

# UC San Diego

## UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

Vanity Run Amok

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0mb846s6>

### Author

Leytham, Leslie Ann

### Publication Date

2015

### Supplemental Material

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0mb846s6#supplemental>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Vanity Run Amok

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

in

Contemporary Music Performance

by

Leslie Ann Leytham

Committee in charge:

Professor John Fonville, chair  
Professor Anthony Davis  
Professor Tara Knight  
Professor Victoria Petrovitch  
Professor Katharina Rosenberger

2015

Copyright

Leslie Ann Leytham, 2015

All rights reserved.

The Dissertation of Leslie Ann Leytham is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2015



## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of János Négyesy.

## EPIGRAPH

It's awfully difficult to keep the line between the past and the present.  
Awfully difficult.

*Edith Bouvier Beales*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page .....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Epigraph .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Figures .....	vii
Acknowledgements .....	ix
Vita .....	x
Abstract of the Dissertation .....	xi
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: The Television Variety Show .....	5
Chapter 2: Lindley La Roo .....	21
Appendix 2.1 .....	35
Appendix 2.2 .....	36
Chapter 3: Patti Cassidy .....	38
Chapter 4: Rita La Mer .....	49
Appendix 4.1 .....	60
Chapter 5: Beverley Shrills .....	64
Conclusion .....	79
References .....	80

Video Recording of *Vanity Run Amok* on file at Mandeville Special Collections Library.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Still of Brendan Nguyen taken from performance .....	9
Figure 1.2: “Never Stop,” an ad featuring internet cat celebrities .....	11
Figure 1.3: “Catheter Joy,” an ad for male tampons .....	12
Figure 1.4 a and b: inspiration for and execution of “Catheter Joy” .....	13
Figure 1.5: “Pudre,” a male body powder .....	14
Figure 1.6: “Perfect Swish,” the mouthwash that changes color in your mouth .....	16
Figure 1.7: “Mystery,” the best way to poison your loved ones .....	17
Figure 1.8: “Cocaine,” an energy drink .....	18
Figure 1.9: “South,” a travel advertisement for Las Vegas .....	19
Figure 2.1: Lindley La Roo promotional photograph .....	21
Figure 2.2: Brendan Nguyen and Lindley La Roo in performance .....	26
Figure 2.3 a and b: the photo on the right inspired Lindley’s wig .....	27
Figure 2.4 a and b: (L) Lindley’s full get-up; (R) Miley Cyrus’s cat outfit .....	28
Figure 2.5: a group of mall patrons photographed by Michael Galinsky .....	28
Figure 2.6: Lindley collapses to the floor in VRA, 2014 .....	31
Figure 2.7: Britney Spears collapses to the floor at the VMA’s in 2000.....	32
Figure 2.8: Madonna collapses to the floor at the VMA’s in 1984 .....	32
Figure 2.9: Rock-A-Hula waterpark in the Mojave Desert .....	33
Figure 3.1: Patti Cassidy promotional photograph .....	38
Figure 3.2: Style inspiration for Patti Cassidy’s wig .....	40
Figure 3.3: Diana Vreeland in her Manhattan apartment .....	40
Figure 3.4: Patti Cassidy in performance .....	45

Figure 3.5: Cher defeats Letterman with a single word .....	46
Figure 4.1: Rita La Mer promotional photograph .....	49
Figure 4.2: Vocal ranges of men and women .....	51
Figure 4.3: Excerpt from Nicholas Deyoe’s <i>Ace Farren Ford Songs</i> .....	52
Figure 4.4: Excerpt from 1. all purpose .....	53
Figure 4.5: Excerpt from 2. part one, part two, part three .....	54
Figure 4.6: Excerpt from 4. the incomplete pleasure .....	55
Figure 4.7: Excerpt from 5. why why not is not is .....	56
Figure 4.8: Excerpt from 5. why why not is not is .....	57
Figure 5.1: Beverly Shrills promotional photograph .....	64
Figure 5.2: Lily Pons performing on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1956 .....	67
Figure 5.3: Maria Callas performing on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1956 .....	67
Figure 5.4: Beverly Shrills performs Ophelia’s Mad Scene .....	70
Figure 5.5: Leontyne Price performs on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1961 .....	70
Figure 5.6: First instance of coloratura in Ophelia’s Mad Scene .....	73
Figure 5.7: “Hysteria” photographed by Jean-Michel Charcot .....	74
Figure 5.8: Joan Sutherland performs Lucia’s mad scene on TV in 1968 .....	74
Figure 5.9: Implied laughter in the vocal line .....	75

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank John Fonville for having immense patience with me throughout this whole process, and for allowing me the opportunity to finish my degree.

Thank you to Katharina Rosenberger, Tara Knight, and Victoria Petrovich for providing a wealth of inspiration and support during my time here at UCSD.

Thank you to Anthony Davis for your incredibly vast knowledge of pop culture, and for all the juicy gossip. I wish you'd told me you knew Madeline Kahn earlier than you did.

I would love to thank Sarah Agler and Juliana Snapper for helping me to find the pure joy in singing again.

And to the team of collaborators and friends who help me bring my silliness to life. Joe, Anna, Brendan, I love you dearly.

## VITA

- 2005 Bachelor of Music, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- 2007 Master of Music, The Boston Conservatory
- 2015 Doctor of Musical Arts, University of California, San Diego

## FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Vocal Performance (Specializations in opera and contemporary music performance)

Studies in Contemporary Performance Practice  
Professors János Négyesy and John Fonville

Studies in Voice  
Dr. Carol Kimball, Dr. Rebecca Folsom, and Sarah Agler

Studies in Acting  
Professors Sanford Sylvan and Christine Seitz

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Vanity Run Amok

by

Leslie Ann Leytham

Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Professor John Fonville, Chair

*Vanity Run Amok* is an extension of mid-20th century television variety shows in a two-person format where one person acts as a fixed host and the other as all of the show's guest performers. The performance emulates many of the standard conventions of the variety show format: campy flash over substance, the disaffected host played by Brendan Nguyen, commercial breaks designed and directed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli,



a flamboyant band leader played by Bob Pierzak and his house band, quick cuts in the live production expertly directed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, and a parade of musical guests that come with cultural assumptions related to their individual performative genres. *Vanity Run Amok* deviates from the legacy of this tradition by giving the variety show tropes new meaning.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **VANITY RUN AMOK ORIGINS**

On May 23, 2014, *Vanity Run Amok* was performed in front of a live audience in Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego, and simulcast online via livestream.com. The show was the result of a year's worth of collaborations with designers, composers, musicians and technicians, and was an attempt to reconcile my upbringing with my training.

Like many people of my generation, I spent much of my childhood and youth glued to the television, and the influence of the entertainment industry and popular culture were an ever-present force to be reckoned with but also something that I greatly admired. As a teenager, I was convinced that I would end up forging a performance career as a comedian, using music as my main source of story telling – more specifically, I wanted to be like my heroes Gilda Radner, Madeline Kahn, and Carol Burnett.

Early on, music performances on television – largely viewed on cable television stations dedicated to classic television – proved to be the most influential to me: the entirety of the Carol Burnett Show, Elvis' 1968 Comeback Special, Gilda Radner's one woman show, Madeline Kahn appearing on The Muppet Show, Nirvana's performance on MTV's Unplugged, Whitney Houston's performance of the National Anthem at the 1992 Superbowl, and Bugs Bunny cartoons. My turn to 'high art' came not from any recognition of cultural hierarchy, but from technical hurdle; as a budding mezzo-soprano, Western Art Music presented an intriguing challenge to more familiar pop forms. As a classical singer and experimental musician by training and a lover of pop music, drag and television culture by hobby, I discovered that these performance practices share a

common theme: a problematic representation of femininity via an overt evocation of the diva (warts and all).

