary critic of William Shakespeare's works was Voltaire, who both lauded Shakespeare for his genius and criticized him for his "farces monstrueuses".[23] This criticism is partially due to the histrionic tradition in French classical drama, where art took precedence over life. Paul Conklin attributes the remainder of the vitriol to the fact that Shakespeare's works overshadowed those of great French playwrights at the time, Racine and Corneille. Any credit or discredit given to Shakespeare by his critics would likely be affected by the prominent translation or adaptation gaining traction at the time. Voltaire would have been exposed to the translation of *Hamlet* by Pierre Le Tourneur, one that was meant for study—not for staging—and is still used today.

Other interpretations of *Hamlet* include those of La Place, a prose translation, and Ducis. Due to his inability to speak English, Ducis based his adaptation on La Place's generalizing and uninspired translation. In this loose relation to Shakespeare's original,

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[22] Jacques Barzun, *Berlioz and His Century: An Introduction to the Age of Romanticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956).

[23] Paul S. Conklin, *A History of Hamlet Criticism 1601-1821* (New York: Humanities Press, 1957), 85. Translated to mean "monstrous pranks."

Ophelia is daughter to Claudius. When Hamlet kills Claudius, Gertrude takes her own life, resulting in a happy ending for Hamlet and Ophelia. Despite its deviations from the original, this "translation" of *Hamlet* became the most commonly performed in France. It was not until English acting troupes began to perform the play in English on French stages that French audiences were exposed to the true character of Ophelia. Most of all, audiences had their greatest reactions to her mad scenes. Particularly of note in Berlioz's setting is the incorporation of Ophelia's madness, and how in listening to the piece, the audience can visualize that striking balance of beauty and despair which Harriet Smithson carried so well- the musical representation of an image of her graceful figure in a plain and flowing dress with a long black veil trailing down her back.

Figure 1. Eugène Delacroix, *Ophelia's Song*[24]

[24] Eugène Delacroix, 1798-1863. 1834. *Ophelia's Song*. Lithograph.

An adaptation of Gertrude's monologue from Act IV Scene 7, "La Mort d'Ophelie" tells the story of Ophelia's death through the eyes of Gertrude.[25] The poetry, written by Ernest Legouvé, is not a direct translation of Shakespeare's text; however, the lyrics bear a strong resemblance to the original monologue (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of Verse Description to Lyrics

Gertrude's Monologue[26]	Legouvé French Translation[27]	Legouvé English Translation
There is a willow grows askant the brook That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream. Therewith fantastic garlands did she make 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 crownet weeds Clamb'ring 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 lauds, 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.	Après 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 pâle, Qu'on appelle des doigts de mort. Puis élevant sur ses mains blanches Les riants 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. 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. 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.	Beside a brook, Ophelia Gathered along the water's bank, In her sweet and gentle madness, Periwinkles, crow-flowers, Opal-tinted irises, And those pale purples Called dead men's fingers. Then, raising up in her white hands The morning's laughing trophies, She hung them on the branches, The branches of a nearby willow. But the bough, too fragile, bends, Breaks, and poor Ophelia Falls, the garland in her hand. Her dress, spread wide, Bore her on the water awhile, And like an outstretched sail She floated, still singing, Singing some ancient lay, Singing like a water-sprite Born amidst the waves. But this strange melody died, Fleeting as a snatch of sound. Her garment, heavy with water, Soon into the depths Dragged the poor distracted girl, Leaving her melodious lay Hardly yet begun.

The translation and adaptation to strophic lyrics for a song resulted in a shift from iambic pentameter to iambic tetrameter. Despite its harrowing subject material of Gertrude witnessing the death of Ophelia, Berlioz keys his piece in Ab Major. Though

[25] The scene structure will not always appear as such. Some editors have five acts with five scenes each. Some stretch the fourth act to include seven scenes.

[26] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1997, 373–75. Act IV, Scene VII: 165-182.

[27] Both Legouvé translations can be found through Oxford Lieder. English translation credited to Richard Stokes. https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/233

overall tonality would not have served as an expressive device for Berlioz, this positive tonal center seems to be a dichotomy to the bleak imagery of Ophelia's drowning. To the listener, this enforces an aestheticization of Ophelia's suffering. While the key wafts through several transformative and developmental passages by way of chromatic alterations, the tonic of the piece does not shift, even after the dramatic musical reverence of Ophelia falling into the brook.[28]

The work is defined by three distinctive motives, one of which is thematically less important due to its emerging out of the initial verse. While the strings bubble in a tremolo reminiscent of flowing water, the first motive (Figure 2) occurs in the anacrusis to m. 3. Recitative-like, the vocal line hovers around the major third of the tonic and mediant. This stasis signifies Gertrude's stability, and likely the absence of her action, a reference to one of the key questions that *Hamlet* raises.[29] Each verse of the lyrical content begins with the same motive, a clear demarcation of thematic material.

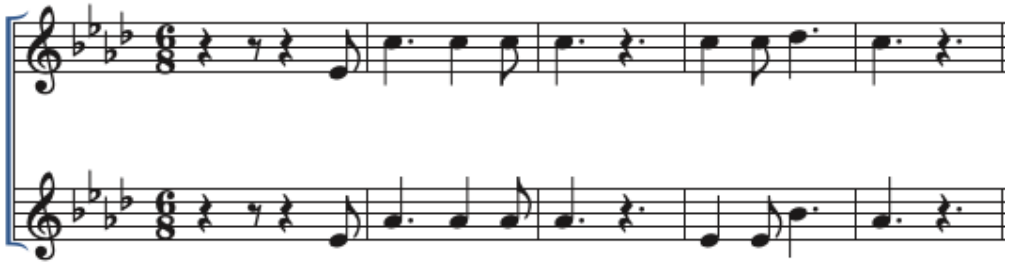

Figure 2. "Gertrude" Motive

[28] This reverence is indicated by a ritardando in the phrase and subsequent caesura following the cadence.

