

Interpretation

By Laura Pallas

Why is having an interpretive plan important?

[about Songs] Only from life
itself may life be born.
Lotti Lieman

What are the major elements to understanding interpretation?

- Musical Considerations
- Lyrical Considerations
- Vocal Considerations
- Imagination!

Imagination

- The media through which one's imagination functions is her experiences; the broader and more aesthetically refined the experiences, the greater the resources the singer can draw upon when interpreting a song.

Van Christi

- You don't need to be a great singer to do great singing. However, you do need to have an active, well-directed imagination or great singing is impossible.

Robert Shaw

Vocal Skills: What you must have to pull off what your imagination asks of the music

- Control of the voice is the soil from which interpretation springs.

Lotti Lieman

- Musically, we cannot give what we are not musicians enough to give;
- emotionally, we cannot give what we are incapable of feeling;
- and technically, we cannot give what the vocal instrument is not free to give.

Louis Bachner

Musical Elements

- Form
- Melody
- Chord Structure
- Tempo / Meter

Form

- Phrases are almost always four or eight measures long

The image displays a musical score for the song "My Wild Irish Rose" in G major and 3/4 time. It is divided into four lines of music, each with a label above it. The first line is labeled "Phrase A" and contains the lyrics: "My wild I - rish Rose, _____ the sweet-est flow'r that grows, _____ You may". The second line is labeled "Phrase B" and contains: "search ev-'ry where but none can com - pare with my wild I - rish Rose, _____ My". The third line is labeled "Phrase A" and contains: "wild I - rish Rose, _____ the dear-est flow'r that grows, _____ and some". The fourth line is split into two parts: "Phrase B2" for the first part with lyrics "day for my sake she may let me take the _____" and "Phrase B2 (section slightly different)" for the second part with lyrics "bloom from my wild I - rish Rose, _____". The notes are color-coded: red for Phrase A, blue for Phrase B, and green for Phrase B2.

What can understanding the form do for the interpretation?

- Let the structure help dictate when to breathe
- Inherent “weak” spots
- Discovered patterns and relationships

Melody

- Sing the melody
- Dynamics (As line goes up so does the volume)
- Ranges (Tessitura)
- Repeated notes
- Bass too low/tenor really high?

Chord Structure

- Progressions
- Tension & Release
- Dynamics

Tempo / Meter

- Time signature
- Look at the smallest note duration to make sure tempo is appropriate
- Consider the musical style (Dixieland, Jazz, Driver, Ragtime, Ad lib, Swing)
- Hold it – grow it (do something with it, held notes don't have a beat)

Lyrical Elements

- A singer with a moderately good voice who has mastered the significance of his words will always have the advantage over the possessor of a much finer instrument to whom they are a sealed message.

Madam Marchesi

Lyrical Elements

- Analyze the Text
- Intro (setting the story)
- First time stating the “hook” of the song
- Important words(heart/lonely) /un-important words (and /the)
- Repeated words/echoes
- For Inflection, dramatically speak the text
- Character of the words (“Honey Dear, want you near”)
- Word Painting /Onomatopoeia (“sighing wind”
“And will you laugh with me when...”)

The Barbershop Ballad

- Ad Lib style
- Underlying meter
- Triplets and fat twos

The Uptune

- Tempo is King (watch out for choppiness)
- Rhythm is Queen
- Down beat or Back Beat?

Pop Songs

- How was it originally done?
- Don't let barbershop arrangement "musack" it
- More risks with Interpretation

Interpretation

- Form
- Musical Elements
- Lyrical Elements
- Understand the Barbershop Ballad (ad lib)
- Understand tempo/rhythm – Uptune
- Go to the source for pop music