*Vanity Run Amok* emerged as an outward expression of these contradictions inherent in my lived experiences related to performance and performativity. By using the diva as a conduit for complicating the borders between high (opera, performance art, experimental music) and low art (pop, musical theater, drag, parody) and gender normativity, *Vanity Run Amok* compels an interrogation of the use of persona in performance.

As I developed the show I turned to other like-minded artists whose work also deals with gender and genre expectations and transgressions. Video artist, Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, was the most obvious choice for media director. Her work “[examines] femininity and expectations in cinema – how moving image has fragmented realities and perceived female identity.”<sup>1</sup> She references cinematic tropes and stylistic traditions, and complicates them by engaging young female actresses to enact vulnerability through a series of poses and gestures typically reserved for private spaces. Anna served as an invaluable collaborator, producing all of the video material for the show.

Pianist, Brendan Nguyen, came aboard the project early on as the show’s host. Having worked together previously on his theatrical, multi-media work *The Seven Tragedies of Space Travel* – a piano recital that explored issues relating to his Vietnamese American heritage – I knew that Brendan would be the perfect foil for my over-the-top personae. His knack for programming concerts that draw connections across centuries of piano repertoire allows him to “[cast] a contemporary eye on the established

---

<sup>1</sup> Lavatelli, Anna Chiaretta. “Artist Statement.” [www.annachiaretta.com](http://www.annachiaretta.com). Web.

canon.”<sup>2</sup> His performance style is remarkable in the way that he is able to successfully wrestle the most technically demanding works without ever losing control of his body. His icy stare and fluid upper body are hypnotizing, and I wondered how he would approach this new territory as an actor.

Also included early in the process was composer Bob Pierzak, tasked with the creation of the sonic identity of *Vanity Run Amok* through the composition of the theme music and all commercial jingles. “Recently, Mr. Pierzak, under the name mayor taco ghost, has self-released his first album, *dream man* - a set of absurdist lounge pop songs.”<sup>3</sup> Pierzak’s compositional language is riddled with reference and absurdist turns of phrase, and I knew that he would provide music that was as silly as it was self-aware.

Each of us takes campiness quite seriously, using reference as a major aesthetic component. Camp typically involves a comic tribute to a previously popular form of media (or show, or personality), and must remind us of something that has happened before. Camp typically includes any of the following: femininity as contrivance, parody, irony, style over substance, reference (to the self or to something else), kitsch, opulence, and forgery. Camp is always something that is performed, though Susan Sontag argues that inanimate objects can also be considered campy (Tiffany lamps, for example).<sup>4</sup> A camp performance is always aware of its audience and is aware that for some, the performance is taken completely seriously, and that others might disregard it as entirely a

---

<sup>2</sup> Nguyen, Brendan. “About.” [www.brendannguyen.com](http://www.brendannguyen.com). Web.

<sup>3</sup> Pierzak, Robert. “Bio/Vitae.” [musicgrad.ucsd.edu/~bob](http://musicgrad.ucsd.edu/~bob). Web

<sup>4</sup> Sontag, Susan. “Notes on Camp.” *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays*. New York: Dell Pub., 1966. 275-92. Print.

joke. Camp draws attention to the common performances of self (even outside of the stage arena).<sup>5</sup>

Campiness is typically perceived as a gay male sensibility through its gender parody (which is mutually exclusive from homosexuality). Though, it's really more of a representation of "ostentatious femininity (e.g., makeup, wigs, feather boas)"<sup>6</sup> which isn't necessarily only found in drag (performing symbols of gender which are not assigned to the gender biologically assigned to us). Mae West, Madonna, and fictional characters such as Xena: Warrior Princess are examples of female camp performers who exaggerate their femininity to the point of absurdity.

*Vanity Run Amok* became a show deeply layered in reference, copies of bygone heroes, nostalgia, and a masqueraded femininity in its representations of diva archetypes. With the structure of 1950s/60s TV variety show, I was able to re-contextualize the cultural assumptions associated with each style of music through parody. In this paper, I will analyze the show's structure, characters, and music, discussing how each of the sets came to be – pointing out each of the points of reference – as well as situating each portion within a broader cultural context relating to televised performances and performance practice.

---

<sup>5</sup> Shugart, Helene A. and Catherine Egle Wagoner. *Making Camp: Rhetorics of Transgression in U.S. Popular Culture*. Pg 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. Pg. 26.

**CHAPTER 1:**  
**THE TV VARIETY SHOW**

We must believe that the performers are presenting themselves, even as their presence is determined by technology, by lighting, amplification, sound balance, editing, etc. For both TV and record producers, audiences, similarly, are both there and not there, an imaginary presence.

- Simon Frith<sup>7</sup>

*Vanity Run Amok* is an extension of mid-20th century television variety shows in a two-person format where one person acts as a fixed host and the other as all of the show's guest performers. The performance emulates many of the standard conventions of the variety show format: campy flash over substance, a disaffected host played by Brendan Nguyen, commercial breaks designed and directed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, a flamboyant band leader played by Bob Pierzak and his house band, quick cuts in the live production directed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli, and a parade of musical guests that come with cultural assumptions related to their individual performative genres. *Vanity Run Amok* deviates from the legacy of this tradition by giving the variety show tropes new meaning. By accentuating and exaggerating the mechanics of the guest performers' feminine representation into a grotesque comedy, it takes a performance practice that on the surface appears harmlessly superficial and reveals its latent dysfunction.

While most modern television is generally very campy (cable news program graphics, reliably over-the-top 3-Act sitcom structures, and the fabricated story lines of "reality" programs), I decided to produce a television format that hasn't existed as a music-based program since the late 1960s/early 1970s. In choosing an outdated form of

---

<sup>7</sup> Frith, Simon. "Look! Hear! The Uneasy Relationship of Music and Television." *Popular Music*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Music and Television (Oct., 2002), pp. 277-290. Web. Accessed 25 Jan. 2009.

television, I'm presenting a nostalgic artifact to an audience that has no physical memory of this type of show (myself included).

Modern variety shows look and sound nothing like the ones on air during the 1950s. Contemporary variety programs fall into two categories: 1) late night talk shows where the celebrity interview takes precedence over music, comedy skits, etc., and 2) reality talent competitions that feature a wide range of acts, entirely amateurs, and centers around a substantial prize package. The narratives of both these types of shows are so predictable and prepared either in advance, or edited after the fact. In the case of the late night talk show, the interview itself is so well groomed that nothing about the interaction between guests and host seems off-the-cuff or spontaneous. The talk show also only features actors and musicians who are promoting a mainstream film or album and artists who work on the fringe are excluded.

The talent competitions *appear* to be a little looser in structure and inclusive of outsiders (the terrible singer featured in the audition reel, circus acts, comedy acts, 8-year-olds singing "opera"), but these types of shows are constructed in post-production. Novelty acts are included, but only as a way to bolster the "truly" talented ones. With shows like American Idol, the untalented ones are heavily featured and used as a promotional tool. It is also imperative that the *really* good singers have a humble backstory. If any of these people are to be deemed by the public worthy of the cash prize and recording contract, or the incredible exposure even if not selected as the winner, we must believe that this will completely change their lives. Oftentimes, stories are edited or coached during the filming process so that the contestants fit this mold. These types of shows end up becoming shills for the American Dream myth: you can achieve anything if

you try hard enough, above all, you must be your most authentic self (even though that self is edited to ascribe to conventions of behavior, style, and appearance), and *anyone* can be incredibly gifted.<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, not much has changed from then (Ed Sullivan, Milton Bearle, Carol Burnett, Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour) to now (Jimmy Fallon, Conan O'Brien, X Factor, American Idol). Shows of the 1950s and 1960s as well as modern variety shows feature celebrity guests and charming hosts (mostly white men). But it was seeing the stars in live performance that was more important than some rehearsed anecdote about that hilarious encounter at Whole Foods Market. At the time (by about 1954) the television was an extension of the radio, and the fact that audiences could see people in action allowed the viewer to feel as though they were a part of the show without leaving their homes. In this way, audiences felt that what they might normally be excluded from became accessible to them.