[29] Joseph G. Price, *Hamlet: Critical Essays*, *Hamlet: Critical Essays* (Routledge, 2014), https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315817651. In Maynard Mack's essay, "The World of *Hamlet*," he states that Hamlet is a play set in the interrogative mood. This is in reference to the idea that the plot raises more questions than it answers.

However, out of the fourth and fifth lines of the first stanza beginning in m. 14, another motive emerges in the vocal lines and the woodwind section. Though not as prevalent or as recurrent as the initial theme, this theme is the most dramatically fragmented and altered throughout the work. It seems to represent what little of Ophelia's humanity Berlioz includes in the piece (Figure 3).

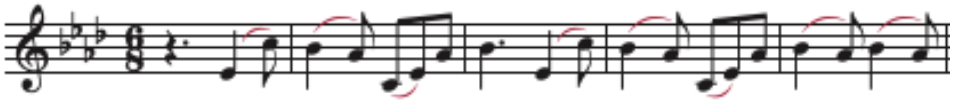

Figure 3. "Humanity" Motive

Initially, this melodic idea is presented in conjunction with Ophelia's flower gathering at the brook. It lilts in a major key and in brighter instruments, highlighting the idea presented by Laertes in Act IV of her turning to "favor and prettiness."[30] The vocal lines and woodwinds fluctuate between the tonic of Ab Major and the dominant Eb Major over a continuation of the steady tremolo on the tonic chord in the strings. This motive returns transposed to F Minor with C Minor fluctuations in m. 63 as an echo of Ophelia's song as she is suspended over the brook by the branches of the willow tree. It returns in its original key in m. 97, as Ophelia floats away singing her "strange melody." Berlioz's final iteration of this motive will be discussed following the explanation of the third melody. However, the fragmentation and manipulation of this motive so far is the most changed of either of the two other themes.

[30] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1997, 360. Act IV, Scene VI: 185-186.

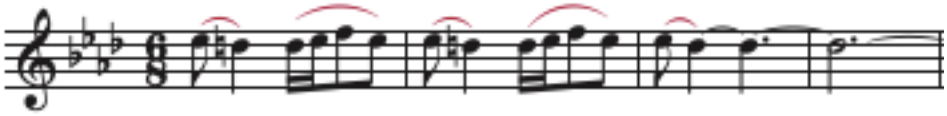

Figure 4. “Strange Melody” Motive

If one motive represents Gertrude’s monologue as an actionless passerby and the other seems to follow Ophelia’s soul in her dying moments, the third motive (Figure 4) acts as Ophelia’s body floating down the brook. Beginning in m. 26, this melodic idea serves as the foundation of what could only be interpreted as a B Section. Not rooted in any one key, the idea becomes a chain of phrases with sequential modulation. As the motive descends through the tessituras (the instrumental part begins in the woodwinds before transferring to the strings), it shifts through major and minor tonality before ending on the dominant, posing an obvious question to Ophelia’s fate. This section returns in mm. 79 and 138 with brief quotations in mm. 111 and 120.

The final idea of the piece (m. 156) occurs also in Mm. 43 after the first iteration of the B Section. Functioning as a tail to the phrase, it leads downward with ornamentation to the mediant, a reference to the opening line in the soprano voice, and quite possibly an indicator of the cyclic nature of madness within *Hamlet*.

Though the piece does not fit any strict formal structure, the pacing of the sections and motivic representation almost follows that of an operatic duet.[31] Typical convention allows for the first player to sing, the second player to follow, and finally for the two of

[31] Michael Tilmouth, *Duet*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.08263. Duets are typically structured as such: first person sings, then second person sings before both voices join to sing together.

them to join on their melodies. Berlioz begins "La Mort d'Ophelie" with the first stanza of Gertrude's account. He then follows it with Ophelia's vocalization of her "strange melody."[32] At this point, her soul and her song are linked. This link begins in the second iteration of the A Section in m. 47. The woodwind response to the strings' ever-present bubbling appears to be a relative inverse of the arpeggiated eighth notes in the "humanity" motive. As the piece continues, the two become independent of one another. In m. 78, Ophelia has fallen, garlands and flowers in hand. The following measure marks the beginning of the duet between Gertrude and Ophelia. Though there are three primary melodic ideas, Berlioz only fixes two of them as themes juxtaposed against one another. The third idea transforms to fit where it needs to function, much like Ophelia's own character.[33]

Berlioz's interpretation of Ophelia is quite sincerely romanticized, but through her unchanging melody as she drifts away, she is also a passive part of the conversation with Gertrude. She is objectified, something to be seen and observed with no interference. Though he references her own independence as a character, Berlioz places his emphasis on her image.[34] Indeed, the aural atmosphere he provides is not dissimilar to the famous painting *Ophelia* by Sir John Everett Millais-- beautiful, untouchable, and inevitable.

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[32] This melody should not be confused with the motive referenced in Mm. 98.

[33] Jennifer Leigh Tipton, "A Document in Death and Madness: A Cultural and Interdisciplinary Study of Nineteenth-Century Art Song Settings on the Death of Ophelia" (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014), 67. Tipton concludes her dissertation with the quote "[Ophelia] and her death are whatever we make them to be." In this dissertation, she too analyzes the Berlioz.

[34] Young, *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900*, 284. Young speaks to Romantic interpretations of Ophelia's death in the visual arts in this quote: "It illustrates the trend for the Romantic artist to break free from the polite, sanitized image of Ophelia. It also shows the artist breaking free from mere illustration of some dramatic moment onstage. Shakespeare the narrator is now seen to have opened the way for a representation of Ophelia as a reflection of injured sensibility poised above the water into which she is about to plunge... the depiction of Ophelia's release from life simultaneously symbolizes the release of the artist from mimetic forces."