In early days, great care was taken in furthering the tradition for “uplifting” programming, and classical music easily fit into this category. Leonard Bernstein’s Young People’s Concerts, for example, aired from 1958 - 1972. NBC Opera Theatre ran from 1949 - 1964, broadcasting fully-staged operatic productions as well as regularly commissioning new works for television. While long-form classical music programming didn’t last past the early 1970s, American opera singers were getting their fair share of screen time on American variety show programs. Soprano Leontyne Price appeared 3 times on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1971, as well as The Bell Telephone Hour in 1968, and

---

<sup>8</sup> Meizel, Katherin. “Win or Lose: Success and Failure and the American Dream.” *Idolized: Music, Media and Identity in American Idol*. Indiana University Press, 2011. Pp. 81 – 101. Print.



was featured many times in the NBC Opera Theatre broadcasts. Soprano Beverly Sills maintained the most successful relationship with television audiences, appearing with great regularity on an array of variety show programs and talk shows from 1969 - 1990 including The Dick Cavett Show, The Merv Griffin Show, The Muppet Show, and the Carol Burnett Show, as well as broadcast performances at Carnegie Hall with Carol Burnett and Danny Kaye. By the end of the 1970s, many of the classical music-oriented programming ceased to exist (with the exception of PBS's *Great Performances* series).

However, the television is primarily a visual form of media, where sound is secondary, making it more suitable for pop singers and actors to promote their work than for classical musicians. At a time Post War when the American teenager became a target market, it was imperative to showcase stars and music that would generate the greatest viewership and sell records and merchandise. The appearance of pop stars on television not only promoted music as a product to be consumed but also provided a code of dress and behavior to be copied. But fans of music eventually become creators of music, so the iconography of the musician (clothing style, speech patterns, physical gesture) gets passed on generation to generation. The TV variety show provided a visual and sonic instruction manual for up-and-coming wannabes.

With *Vanity Run Amok*, I wanted to present a variety show that was formulaic and superficially predictable. As the show progressed, the formula began to unravel as expectations were challenged. The show begins with our male host presenting a rambling monologue about beauty standards, eventually ending with a pronouncement that this show *celebrates* the Diva!



*Figure 1.1: Still of Brendan Nguyen delivering his opening monologue.*

The host, Brendan Nguyen, represents the conceit of vanity and its resultant cognitive dissonances are embodied in this central male character, and he begins to lose control of his social faculties as the show progresses. The confidence and cunning he exhibits in the beginning are revealed to be a thin affectation, masking a nascent naiveté. The glitz and glamour to which he seems to aspire drives him to act impulsively, and ultimately reveals a sociopathic core.

The variety show's host "persona is radically split between his or her function as autonomous individual and as corporate spokesperson."<sup>9</sup> The most successful variety show hosts – bandleader Perry Como and American songstress Dinah Shore – function as a reflection of their home audiences, self-consciously positioning the ordinary (host, audience) against extraordinary decadence (celebrity guest stars). In the cases of Como

---

<sup>9</sup> Mann, Denise. "The Spectacularization of Everyday Life: Recycling Hollywood Stars and Fans in Early Television Variety Shows." Pg. 62

and Shore, neither of them was able to successfully cross over into film. Their celebrity tied them directly to the television, thereby leaving them with a “lower cultural status.”<sup>10</sup>

But there was a shift in the late 1950s when celebrities like Frank Sinatra took up hosting positions on their own variety programs. Sinatra’s personal life was publically discussed and criticized at length, as well as having already established incredibly successful careers in film, music, radio and live performance. He already comfortably inhabited the glamorous position that the host was supposed to remain pitted against.

For film stars moving to television in the 1950s, their star identity was already established, but the intimate and routine quality of early television, as well as its small visual dimensions, presentational genres, overt commercialism, and lesser cultural standing in relation to film, enforced a redrafting of that identity away from the extraordinary. The preformed star image, and even glamour itself, was thus reconstituted as a more ordinary and personal construct.<sup>11</sup>

Brendan sits somewhere between Sinatra and Como. Part variety show patriarch (soothing spokesperson and trustworthy arbiter of taste) and part cabaret emcee (a character with a presumed fan base and enjoyer of excesses), Brendan is without any declared history. As Christine Becker notes, the celebrity host redefines the role of host, making the glamorous seem somehow ordinary. Brendan’s performed vanity and disaffected personality complicates his role as our trustworthy guide through *Vanity Run Amok*’s cavalcade of guests. His appearance is affirming, familiar, yet glamorous and mysterious.

*Vanity Run Amok* wouldn’t have been complete without corporate sponsorships. I had originally wanted Brendan to do all of the advertisements – much like Mike Wallace

---

<sup>10</sup> McNally, Karen. “Hollywood stars vs. variety show hosts: The incompatible case of Frank Sinatra on 1950s television.” *European Journal of American Culture* 31:2, pg. 108

<sup>11</sup> Becker, Christine. *It’s the Pictures That Got Small*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University press, 2008. Pg. 7.

did on his show – or include a group of studio singers and actors who would perform the commercials live, like on the Colgate Comedy Hour. I needed time to change from one character to the next – and I nearly didn’t make it to my mark for the final act. To avoid any possible litigation, I tasked composer Bob Pierzak with the creation of fake products and their jingles, and he did not disappoint. The intent was to have all of the commercial jingles recorded by December 2013, and all filming finished by March 2014. As deadlines became more fluid, many of the original treatments for the commercials – including an entire 8<sup>th</sup> commercial – got scrapped. All of the commercials were directed and filmed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli.

#### **COMMERCIAL #1: NEVER STOP**



*Figure 1.2: “Never Stop,” an ad featuring internet cat celebrities*

“Never Stop” was a major mystery to Bob, Anna and myself. The product was never really clear, and we couldn’t quite agree on where to go with the filming. Of course, as time ran out, this commercial shoot got put on the backburner. Anna decided a

week or two prior to the show that she should just do a quick animation of felines who had found fame on the Internet. The cut and paste feeling of it was evocative of many of my middle school folders that were covered in magazine collages. The still images of kittens in this commercial are anthropomorphized as if they are taking a vow never to stop working for us humans. This commercial takes what is a current Internet trend and creates something that is equal parts solemn and silly.

The commercial lasts 0:48 seconds, during which there are tight, staccato, voices singing – more like whining – the mantra, “We’ll never, ever, ever stop working for you!” Then the commercial goes into a groovy breakdown with midi drums, a funky bass line and a free-improvised saxophone solo played obnoxiously by Drew Ceccato.

## COMMERCIAL #2: CATHETER JOY



*Figure 1.3: “Catheter Joy,” an ad for a male tampon*

Catheter Joy is the male tampon you never knew you needed. We decided to take inspiration from a promotional film produced by General Motors in 1956 called “Design

for Dreaming” in which a glamorous woman marvels at all the things her “kitchen of tomorrow” can accomplish, leaving her ample time during the day for leisurely and vain pursuits.<sup>12</sup> Her reactions are so over-the-top and unrealistic that we felt a commercial for this type of product should mimic this sort of atmosphere.



*Figures 1.4 a and b: inspiration for and execution of Catheter Joy.*

We recruited pianist and performance artist, Todd Moellenberg to star as our man in need of such a device, and sent out an open call to the UCSD Music graduate students, asking for volunteer extras. The premise is that Todd has discovered this incredible product, and is hosting a party to tell his friends about it. We decided to film at IKEA because the only person we know with a stylish home is Brendan, and we had already planned on filming two other commercials at his apartment. We also felt that if we were in danger of being ejected from the premises, the energy might reflect that, creating intensity in the footage that we might not have been able to capture otherwise.

---

<sup>12</sup> Nply. “Kitchens of the Future.” Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 Feb. 2008. Web.



The commercial opens with a booming interrogation, “Can you stop the flow,” followed by an indignant response, “Nobody stops the flow like the Catheter Joy!” The musical interplay is very active, a delicate texture of pizzicato strings and lilting recorder melody played brilliantly by Wojtek Blecharz, with brief punctuations by horns. Then, the jingle takes a turn towards the mysterious, featuring a chorus of ooh’s and ah’s, signifying something beyond Todd’s – or any of his party guests for that matter – control. They are transfixed by the magical powers of “Catheter Joy!” Then, as if being jolted out of a dream, the initial, barbaric interrogation and response returns. It snaps Todd back to reality, but this time, he is a much happier man for having used this product.

### COMMERCIAL #3: PUDRE



Figure 1.5: “Pudre” a male body powder that turns to glitter when it touches the skin.

“Pudre” is a commercial that nearly didn’t happen. We asked friends if they would be able to come to a shoot at Brendan’s apartment, but for some reason, none of our male friends wished to appear in their underwear in a video piece that would be published on the Internet. Anna and I sent Brendan on a “scouting mission,” that required him to go to the gay bars and clubs in Hillcrest, and recruit any wannabe actors who would like to participate in an art project. The morning of the shoot, we had no official confirmations that anybody would show up. Luckily for us, Brendan’s impeccable social skills procured six lovely men willing to participate, most of whom had never met each other, or Brendan, beforehand.

The idea for the product was a body powder for men, but it turns into glitter when it touches the skin. Like “Catheter Joy,” the main dramatic element is its transformative power. We wanted this commercial also to resemble marketing plans that target women by creating a slumber party atmosphere. The effervescent nature of the flute-based jingle lent itself well to such a treatment. We wanted beautiful male bodies giggling and carrying on in the way that young women have been portrayed to do in film and commercials (the slumber party scene of *Animal House* always made me cringe).

#### **COMMERCIAL #4: PERFECT SWISH**

“Perfect Swish” was my favorite of all the commercials; the jingle and the filming turned out better than I had imagined! Four of our seven commercials ended up subverting hetero normative gender expectations; we needed at least one commercial where the women got to flip the script. The idea for the product was simple: it’s a mouthwash that changes color once it makes contact with your saliva. The jingle was made up of laser sounds and 1980s video game music, ending with the sung hook: “The



perfect swish of your life!” The only image that came to mind was the nauseating teen B-movie horror films where the bad girls hang out in their safe space: the high school girls’ bathroom.



*Figure 1.6: “Perfect Swish,” the mouthwash that changes color in your mouth.*

Typically, the female bedroom is considered the safe space where girls can truly be themselves, listen to music and talk about boys because it’s an enclosed room in a domestic environment. The tough chicks, though, occupied a private space in a public environment. In this commercial, the women also enact a male biological response: ejaculation. With each laser burst, the girls take their turns spitting for the camera and also spitting on each other. They gleefully participate in a gross act, until they enact a tableau vivant at the end, baring their “swish”-stained teeth. They grin at the camera, with “swish” dripping down their chins...a very unladylike thing to do.

## COMMERCIAL #5: MYSTERY



*Figure 1.7: “Mystery,” the best way to poison your loved ones.*

“Mystery” featured a swinging bachelor pad jingle that begged to be staged at Brendan’s spectacular downtown loft apartment. The product was a poison marketed to those who wanted to kill their lovers in a most dignified way. In the commercial, the product name is never revealed, but the action of people poisoning each other while at a sophisticated party is prominently featured. Of course, though, there’s a twist. At the tail end of a moving shot, the camera closes in on my face, at which point I open my eyes, wink and flash a mischievous smile.

The jingle features a swung vibraphone melody accompanied by a piano and accented by muted horns. The tune gets passed around to a muted trumpet, saxophone, and then all play the tune together in its final iteration. The jingle isn’t really a jingle, but more of a nod to Henry Mancini tunes from the 1950s and 1960s. Whereas Mancini

regularly used the Big Band, Pierzak utilized the smaller jazz combo. The jingle reflects a sense that we've just been invited into Dean Martin's apartment for a nightcap.

### COMMERCIAL #6: COCAINE



Figure 1.8: “Cocaine,” an energy drink.

“Cocaine” is the only commercial to feature a product that actually exists, though it has been officially pulled from retail shelves and is now only available online. The drink contains 280mg of caffeine per 8.4 fl. oz. can, which is the maximum recommended daily allowance for a healthy adult.<sup>13</sup> None of us on the production team of *Vanity Run Amok* have ever tried the drink, nor do we have any desire to do so, but when we were presented with a jingle that says, “maybe in a year you will drink some cocaine,” we couldn’t resist the opportunity to feature this highly un-recommended product.

This commercial also provided a welcomed opportunity to dust off my old Kenneth White Jr. High cheerleading uniform and pom-poms. Once again, we featured

<sup>13</sup> Kallmyer, Ted, and James Foster. *Caffeine Informer*. Web. Accessed 8 Feb, 2015.

Todd Moellenberg – who is depressingly as small as I was at a pubescent 13-years-old – prancing around a local gas station in a wig I purchased more than a decade ago for a Madeline Kahn costume. The run-down station and Todd’s incurably cheery disposition complement Pierzak’s aggressively upbeat jingle that predominantly features a pulsating synth beat. The vocals were recorded by overdubbing several versions of myself singing: “Maybe in a year you will drink some cocaine. Maybe in a year you will feel so fresh and new. Maybe in a year you will drink some cocaine. Maybe in a year you will be so bored you’re dead.”

#### **COMMERCIAL #7: SOUTH**



*Figure 1.9: “South,” a travel advertisement for Las Vegas.*

The final ad that appeared before our last act was a travel advertisement for Las Vegas, my declared hometown, named “South,” which is a nod to where I was born, Texas. The ad starred my incomparable 14-year-old niece, Chelsea Loveridge, prancing before a backdrop of Las Vegas marquees that Anna filmed on a trip we took in March

2014. Coincidentally, I was 14-years-old when my family moved from a border town in South Texas to Las Vegas. It was a major culture shock for me at that age, so we staged Chelsea enacting poses and gestures of awe, delight, and terror.

This jingle is typical of Pierzak's compositional style: lyrics that blend immaturity with obscure metaphor, grotesque imagery, wordplay, and tight vocal harmony. The voices (all Pierzak) repeat a single melodic phrase that sounds like a schoolyard chant. A punchy bass line enters as the voices finish the first phrase and takes us into the B section that is punctuated with a masculine battle cry: HUH. The voices re-enter and the war cries become more consistent, accenting the second and fourth measure of each bar. This jingle is like an act of hypnosis. Its repetitive melodic and rhythmic structure are luring you not through enticing imagery but through subconscious coaxing like the witch luring Hansel and Gretel into her candy house.