Figure 5. John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*[35]

[35] John Everett Millais. 1852. Ophelia. Place: Tate Britain, London. https://library-artstor-org.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/asset/LESSING_ART_1039490534.

CHAPTER III: GERMANY—RICHARD STRAUSS

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, *Hamlet* took the German stage by storm with performances across the country. The translation performed was that of Wieland, which was much closer to the original than Ducis'. In fact, in German tradition, a strong reaction against the classicism of French tragedy resulted in versions that were more likely to be overly blunt and undramatic, characterized by Conklin as sometimes "buffoon-like."[36] However, performances of this tone resonated well with German audiences, creating a "Hamlet fever" throughout the country.

Because of this shift in tone, the German opinion of Ophelia shifted, attributing her madness and suicide to external societal factors.[37] Owen states, "now she embodies female suffering caused not by love, but by larger sociopolitical forces."[38] Multiple translations followed the Wieland translation, but the most highly revered version is that of August Schlegel. Because of Schlegel's translation, Germans adopted Shakespeare as one of their own, a sentiment that lasted through the twentieth century and still exists today.

Twentieth century Germany is easily best described as a turbulent region in history. Left destroyed and fumbling for recovery by the first World War in 1918, and even within the duration of the war, the country faced challenges from conflicting belief systems to economic devastation.[39] Though the tenets of Expressionism existed well over

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[36] Conklin, *A History of Hamlet Criticism 1601-1821*.

[37] Ruth J. Owen, "Claiming the Body: The Ophelia Myth in the GDR," *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 82, no. 3 (July 2007): 253, https://doi.org/10.3200/GERR.82.3.251-268.

[38] Owen, 265.

[39] "Germany" in *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. Updated April 1, 2020. https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany

a decade prior to the war, the polarization of society and resulting violence exacerbated the brutal qualities that accompanied Expressionist art in all forms, fostering the avant-garde in art through subgenres such as Surrealism.

During this stylistic period, artists rejected the idea of objective realism so prevalent in the late nineteenth-century, instead favoring imagery rendered from a personal perspective which evoked the emotions the artist felt about the subject. Poets began to exploit morbid metaphorical imagery to incur the idea of philosophical festering. Art no longer focused on figures and the raw beauty of nature, but instead on unnatural color palettes and figurative distortion. Composers took once lush chords and expanded dissonance and extended techniques to broaden the musical vocabulary as a medium for truly expressing a text or idea.

These alterations affected great change on renderings of Ophelia across all art forms. What were once beautiful portrayals of her death among the brook, flowers, and willow trees became images of her bloated and decomposing body. Poetry captured the rancor trapped in her body as she floats lifeless in the water, as opposed to objectifying her image as an extension of the natural beauty embedded in Gertrude's verse description.[40] In contrast to the imagery Hector Berlioz invokes with his "La Mort D'Ophelie," Richard Strauss neither focuses on her death nor incorporates her passive existence into an already established world. Instead, he creates an active character whose

[40] Owen, "Claiming the Body: The Ophelia Myth in the GDR," 254. "What seems to replace the eroticization is a tendency to reframe Ophelia in the largest context of her relations to society and the human order. Motifs of barbed wire, human ash, and ruins, for instance, create a postwar sociopolitical frame for the female 'Wasserleiche.' In this frame, she is victimized as a consequence of grim crimes, environmental destruction, and social exlusion."

erratic delivery distorts her original intent.[41] In Strauss' depiction, Ophelia's black humor stands as an expression of Strauss' own position, trapped between the free creation of art and the binding laws of a society that incurs its own increasing body of criticism.

Though Richard Strauss composed lieder steadily toward the end of the nineteenth century, his production for that medium stalled in the early twentieth century, up to 1918. The cause for this pause is unclear, though Strauss did use that time to focus on operatic writing. During the same interim, he also became embroiled in a feud over copyright. Having begun a society protecting composers' rights known as the Genossenschaft deutscher Tonsetzer, Strauss' creation motivated the formation of competing societies for music publishers such as the Genossenschaft zur Verwertung musikalischer Aufführungsrechte (GEMA).[42] Unbeknownst to Strauss, in the early 1900s, he entered into contractual obligations with a member of GEMA, Hugo Bock.[43]

Bock demanded a song cycle from Strauss after one of Strauss' productive periods of writing lieder, a demand that Strauss resisted. Instead, he focused on opera—an era that resulted in a few of his masterworks, such as *Die Rosenklavier* and *Elektra.* There came a point, however, where Strauss could no longer procrastinate writing the song cycle for Bote & Bock. In his efforts to appease the publishers, he held nothing back in terms of his darker sense of humor. The song cycle he wrote featured unflattering characters based on publishers of Bote & Bock, Breitkopf & Härtel, and others within

[41] Christian Griffiths, "R. Strauss, Opus 67, 1-3, Drei Lieder Der Ophelia</Em>: Ophelia Set Adrift in the Cross-Currents of Interdisciplinary Culture," *Australian Literary Studies*, June 1, 2014, https://doi.org/10.20314/als.05ab08d5df. Insert quote of Griffiths' interpretation of Strauss' Ophelia.

[42] Bryan Gilliam and Charles Youmans, *Strauss, Richard*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40117.

[43] Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on His Life and Works Vol. III* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1973), 357–58..

GEMA.[44] Of course, angered by the insinuations of his writing in Strauss' *Krämerspiegel*, the officials of Bote & Bock held him legally bound to their requirement for a song cycle and refused to publish the Opus 66 *Krämerspiegel* (which would be published in 1921 by another publishing company). With the end to his relationship with Hugo Bock in sight, Strauss found himself writing what he considered his best foray into lieder, the Bretano Lieder. However, he did not want to relinquish such a personal achievement, so instead he wrote his Opus 67, published in 1918, a collection of three mad songs of Ophelia and three ill-tempered songs inspired by characters created by Goethe.[45]

These three songs for Ophelia utilize a German translation of the lauds she sings in madness in Act IV of *Hamlet*. Strauss chose to utilize the translation by Karl Simrock, rather than using the more common and widely accepted translation by Schlegel & Tieck. This choice may have been an intentional bait to Bote & Bock, as Simrock was employed by one of their competitors; in giving the publishers what they wanted, Strauss simultaneously advertised for their rivals.[46] The Simrock translation varies from Shakespeare's metrical setting of the text in English, which Susan Gale Johnson Odom qualifies as "problematic" when considering the effect on the musical setting.[47] In choosing this translation, Strauss featured the idiosyncrasies in the full texts of Ophelia's songs through rhythmic and metric displacement, unstable harmonic structure, and a

[44] Del Mar, 361–62..
[45] No dates were left on the manuscripts, so the exact years he wrote the work is unknown.
[46] Susan Gale Johnson Odom, "Four Musical Settings of Ophelia" (University of North Texas, 1991), 50.
[47] Odom, 60.

recitative-like rendering which Odom identifies as "sprechlieder."[48] These techniques allow for Strauss to highlight Ophelia's grapples with her dwindling sanity while incorporating her (and likely, Strauss') biting wit.

Richard Strauss wrote his "Drei Lieder der Ophelia" utilizing Karl Joseph Simrock's German translation of *Hamlet*. These three settings demonstrate the "old lauds" sung by Ophelia in Act IV Scene 5. Whereas Johannes Brahms set five Volkslied songs to the same ballads as incidental music to a production, Strauss's iterations include Ophelia's own lyrical alterations, allowing for a more holistic approach to her madness.[49] Each setting affects a unique mood and variation of sanity (or lack thereof). All three settings are analyzed separately to account for the major differentiations between them.

In his interpretation of the first song within Ophelia's monologue, "Wie erkenn ich mein Treulieb vor andern nun," Strauss manipulates the clarity of the meter. With a steady pulsing on the off-beats in the piano accompaniment balanced with a running motive throughout the piece that occurs on the second sixteenth note in the first beat of every measure it occurs, the ambience behind the vocal line alludes to instability (Figure 6). That volatility is possibly a reference to a quote by Hamlet in Act I Scene V: "The time is out of joint…"[50] The metric ambiguity also symbolizes Ophelia's lack of touch with reality, marked even more by the presence of the vocal line on the downbeat. Rarely do the voice and piano place emphasis on the same parts of the beat.

[48] Odom, 51. Defined in a quote from Barbara Peterson as "containing examples both of monotone recitation or movement within a confined range and of wide, expressive and unexpected leaps."

[49] Odom, 35–47.

[50] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1997, 228. Act I, Scene V: 196.

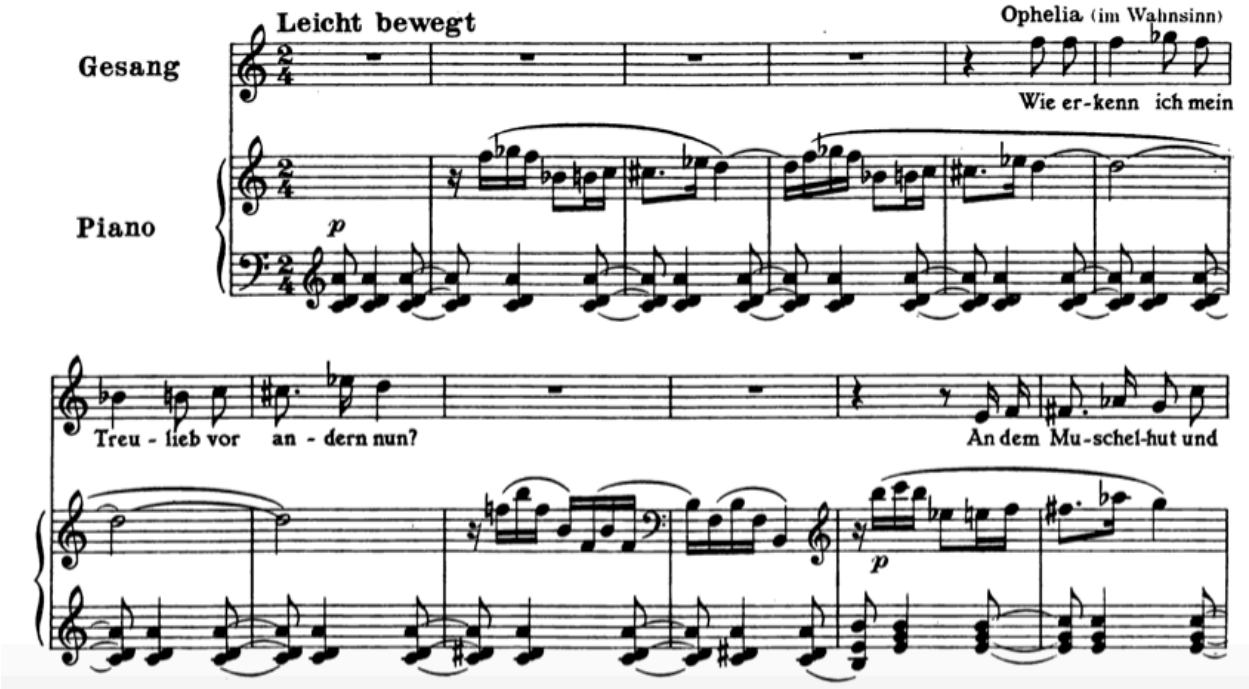

Figure 6. Opening Phrase of "Wie erkenn ich mein Treulieb vor andern nun" [51]

An exception to this rule occurs in m. 11, when Ophelia's melodic idea emerges from the sixteenth note motive in the piano on the line "An dem Muschelhut und Stab."[52] This motion condenses the motivation behind the first line in the vocal part, which rhythmically augments the same sixteenth note motive. Even more striking is the declarative "tot und hin, Fräulein!"[53] where the vocal part draws from the inner voices of the accompaniment, a unification of the two voices. From that point forward, the two voices move independently of one another, and the piano part does not deviate from the patterns established at the beginning until the end of the vocal line. Its staggered chordal

[51] Richard Strauss, "Drei Lieder Der Ophelia," in *6 Lieder Op. 67* (Berlin: Bote & Bock, 1947). In this example, look for the the ties over the barline to as evidence of the metric displacement.