...come to Las Vegas...it'll be fun...I promise...



**CHAPTER 2:**  
**LINDLEY LA ROO**



*Figure 2.1: Lindley la Roo promotional photograph.*

Lindley La Roo's performance involved a cloying, teen pop patriotic homage to American Imperialism. Her costume (cat leggings, shocking pink and purple hair) projects her as a hollow, plastic embodiment of juvenile pastiche. Her language is coded as adolescent and therefore perceived as unimportant and uninformed. Her performance is an inauthentic pantomime in front of projections of desolate landscape and inanimate objects designed by Anna Chiaretta Lavatelli.

In collaborating with composers, I don't typically work out much of the musical material beforehand and this was no different. I tend to situate myself as the interpreter of the notes on the page, so long as the composer gives me the freedom to invent in this capacity. The collaborations in this show, however, began with my providing the narrative context, the composer writing the work with a specific type of girl in mind, then

me fleshing out the persona and writing dialogue that would make my initial idea and the piece of music meet somewhere in the middle.

The character initially came out of necessity for the structure of the show. I knew I needed a lip-synced pop music persona and figured the best person to write music for her would be Clinton McCallum. McCallum's work typically plumbs the depth of horror, mental and emotional instability, and heavy metal (the material as well as the music genre), creative arenas that are miles away from teen pop. Despite this, he is one of the fiercest defenders of pop music. His love of the Spice Girls runs pretty deep, and I was curious as to how he would treat this genre.

When Clint presented me with a 12-minute song about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I had no idea how to situate Lindley's persona in relation to it. I was expecting something much more conventionally pop: easy verse/chorus/bridge structure, repetitive and banal lyrical content, music driven by the vocal line, but most importantly, a song that foregrounds the singer. What Clint created was a piece of music that was mostly instrumental with lyrical content that abstractly dealt with American foreign policy of the last 15 years. What kind of pop singer would record this?

Then Courtney Love (lead singer of 1990's grunge rock band, Hole, and former wife of the late Nirvana front man, Kurt Cobain) made an unfortunate tweet about the Malaysia Airline tragedy, and whatever was left of this woman's already thin credibility was thrown out the window. Not that anyone should be taking search and rescue advice from someone who isn't a trained professional, but it got me thinking about those who have a substantial platform to state their opinions but lack the ability to realize that they should maybe keep their mouths shut.

There's something more to Courtney Love than just a person with a digital megaphone and nothing to say. In the last decade, seemingly everyone in the first world has the opportunity to become that person via the advent of social media use through hand-held devices. Lindley is a teenager who has only experienced the world through some sort of mediated device. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were understood through the Internet, the 24-hour news cycle, and from the safety of our homes. "Supporting" the troops has never been so easy! Guy Penn, in his blog about Madonna's single and video criticizing American foreign policy in 2003, remarks:

Although I wished for the troops safety, I, like most Americans, ultimately got distracted as the war progressed. Sure, I scoffed at the mess when it spiraled out of control, demanded change I could believe in, but in the end – I was removed from the horrors of war, a complacent member of the audience...<sup>14</sup>

But unlike Madonna, Lindley doesn't have a first-hand, sophisticated account of these events. Teenagers are in an interesting position of having been alive for such major world events, but are left with the task of piecing it together after the fact through images, video footage, and what others have to say about it. If my life can be used an example, I was 10 years old at the time of the Los Angeles riots in 1992. I watched in horror as buildings burned, people beat each other and businesses were looted live on television. I was old enough to know something horrible was happening, but too young to understand the complexities of the situation. At 10 years old, I only saw hatred and it terrified me.

In thinking about Lindley la Roo and an atmospheric song about war, McCallum and I wondered, how would someone who was born in 1997 *actually* understand the

---

<sup>14</sup> Penn, Guy. "Revisited a Decade Later: 'American Life'." *Guy Penn and the Gospel According to Madonna*. Wordpress, 13 Feb. 2013. Web.



events that happened during her lifetime at a point in her development where she would have been entirely unable to comprehend the severity of the situation? What would be the least obvious point of view for a young celebrity to have? What if she *was* fully aware of the atrocities and developed an obsession with the architects of these wars? What if she were a *fan* of President Bush in the same way that young people were presumably fans of hers in this make-believe world? Can a 17-year-old be taken seriously when she talks about “adult” topics?

Lindley, a teenager obsessed with an unpopular President and fascinated by unpopular wars, comes off as completely delusional. Her “fandom is seen as a psychological symptom of a presumed social dysfunction.”<sup>15</sup> Modern times are consistently perceived by the older generation as technologically advanced but morally deficient and young people are often considered naive, emotionally vulnerable, and irrational.<sup>16</sup> Lindley exists in our modern age as a digital native, someone who has only ever consumed information through some sort of media, and maybe lacks the ability to construct a narrative based on facts.<sup>17</sup>

But Lindley doesn’t give the audience the chance to take her music performance seriously, regardless of the subject matter. Before she performs her “hit song” of her smash album, *Glitter Bomb*, Lindley opens her mouth to speak. La Roo represents what is wrong with the youth of America, when viewed through a prescriptive lens. She dresses and speaks like a 1980’s mall rat (with no understanding of the social contexts of such a

---

<sup>15</sup> Jensen, Joli. “Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization.” *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Ed. Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge, 1992. Pg 9. Print.

<sup>16</sup> Jensen, Joli. Pg 14

<sup>17</sup> Prensky, Marc. “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants.” *On the Horizon*. MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001.

look). She has no idea that Ozzie Osbourne was a major Rock ‘n’ Roll star (which is my personal favorite joke about the hypocrisy of rock fandom’s dismissal of pop music as inauthentic, when one of its godfathers ended up becoming an octogenarian “reality” television star). Her appearance is referential, but her point of view and speech patterns are totally modern.

In writing her exchange with Brendan, I watched footage of other teen pop stars being interviewed for various publications and TV shows. I ended up getting drawn to footage of current teen sensation, Lorde, and 1980s teen pop idol (and one of my favorite singers as a child), Tiffany. Their stories are quite similar, though their receptions were the exact opposite. Both were discovered at very young ages (12 and 11, respectively), both had their debut singles reach #1 on the pop charts at the age of 16, and both were self aware and presented themselves as people who were more complex than their music indicated. Yet Lorde writes her own music and Tiffany does not. Tiffany sang “like a teenager” about “teenage subjects” and Lorde does not. Lorde is taken seriously and Tiffany was written off as someone who was constructed in the studio by record executives (even though both pop stars are constructs of record labels).

I wanted Lindley to be a combination of Tiffany and Lorde: girls whose music and personae didn’t quite match. I also wanted the audience to treat her in the dismissive way that critics initially treated Tiffany. For the source material of Brendan and Lindley’s dialogue, I took interviews that Britney Spears and Lorde gave immediately following their first successes, and re-wrote them largely through improvisation to include references to other pop stars’ careers (see Appendix A). For example, Lindley’s “discovery” is a mash-up of 3 different pop stars’ career stories. Lindley sang in church

choirs (Britney Spears), then ended up doing a performance tour of shopping malls (Tiffany), which led to a performance at a talent show (Lorde) being filmed and put up on YouTube where a music insider celebrity discovered her and gave her a record contract (Justin Bieber).