[52] "By his cockle hat and staff".

[53] "Dead and gone, Lady!"

recitation begins to land on the second beat of each measure before once more accentuating the offbeat. This motion accompanies a tonal descent back to the key center established in the beginning, where the offset quarter note rhythmic pattern picks up once more.

Though the piece revolves around a D7 chord, the harmonic function seems to matter less than the aural implication of the dominant chord. While the meter represents instability, the tonality incites Ophelia's primary question. Scholars puzzle over the choice of this laud because of the lack of delineation between its association to Hamlet or to Polonius.[54] She references death in what seems a clear indicator to Polonius; however, the first line references her "true love." Her utterance of this particular song has been found to be a lamentation for her lost love in Hamlet and her question of whether or not his love was true. The amount of chromatic alteration and transformation Strauss implements exacerbates that question, making ambiguous the tonal center of the piece, and in essence, serving as the inflection for her question.

Whereas Strauss's first setting represents Ophelia's uncertainty, the second movement, "Guten Morgen, 's ist Sankt Valentinstag," demonstrates her raucous and exasperated hysteria. Three gestures serve as the foundation for the piece: an iteration of three chords that acts as a neighbor group around chords with B as the root (minor and major; both are present), a two-measure ascending motive that allows for motion and inflection in the vocal lines, and a two-measure descending motive which counteracts any

[54] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1997, 350. Jenkins writes, "The song thus reflects the actual shortcomings of her father's burial but still more, since it concerns a 'true love', her fantasies of Hamlet's death.

prior motion and allows the piece to return to its stasis.[55] At the beginning of the piece, both piano and vocal line motives move in the same direction, and the harmonies bounce between major and minor. This gives a feeling of uncertainty to Ophelia's narrative.[56] However, as Ophelia contemplates "wärst du nicht kommen herein," those lines move in contrary motion to the resolution of the piece in E minor. This particular ballad is often interpreted to be evidence of a sexual relationship between Ophelia and Hamlet, and Strauss appears to have been of like mind because of this motivic resolution. The way the motives peter off in a somber fashion reflects that Ophelia has been upset and betrayed, much like the Baker's daughter.[57]

Like the first setting, the vocal line draws primarily from the inner voices of these chordal gestures, and sonically, the correlations between the motives in both parts are clear. However, one deviation from that pattern exists- in m. 62, as the piano accompaniment ascends, the voice descends into its final note, the mediant of the overarching tonality. The line here is "wär'st du nicht kommen herein."[58] Strauss's choice of finality on this line does not only indicate the conclusion of the vocal line, but also demonstrates resolution to the idea being presented. Ophelia's song ends with a statement of remorse by the young maid who let the young man into her bed because of his promise to marry her. Because Strauss deliberately allows the vocal line to deviate

[55] The piece fluctuates between G Major and E Minor, so B is naturally an important note, functionally serving as the respective mediant and dominant.

[56] Odom, "Four Musical Settings of Ophelia," 57–58.

[57] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1997, 350. Act IV, Scene V: 42-43. There was a religious tale in which a Baker's daughter only spares bites of bread for Christ, who transforms her into an owl for her lack of generosity. Ophelia's reference has been interpreted as being similar in lack of virtue. Alison Chapman, "Ophelia's 'Old Lauds': Madness and Hagiography in Hamlet," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England* 20 (2007): 111–35; Guilfoyle, "'Ower Swete Sokor': The Role of Ophelia in Hamlet."

[58] "If you had not come in."

from the piano accompaniment, he insinuates the correlation between Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet and that of the young maid and her man. This idea is secured by his manipulation of tonality after the final vocal line. Again, he toys with G, except now it is minor. He shifts into E major twice before isolated iterations of the neighbor group around B. Finally, he incorporates another neighbor group around E minor before establishing E minor as the home key. The trigger for the hysteria rife in Ophelia's song is now clear—sadness and regret.

The focal point of this final setting by Strauss, "Sie trugen ihn auf der Bahre bloß," is Ophelia's rumination on Polonius. Beginning in Eb Minor, the accompaniment wafts through triplets that surround the root of the tonic chord. This setting is certainly the most episodic of the three, almost following a rounded binary form with a coda that references transitional material. Unlike the two previous settings, Strauss motivates the rhythm much differently, allowing the shift between continuous sixteenth note triplets and sixteenth-thirty-second note combinations to serve as a marker for both the melodic material and the tonality. The triplets primarily indicate the melancholy of the song, while the more martial rhythms demonstrate the more visual lyrics such as "Manche Träne fiel in des Grabes Schoß"[59] and "Sein Bart war weiß wie Schnee"[60].

Perhaps the most interesting element of this setting is the reference to Christianity. Alison Chapman breaks down these references into their intended irony as well as their somber importance to Ophelia's background and present circumstances. She states, "Ophelia seems to resort to old forms of piety precisely because they offer some

[59] "Many a tear dropped in the grave".
[60] "His beard was white as snow".

solace in her personal wasteland.[61] The work's episodic nature creates a more conversational sonic environment, almost like a prayer. Strauss appears to toy with that idea at the end, utilizing a second inversion tonic chord as a transition to a raised subdominant chord in the penultimate measure. He then resolves that chord into a Picardy third, with the final chord as Eb Major. This wickedly altered Plagal motion solidifies the disturbed Ophelia's final words of "Gott sei mit euch."[62]

Figure 7. Andre Masson, *Ophelia*[63]

Though post-Expressionism and indicative of some blending of French and German styles, Masson's painting encapsulates the grotesque of Ophelia's death.