*Figure 2.2: Brendan Nguyen shares his disgust with the home audience as Lindley goes on about how she was discovered.*

Lindley’s personal story was meaningless, however, without a signature voice. She had to be so annoying that Brendan Nguyen, the consummate professional, would have difficulty hiding his disdain for her. Regardless of the interesting things being said about her inspiration, her awareness of process, and her discomfort with the industry practice of claiming a performer is the direct representation of an entire generation, her speech had to be coded in the world of vapidty so that everyone watching could develop a certain expectation of the performance that followed.

Whether it be uptalk (pronouncing statements as if they were questions? Like this?), creating slang words like “bitchin,’ ” and “ridic,” or the incessant use of “like” as a conversation filler, vocal trends associated

with young women are often seen as markers of immaturity or even stupidity.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to Lindley's speech patterns serving as reminders of a certain "type" of person, her personal appearance is a direct reference to a few types of teenagers from the 1980s and their later recreations by modern teenagers. The hair style looks like it is lifted from 1980s glam metal band, Poison, but it is actually taken from modern teenagers' interpretations of that look, called "scene hair". Lindley's acid washed denim jacket, flannel shirt tied around the waist, and hot pink Reebok® high top sneakers are an homage to the late 1980s and early 1990s mall rat. The shredded "Don't Mess With Texas" shirt is about me, as I lived in Texas until I was 14 years old. Finally, Lindley's cat leggings are a nod to Miley Cyrus's performance of "Wrecking Ball" at the 2013 American Music Awards.



*Figures 2.3 a and b: the photo on the right inspired Lindley's wig.*

---

<sup>18</sup> Quenqua, Douglas. "They're, Like, Way Ahead of the Linguistic Currrrve." *The New York Times*. 28 Feb. 2012, New York ed.: pg. D1. Print.



Figures 2.4 a and b: (L) Lindley's full get-up; (R) Miley Cyrus's cat outfit.



Figure 2.5: a group of mall patrons photographed by Michael Galinsky.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Galinsky, Michael. *Malls Across America*. Göttingen; Steidl-Miles, 2013. Print.



As a performer, Lindley is, at first, awkward in her body yet confident in her ability to mimic what she's seen other pop stars do in performance. The track begins with a fanfare followed by a minute long section of canned applause as she basks in her perceived glory. Another two-minute section of open 5<sup>th</sup> E chords over a descending five note scale follows as Lindley unsuccessfully tries to hit a new pose – each uncomfortably sexy for her age – with each new chord.

As soon as the drums kick in, signifying the beginning of the first verse, Lindley rushes to her microphone stand and begins lip-syncing. As the first verse plays, footage of blurred out Las Vegas marquee signs are projected behind her on a large screen. In putting together the imagery for the verses, I wanted footage that was as vague or non-descript as the lyrics to the song, and it needed to sparkle (her album title is *Glitter Bomb*, after all). It was also imperative that the footage represented me in some way, so Anna primarily used images from a trip to Las Vegas, its surrounding desert, a nearby deserted water park, and Lake Mead.

The singing on this recording didn't come easily. I was initially frustrated that the song wouldn't showcase my voice as I had hoped, and was even considering asking for it to be rewritten. Before we began recording, Clint and I met where I tried to sing it as best I could, but *my* voice wasn't right for it. It sounded too careful, amateur, and not nearly brazen enough. So, I decided to do my best Britney Spears impression. With eyes closed, I began singing my heart out, recreating my own 16-year-old self (fittingly, we were in his bedroom at the time, and I grabbed his hairbrush and sang into it). Clint immediately doubled over, cackling mightily with his unforgettable laugh. The singing voice for Lindley *had* to be as contrived as everything else about her.

The short, but intense chorus of several overdubbed Lindleys belting “Over there, no here!” leads to a recitation of a love letter she wrote to President George W. Bush. The love letter was taken from an actual fan letter an anonymous “Belieber,”<sup>20</sup> which extolled her love for him. The language in the letter reflects an imagined emotional intimacy between her and her idol (see Appendix B), and tries to set herself apart from the rest so as to grab his attention. She talks about how his actions have taught her how to love herself and to be a better person. Now, when thinking about this in regards to a teen pop idol, it’s relatively harmless; however, in the context of American Imperialism and global terror, it takes on another atmosphere altogether.

In order to further drive home the disturbing nature of such an intense oration, the text is accompanied by a sample of an Arabic folk song and featured loud, unpredictable percussive hits. Lindley, an unseasoned semi-professional, isn’t so great at lip-syncing. She is clearly under rehearsed and she eventually gives up as the Arabic song becomes more distorted and disorienting. Lindley nervously returns to smiling and mugging for the camera that she began with. When the letter finally comes to an end, Lindley returns to the melodic material, this time with greater intensity.

During the second verse, which is as unremarkable as the first and features the same Las Vegas imagery, Lindley begins to perform more pop gesture clichés. Lindley moves her hands in relation to the height of the pitch, she starts sexily roll her body, and she finally removes the microphone from the stand and begins to move towards the

---

<sup>20</sup> “Beliebers” is the name that Justin Bieber fans have collectively given themselves. Through social media, these young girls can organize and feel as though they have direct contact with the celebrity. They have even launched social media campaigns in the form of hashtags in order to get Justin to do something for them. The most notorious is #cuttingforBieber, where they would post gruesome images (some of them fakes) of their cut marks in an effort to convince Justin Bieber to stop doing drugs.

audience. At the arrival of the second chorus, Lindley has made her way to the floor, mimicking that she were actually screaming the last bits of text much in the same way that Madonna rolled on the floor of her television debut at the 1984 Video Music Awards on MTV and was later referenced by Britney Spears in her second Video Music Awards performance of 2000. Both of these performances signified for Madonna and Britney a breaking away from expectations. Britney, having been associated with Disney for so long, was finally “legal” and desperate to show that she was in control of her life (the exact opposite turned out to be true), and Madonna was ironically referencing the presumptions about pop music and what was expected of female pop stars’ behavior.



*Figure 2.6: Lindley increases the intensity of her performance by crumbling to the floor in VRA, 2014.*





*Figure 2.7: Britney Spears increases the intensity of her performance by collapsing to the floor at the VMA's in 2000.*



*Figure 2.8: Madonna increases the intensity of her performance by collapsing to the floor at the VMA's in 1984.*

As the second verse and chorus end, Lindley aggressively kicks over the microphone stand (how rock ‘n’ roll of her), throws the microphone to the ground, and stomps off the stage. The song, however, is far from finished. An intense mix of Taliban and US soldiers commanding their troops, gunfire, Arabic singing, melodic lasers, and several Lindleys overdubbed singing “And the dark” as a repetitive mantra interrupt Lindley’s final outburst. This is paired with imagery of the abandoned Rock-A-Hoola Waterpark, which is located off Interstate-15 halfway between Los Angeles and Las Vegas in the Mojave Desert.



*Figure 2.9: Rock-A-Hoola waterpark in the Mojave Desert.*

Eventually the images of the waterpark blur into over-exposed images of the Mojave Desert mountains as the hypnotizing melody begins to fade, building to a heightened intensity and leading to a most satisfying interruption by a midi trumpet

fanfare heralding the arrival of freedom: “Bounded before the sky!” Layers of Lindley riffing off this triumphant phrase – including every pop/R&B vocal cliché – are heard over an accompaniment of dense percussion and trumpet. Images of fireworks fill the screen. After about a minute, this musical ejaculation slowly comes to an end, featuring a sample of a Taliban man talking to his very young son with video of water splashing in Lake Mead. While I can’t understand what is being said between the man and the little boy, upon first listening, I thought that surely this would end with a type of explosion. The inclusion of the child’s voice as he plays with his father takes the song to an even darker place, where we fear something horrible might happen to the little boy and his apparently loving father. The tone in this man’s voice is sincerely sweet and doting, and this sort of juxtaposition against the backdrop of soldiers fighting and explosions, jolts the audience back to the reality that children are often casualties of these conflicts and that presumed evil people are capable of showing love. It’s a disorienting and disturbing end to an already fluid performance by a character that is a presumed idiot. By the end, I’m sure the audience has forgotten all about Lindley.