[61] Chapman, "Ophelia's 'Old Lauds': Madness and Hagiography in Hamlet," 112.
[62] "God be with you."
[63] André Masson (French, 1896-1987)
Ophelia, 1937
Oil on canvas
Unframed: 44 3/4 × 57 3/4 in. (113.7 × 146.7 cm.)
Framed: 47 × 59 × 3 3/8 in. (119.4 × 149.9 × 8.6 cm.)
The Baltimore Museum of Art: Bequest of Saidie A. May, BMA 1951.328
Photography By: Mitro Hood

CHAPTER IV: RUSSIA—DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH

Much like France in the mid-19th century and Germany in the early-20th century, mid-20th century Russia faced its own political strife. With the rise and reign of the Iron Curtain, art forms were relegated to propaganda promoting conformist ideology. Translations of *Hamlet* in Russia originated from the French tradition due to their intertwined cultures within the upper class. In Russian texts, Ophelia did not face the same fate as in the Shakespearean tradition. The first common adaptation featured Ophelia as daughter of Claudius, which mirrors Ducis' adaptation.

A more popular adaptation by Sumarokov rose to prominence and placed Polonius as an accomplice to Claudius, aiding in the plot to murder Hamlet's father and marry his mother. In this telling, Ophelia condemns her father for his crimes, then convinces Hamlet not to execute him. Her father, knowing his guilt and recognizing she would continue to marry Hamlet, kills himself. As truer translations of the play were performed, the reaction to Ophelia shifted. Because her character's story arc inherently incites negativity toward Hamlet, and Hamlet's narrative stood as a beacon of heroism for the Soviet culture, Ophelia was often vilified.[64] "She is perceived as a deeply ambiguous figure whose lovely surface might hide dark and threatening entrails (not unlike those of a dead dog)."[65] Not only does this reflect the change in viewpoint from the Romantic interpretation of Ophelia, but Sukhanova paints Ophelia as a wolf in sheep's clothing..

[64] Ekaterina Sukhanova, *Voicing the Distant: Shakespeare and Russian Modernist Poetry* (Madison, Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), 70. Sukhanova uses the term "Hamletism" to describe the Soviet fascination with Hamlet as hero.

[65] Natalia Khomenko, "The Cult of Shakespeare in Soviet Russia and the Vilified Ophelia," *Borrowers and Lenders* 9, no. 1 (2014).

In contrast, Modernist female poets treated Ophelia as a more active participant in the plots. Chernysheva describes her as "a vocal agent, capable of public argumentation and private introspection."[66] In her analysis, Chernysheva notes that Ophelia's motivation is both for love of Hamlet and for her own promotion in the social order.[67] The idea that women in such socially constrained positions could have such blatant opinions and worldviews put the following analysis of Shostakovich's musical interpretations of Ophelia into perspective.

The idea of a set societal structure with a reverence for big government and authoritarian political leaders permeated Russian culture, simultaneously offering artists like Dmitri Shostakovich a voice while also limiting their freedom of creative expression. Shostakovich faced several peaks and valleys in the trajectory of his career. Criticized by *Pravda* for his opera *Lady MacBeth of the Mtsensk District*, he fell into a writing slump, scrapping his Fourth Symphony.[68] His Fifth Symphony marked a major comeback for the composer as his work was lauded for its portrayal of the Communist Regime in Russia.

Though Dmitri Shostakovich composed incidental music for a production of *Hamlet* by Nikolai Pavlovich Akimov in 1932, the works evaluated within this thesis were not conceived until over three decades later. Shostakovich himself relayed his fondness for Shakespeare's play, stating, "But really, I love *Hamlet* too. I 'went through' *Hamlet* three times from a professional standpoint, but I read it many more times than

[66] Daria Chernysheva, "Transplacing Ophelia: Woman and Nation in the Earliest Russian Hamlets," *Comparative Drama* 51, no. 2 (2017): 190, https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2017.0016.

[67] Chernysheva, 199.

[68] Would later be premiered in 1961. Laurel Fay and David Fanning, *Shostakovich, Dmitry*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2001), https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.52560.

that, many more. I read it now."[69] Director Grigori Kozintsev found Shostakovich's writing for *Hamlet* so evocative of Shakespeare's own meaning that he asked Shostakovich to compose music for a staged production of *Hamlet* in 1954. Eventually, he collaborated directly with Shostakovich for scores for cinematic adaptations of the same plays.[70] These were Shostakovich's initial forays into the world of Shakespeare.

Shostakovich took great care in his incidental music for Kozintsev. Where some of his other rough drafts were lightly marked and devoid of major changes, Dombrovskaya notes "the sketches of *Hamlet* are full of other distinguishing characteristics, which show his intense search for expressiveness of the music and, most importantly, for pervasive dramaturgical logic of the musical whole."[71] The discourse between Shostakovich and Kozintsev regarding the film score indicates the same attention to detail, evident in the fact that the score corresponded closely to the music script and ultimate final product by Kozintsev. Within the film music, Shostakovich curates a specific sound for Ophelia. The first piece he wrote of the score was a short, repeated period originally intended for solo instrument and piano accompaniment called "The Dance of Ophelia." After having the theme played on piano and celeste, Shostakovich and Kozintsev eventually chose to utilize the harpsichord, eliciting the sound of a mechanical doll within Ophelia's first appearance.

As he neared the end of his life, he experimented with smaller translations and interpretations of Shakespeare texts for vocal works. One such piece occurred within his

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[69] Dmitri Shostakovich, *Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich*, ed. Solomon Volkov (New York: Harper & Row, 2004), 84.