**APPENDIX 2.1:  
BRENDAN AND LINDLEY'S DIALOGUE**

**Brendan:** Our first guest is making her national television debut with us tonight. Straight from Vancouver, Canada, give a big *Vanity Run Amok* welcome to Lindley La Roo!

*Lindley enters*

**Brendan:** Welcome to *Vanity Run Amok*! First of all, congratulations on your new-found success, your single is just exploding right now.

**Lindley:** Um, it's awesome? I'm mean, it's a lot to take. Like, I'm really flattered by all the attention, but it's hard to take, y'know?

**Brendan:** So, you're really young, right? You're, what, 17? How did you know you wanted to work on a music career?

**Lindley:** Um...I don't know, I've always sang. Sung? It's always something that I've wanted to do, you know. It really began, like, when I was singin' in the church choir, and then I started performing in many other places, and ended up singing at my school's talent show. Someone took a cell phone video and posted it on youtube. And then...Kelly Osborne found me and sent the video to my record company...and I just got signed...and...here I am.

**Brendan:** Do you find any inspiration in other teen success stories like Selena Gomez and Taylor Swift who have become unofficial voices of your generation?

**Lindley:** Oh yeah, okay, well yeah, I guess, but I hope this is where the comparison stops, you know? I mean, those girls were major breakthroughs but it really made me question their appeal. I thought that that type of girl didn't give me anything that felt familiar or relatable. I think someone like Ke\$ha comes close, but even *that* is her own reality, you know? I don't like the idea that one person or musician is supposed to represent an *entire* group of people. That's not cool. It's cool that people like me enough to buy my stuff, but really, I just hope I'm left alone to be myself without feeling any of this pressure to be a model for anyone else. Whatever, that's dumb.

**Brendan:** How did you go about writing your first record? Did it come easily to you?

**Lindley:** Well, my dad is a record hoarder, and I just kept thinking that all of my favorite records felt like one complete thought, you know? Not like I wanted it to be a *concept* record, but I wanted it to feel like everything belonged together. I was also sort of dealing with my own idolization and fascination with...

**Brendan:** (*Interrupting*) Sweetie, that's enough...

Well, we are looking forward to hearing you! Her new album "Glitterbomb" is out and you can get it on iTunes now. Ladies and gentlemen, here's Lindley La Roo performing her hit single "There No Here!"

**APPENDIX 2.2:  
THERE NO HERE TEXT**

Propeller buoyed cloud skating sliding slow on guiding light  
 Glowing orange orb organ filled with blood  
 Floating relentless forward receding static sun!  
 Trained eyes screen the horizon  
 Mountains out of sand cradle dry cold circling souls at the edge of the other side.  
 Lost and ancient names hover on the endless wind.  
 Tongues too faint to hear but you can listen to the space that they speak  
 Over there no here! Over there no crossing here!

*(Spoken voice over)*

I'm Lindley and this is my story. It's not a story like the rest, with pics of meeting you and stuff, but I'll give it a try. I'm 14 years old, AND, you are seriously my inspiration. You have taught me so much in my life. You have taught me to never give up. You have taught me to believe in my dreams. You have taught me that everyone is beautiful. But most of all, you have taught me that you don't have to be near to love someone :) You have taught me so much, & I couldn't thank you enough. Sometimes I'm dreaming... When I watch on YouTube, I look at a portrait in my room, while a subject says 'hi', I say 'hi' to the portrait, while you say: 'hi' , to your subject. I look to the portrait that doesn't answer. Then tears roll down my cheeks. My dream is to meet you. ~~Mr. President~~, I love you so much. Your voice always gets me through the day. I'm a fan, & I don't care what other people say. You've changed me. Before you, I cared about what people said about me. But you taught me that's everyone is beautiful. ~~Mr. President~~, it's not just me you've inspired. It's millions of others. I just wish you would read this. I wish you would know how much I support & appreciate you. You are such an inspiration for so many people. I wished you knew how much I care about you. How much I love you. I'm here for you. I'll always be here for you. And nothing, I mean nothing will change that. ~~Mr. President~~, I'm still here. Five years ago, you didn't have a clue what the future would hold. I supported you from day one. As soon as I found you, I knew there was something special there.

[You changed, yes, I'm still here. I stuck with you. Your policy proposals changed, yes, I'm still here. And I loved them like I loved them before. Your whole platform changed. You cut your hair, dyed it, matured. I still loved it like I loved it before.]

A lot of people have given your wife a hard time, but I loved you the same. And I respect her, because she has made you so happy. You moved from local governance, and now you're doing foreign policy (BTW, amazing decisions, SO proud of u).

Pulsating oasis herds to the watering hole  
Frenetic brittle twisting thirst on the verge at the end of the road  
Erupting plumes of sand raining from on high exploding aspiring free  
From the flaking edge of land.  
Shrapnel saturation melding man and world  
Epidermal forgiving caress of the shards at the final plane  
No one seems to die here transform beyond the mamed  
The body is a singing ship on a rising prosthetic sea.  
Over there no here! Over there no crossing here!



**CHAPTER 3:**  
**PATTI CASSIDY**



*Figure 3.1: Patti Cassidy promotional photograph.*

Patti Cassidy is a chimeric puzzle of hairstyle and personality culled from superstar Cher's conversations and interviews. Along with Cher's words are included the countercultural sexual narrative of Lenny Bruce's "To is a Preposition" and the Andrews Sisters' hit "I Can Dream, Can't I?" She is a vessel for existing works to be repurposed and her performative gestures mimic the emphatically emotive gestures of bygone crooners. All this bricolage of elite pop-culture acts a defense against her own insecurity, which, ironically is painfully obvious to the audience, as she fumbles through her performance with uncommitted gestures until finally lashing out at the host while being interviewed.

What I originally intended and what was actually performed couldn't be farther from each other. I spent so much time fantasizing about what this woman would look like and such little time thinking about the music – assuming it would just sort of “happen” – that I ran out of money and time to fully execute it. I had a grand vision that she would be an eccentric Manhattan socialite from the 1960s early 1970s. Patti would be someone unafraid to draw attention to herself, and completely unaware of any negative response people might have towards her. I hoped that this persona would be unflinchingly honest and bold.

I had a wig made that was a replica of a hairstyle worn by a model for the British label, Biba (which is also an exaggeration of my own hair and a major source of insecurity in my youth). The Biba style featured rich pigments, romantic materials and shapes, and was a modern mixture of late 1960's hippie culture (with its use of peasant blouses, leather, and textured fabrics) and 1920's-inspired silhouettes and makeup (straight cuts, sequins and beading, and jewel-toned makeup that emphasized deep-set eyes). I fantasized about Patti in shades of reds and oranges and hoped to construct a set that was similar to Vogue editor, Diana Vreeland's Manhattan apartment. I loved the way that a woman as notoriously flamboyant as Vreeland could simultaneously stand out and disappear, and I wanted Patti to blend in with her surroundings such that her persona could be foregrounded.