[70] Olga Dombrovskaya, "Music to the Film Hamlet: Dmitri Shostakovich and Grigori Kozintsev-A Collaborative Effort," in *Novoe Sobranie Sochineii* (Moskva: Izd-vo "DSCH," 2013), 247.

[71] Dombrovskaya, 251.

"Seven Poems by Alexander Blok," Opus 127, written in 1967. The first movement, entitled "Song of Ophelia," was based on Blok's first attempt at two poems by the same name. Blok's initial poem showcased a lamenting Ophelia ruminating on her lost love with Hamlet as he left Elsinore, banished to England by Claudius.[72] The second "Song of Ophelia" highlights Ophelia's madness by its use of third-person references to Ophelia while she plays the role of narrator (a comparison of the two settings can be found in Table 2). Shostakovich's choice to use the first of the two interpretations allows insight into which of the two Ophelia's he credits—the romantic Ophelia takes precedence over the mad Ophelia. In his realization of Blok's poetry, he accentuates the female voice by way of using cello accompaniment. Throughout the entirety of the song cycle, Shostakovich keeps his instrumentation at a minimum, a practice he exhibited more as the years progressed.

Table 2. A Comparison of Blok's Two "Song of Ophelia" Settings

"Song of Ophelia" (1899)[73]	"Song of Ophelia" (1902)[74]
When you left me, my dear friend you promised to love me You left for a distant land, and swore to keep your promise! Beyond the happy land of Denmark, the shores are in darkness... The angry waves wash over the rocks... My warrior shall not return, all dressed in silver... The bow, and the black feather will restlessly lie in their grave.	He whispered to me a lot yesterday, Whispered to me terrible, fearful… He left a sad way, I forgot yesterday – forgotten yesterday. Yesterday it was - how long have? Why is he so silent? I did not find my lilies in the field, I was not looking for a weeping willow – weeping willow. Brother, long-li! With me, with me They said - and I kissed… And I do not remember, I do not remember - I must admit, What whispered the shore – shore whispered.

[72] Sukhanova, *Voicing the Distant: Shakespeare and Russian Modernist Poetry*, 72. Sukhanova writes of Blok's poetry regarding *Hamlet*, "What is new for the reader is the connection made by Blok between the existential problems and the theme of love, in itself a key topic in Russian philosophy of the time."

[73] English translation found courtesy of The LiederNet Archive, translated by Anne Evans: https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=47539

[74] English translation found at this website: https://aleksandr-blok.su/pesnya-ofelii-2/?lang=en

	I saw in each blade of grass his dear face terrible… He resigned on the same path, Where it took yesterday – it took yesterday… I was sheltered in a field, And there was no longer sad. Yesterday it was - how long have? With me said, and kissed me – I kissed.

Discourse regarding Shostakovich's interpretation of Ophelia would be lacking without mention of his use of thematic transformation within the score he wrote for Grigori Kozintsev's 1964 film adaptation of *Hamlet.* Ophelia's introduction in the film is marked by a whimsical dance in C Major. Largely outlining the tonic chord, the piece floats from tonic to mediant to tonic to dominant with an identical repetition, essentially a parallel double period. Leonard notes that Shostakovich utilizes a tritone in the seventh bar of the dance, a common indicator for Shostakovich's acknowledgement of the macabre.[75] The use of the harpsichord seems out of place against the lush yet angry orchestration common in Dmitri Shostakovich's music; however, that same oddity fuels an idea that Ophelia is a product of an older society, and even more so, a cog in antique machinery. The image of her rigid dance movements in conjunction with the harpsichord tune recalls that of a porcelain ballerina in a jewelry box, dancing because it is pretty and because it is expected.[76] The omnipresent use of the harpsichord accompanying Ophelia throughout the film is most effective when the machinery begins to break down.

[75] Leonard, *Shakespeare, Madness, and Music: Scoring Insanity in Cinematic Adaptations*, 50.

[76] Gulsen Sayin Teker, "Empowered by Madness: Ophelia in the Films of Kozintsev, Zeffirelli, and Branagh," *Literature-Film Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2006): 115. Teker references Ophelia's resignation as such: "A close up of her stone-like, lifeless face leaves the spectator with the impression that she is not

In Ophelia's mad scene, the strings alternate between mechanical repeated eighth notes and disturbing tremolos outlining a tonic-predominant-tonic progression in F Minor. The tonal center fluctuates as the first violins play a haunting melody overhead, first descending into a C, and then reiterating an altered version of the tremolo figure, but in a melodic context. These episodes lead to scalar passages in the first violins which are only once interrupted by the fervent tremolos. A break in the score commences within the scene so that Ophelia may present her first laud. Following her remark about her brother,[77] the harpsichord melody returns, a clear indicator of her own function within her brother's life, and within the hierarchy of society.[78] In her rickety dance, she sheds her mourning clothes, and the scene changes. She continues to sing her lauds outside the stark castle walls, and her erratic behavior prompts more excited gestures from the harpsichord. The theme titled "Ophelia's Insanity" features contrapuntal motion quite unusual for Shostakovich but again reminiscent of a different time.

These different iterations of the Ophelia motifs combine in "The Death of Ophelia" with a yearning repetition of her first laud in the first violins, followed by excited and dissonant motion in the harpsichord. All these elements culminate into more scalar figures and trills in the woodwinds as her body is shown in the brook and the

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enjoying dancing, a country activity imposed on her as a social rule." Leonard interprets this facial expression differently: "She is placid, wide-eyed, and innocent; when she is used by Polonius and Claudius to test Hamlet's sanity, she is more confused than hurt." Khomenko likens her to "an inscrutable automaton or a wooden doll."

[77] "My brother shall hear of this."

[78] Leonard, *Shakespeare, Madness, and Music: Scoring Insanity in Cinematic Adaptations*, 52. "If the celesta music represents Ophelia's court persona—the dutiful Ophelia who takes her dancing lessons, obeys her father, and is modest and proper in all things00 then the sung music must stand for Ophelia's own vocality. She sings these songs with her own voice, unaccompanied. She has internalized the songs as much as the stilted, formal music of the celesta is external to her. For the brief moments when she sings to her own chosen tunes, Ophelia is allowing herself to project her innermost feelings and desires."

camera suddenly pans to a bird flying overhead, a visual cue for the freedom of Ophelia's soul. The various demarcations of Ophelia throughout the musical content and the way they deteriorate as the scenes progress use her broken soul and body- no longer a functioning part of the mechanism- as a catalyst for what is to come in the breakdown of the Danish court.

Shostakovich wrote his "Song of Ophelia" in a set of seven pieces based on the modernist poetry of Alexander Blok. Solo soprano and cello create the texture for the work, which is largely centered around C Minor. The combination of the stated key signature as well as the emphasis on minor, augmented, and diminished intervals reinforces the minor mode.

Much like the Modern movement as a whole, this piece demonstrates the rebuttal of historical influence and instead focuses on the objective by minimizing the harmonic texture and directing the functional tonality horizontally rather than vertically. Chords occur through arpeggiation, creating a prolonged sense of harmonic space within the melody. In fact, chords are practically nonexistent, but because of the way the soprano and cello lines interact, implied pitches fill out the sparsity of the harmonic content within the listener's own tonal contextualization. Through the piece, Shostakovich creates the illusion of a tonic-secondary dominant-dominant-tonic progression for each stanza. The first stanza stands solidly in C Minor, the second serves as a conduit between C and its dominant G, and the third reiterates the dominant. When the vocal part ends, the cello moves back to the tonic to complete the harmonic progression.

Most interesting about the way the harmony is presented in this particular setting is that while the vocal line is certainly accessible and, for lack of a better word, sing-able,

this line is not the melody. The cello carries the melody throughout the majority of the work. Meanwhile, the vocal part outlines the chordal structure with occasional passing and neighbor tones, though primarily fluctuating between thirds.[79] This dichotomy should likely be interpreted as Ophelia's grounded lamentation for the fickle and independent Hamlet, with the vocal line representing Ophelia and the cello representing Hamlet. Shostakovich enhances their relationship rhythmically by creating motion on every eighth note subdivision in nearly every measure which features both parts.[80] And while the pitches within Ophelia's song only add substance to Hamlet's unstoppable melody, when her voice falters, so does the momentum of Hamlet as the cello adopts the harmonic outline in the final measures of the piece, signifying his own end.

Not only does this song not follow the idea of traditional vocal/accompaniment text painting to accentuate the meaning of the lyrics, but within its notated pitches, Shostakovich eschews rules of voice leading and counterpoint by notating certain pitches enharmonically. For example, though the Gb in mm. 6-8 aurally supports a secondary dominant function, leading to the dominant G, it is written as Gb rather than F# so that it can resolve down (differently than convention dictates), thus prolonging the harmonic function. This same method can be observed in mm. 32-33 by way of the Db. Though the result is ultimately the same as it would have been in the 17th century, Shostakovich uses subtle manipulation of these rules to increase the suspense and heighten the melancholy so prevalent within the meaning of the poem.

[79] Can be observed in mm. 5-9, 11-12, 22-24, 26-27, 30-33, and 35-38.

[80] Exceptions include mm. 12, 16, 27, 32, 36, and 37. Note: Measures that featured stagnant ends of phrases in the vocal line were omitted.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Anna Jameson classifies Ophelia as a character rather felt than heard.[81] Despite the fact that music is grounded in the auditory sense, each composer discussed in this thesis verifies her statement. Berlioz crafts an emotional response to his own marriage and dying ex-wife. Strauss utilizes structural imbalance as a sonic cue of her insanity, with multiple moments of embedded irony in relation to his legal battles. Shostakovich weaves narratives which showcase Ophelia's integrity as a necessary component to the storyline of Hamlet, a recognition of the crisis he had in his own societal position. With each composition, we see not only Ophelia in turmoil, but we witness the struggles and emotional states of the artists-- the human beings pouring their own lives and perceived weaknesses into Ophelia. Those who challenge Ophelia's relevance and importance to the story of Hamlet perhaps miss that Ophelia represents what Hamlet does not.

Looking to further study of a similar vein, I wonder if it would perhaps be pertinent to more deeply consider analyses of Ophelia's "foil" status to Hamlet. Both Berlioz and Shostakovich clearly identify with the character of Hamlet and his heroic plights: Berlioz by writing his ex-wife as Hamlet's ex-lover, and Shostakovich in the same way he posits his Fifth Symphony by representing both the leader and the revolutionary.[82] With Strauss, this connection is less clear; however, one might postulate that Ophelia's tongue in cheek songs are meant to be the manifestation of the publishers, much like he wrote *Krämerspiegel.* Inherently, he would be writing himself as Hamlet.[83]

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[81] Jameson, *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical, and Historical*, 185.

[82] Fay and Fanning, *Shostakovich, Dmitry*.

[83] Any support of this would need further study in the field of psychoanalytic musicology. For further reading: Gilbert J. Rose, *Between Couch and Piano: Psychoanalysis, Music, Art, and Neuroscience*

If we follow this line of thinking, perhaps these composers, in placing their best, most heroic qualities into Hamlet, place their weaknesses into Ophelia. In doing so, viewing Ophelia in a weaker light might be more of an act of self-preservation than a reflection on Shakespeare's intent for the original character.

(New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004); Sander L. Gilman, "Music and Psychoanalysis," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music and the Body*, ed. Youn Kim and Sander L. Gilman (Oxford University Press, 2019), 111–26, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190636234.013.8.

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