*Figure 3.2: A Biba model with the hair and makeup inspiration for Patti.*



*Figure 3.3: Diana Vreeland in her Manhattan apartment.*

As a piece of music, I thought it would be loosely composed version of an act by 1950s shock comedian, Lenny Bruce, in which I would sing through the melodic cadence of his own eccentric speech pattern. But I'm not a composer, nor am I a convincing and confident vocal improviser. I sought help from Bonnie Lander, a fellow singer whose own vocal improvisation pushes the limits of vocal expressivity, but my idea wasn't clear (or I was unable to fully articulate what I'd had in mind to begin with) and she wasn't sure how she could be of any help.

Then I thought that maybe I should collaborate with someone in computer music. If we could create some sort of tool that I could interact with, maybe the musical ideas would come to me. I met a few times with Colin Zyzkowsky and he came up with a bracelet type device that could play back and alter certain pre-defined samples of sounds while I sang. I thought, sure, she's fabulous; I could make it into an exaggerated accessory of some kind. But I couldn't quite conceive of a way to integrate additional sounds to the existing sound world of the Lenny Bruce text. If I were to interact with a piece of electronic jewelry, then it would end up being a piece about the interface and not the text.

It was a week away from performance and I had no idea what this piece was about. It was too late to scrap the character altogether, which would put me in danger of being short on music (per recital requirements). I had to return to what drew me to the Lenny Bruce bit in the first place: a public representation of a deeply personal humiliation. It was his honesty and ability to be so vulnerable about such an embarrassing topic that enticed me. All those other ideas were distractions.

Lenny Bruce was a tragic American figure that spent most of his career getting arrested for public indecency because he refused to censor his material. “To is a preposition,” is one of those sets that resulted in an arrest, and deals with the anxieties and shame associated with sexual climax and inadequacy, punctuating each stanza with some iteration of the prepositional phrase, “to come:”

To is a preposition. To is a preposition. Come is a verb. To is a preposition. Come is a verb. To is a preposition. Come is a verb, the verb intransitive. To come. To come.

I've heard these two words my whole adult life, and as a kid when I thought I was sleeping. To come. To come. It's been like a big drum solo.

Did you come? Good. Did you come? Good. Did you come good? Did you come good? Did you come good? Did you come good? Did you come good? Did you come good? I come better with you, sweetheart, than with anybody in the whole goddamn world. I really came so good and I came so good 'cause I love you. I really came so good. I come better with you, sweetheart, than anyone in the whole world. I really came so good. So good.

But don't come in me. Don't come in me. Don't come in me. Don't come in me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me. Don't come in me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me. Don't come in me. Don't come.... in me...in me in me. Don't come in me, in me....in me.

I can't come. 'Cause you don't love me--that's why you can't come. I can't come. I love you, I just can't come; that's my hang-up. I can't come when I'm loaded, all right? 'Cause you don't love me. Just what the hell is the matter with you--what has that got to do with loving? I just can't come that's all.

Now if anyone in this room or the world finds those two words decadent, obscene, immoral, amoral, asexual-- the words "to come" really make you feel uncomfortable--if you think I'm rank for saying it to you, you the beholder think it's rank for listening to it, you probably can't come. And then you're of no use, because that's the purpose of life, to re-create it.<sup>21</sup>

As a piece of comedy, this set subverts many of the conventions associated with comedic routines performed in the 1950s and 1960s. Sid Caesar – host of his own variety show that ran on NBC from 1950-54 – states, “Comedy has to be based on truth. You

---

<sup>21</sup> Bruce, Lenny. “To is a preposition; come is a verb.” *What I Was Arrested For: the Performances that Got Lenny Bruce Busted*. Douglas, 1970.

take the truth and you put a little curlicue at the end.”<sup>22</sup> Instead of weaving a yarn of truth and then hitting it with some punch line at the end of the story, Bruce begins with the punch line and then builds on it by singing his way through several scenarios, building on the phrase, “to come,” expanding it to takes on “did you come?” “don’t come,” and “I can’t come.” None of what is said is overtly funny. It’s embarrassing, humiliating, pathetic and rife with angst, but it’s his neurotic singsong style of delivery that leaves the bit up in the air.

Bruce’s comedy foregrounded his own pathos and tragedy, which made him relatable yet dangerous. The challenge became, then, how could I foreground my own neuroses pertaining to non-sexual performance anxiety? I felt that the piece had to be about how totally embarrassing it is for me to perform in front of people. As a singer, we are asked to reveal so much of ourselves while wearing someone else’s clothes, saying someone else’s words, conveying someone else’s idea. In order for me to lend my own voice to someone else’s truth, I must find a way to make it natural to me in some way and that usually involves me performing very private moments in a very public way. This is how Patti could be a version of myself, safely disguised in a wig that is a caricature of my own hair.

It became clearer to me that Patti should try to artificially affect the space with her voice as a way to hide in plain sight using technology to publically deal with her crippling nerves. I started playing around with some guitar pedal effects. While testing the limitations and parameters of the different effects, I sang to myself pop songs from the 1940’s and 50’s, and kept returning to The Andrews Sisters’ 1949 hit, “I Can Dream,

---

<sup>22</sup> Respers France, Lisa. “The words and comedy of Sid Caesar.” *www.cnn.com*. 12 Feb. 2014. Web.

Can't I?" I realized that it shared the same sort of self-loathing and desire to be understood (or seen) that is expressed by Lenny Bruce, but from a very different point of view.

Yet, I waited until the dress rehearsal to try piecing together Lenny Bruce with the Andrews Sisters because I am incredibly insecure about my ability to perform a vocal improvisation. However, I am very confident in my ability to improvise narrative. I needed Patti to be put together from head to toe in order to inhabit this oddball personality and to organically tell her point of view. Then again, waiting until "Patti was put together" could have been my own way of avoiding the reality that I had nothing and the show was in two days. During the dress rehearsal, I improvised exactly what was performed for the show. Patti fumbled with the equipment, accidentally distorting her words as she went, and nervously gesturing her way through the text.

I wanted Patti to appear as if she were unfamiliar with her audience, giving signals that might help ease them into her performance. Thrusting her hands the way she did was a way to communicate through body language (a symbol of public expression) that she acknowledged their existence, even though the material was an expression of something private. Patti knew that this wasn't her territory, so she had to give them something that might look familiar.

Halfway through the Lenny Bruce text, as if hypnotized, Patti then begins to sing the Andrews Sisters song. This switch is less about showing that Patti might actually be an okay singer, but more about the physiological effects of singing to oneself in order to calm down, something that Bruce does in his act. As he meanders through the text, bitterly enacting shameful scenarios, he ends each little bit with a moment of singing to

himself, shifting the external expressions of frustrations internally. Each of the phrases is sung in some way, creating a performance that is part presentational and part internal struggle. Patti needed to do the same. She begins rather defeated and shaky, sings to herself, and ends confidently, ready to deliver the final sting: “You probably can’t come.”



*Figure 3.4: Patti Cassidy in performance.*

I can see  
No matter how near you'll be  
You'll never belong to me  
But I can dream, can't I?  
Can't I pretend that I'm locked in the bend of your embrace?  
For dreams are just like wine  
And I am drunk with mine

I'm aware  
My heart is a sad affair  
There's much disillusion there  
But I can dream, can't I?

Can't I adore you although we are oceans apart?  
 I can't make you open your heart  
 But I can dream, can't I?<sup>23</sup>

As a guest on a TV variety show, Patti doesn't quite fit. She doesn't represent a lifestyle that is sellable on a broad scale. Her personality is nervous and a little cold, and though her performance was based on the work of those who were popular in the past, there is nothing that can comfortably situate her in the present. The interview was Patti's chance to win some people over (if that's even what she wanted), but instead she took the opportunity to put Brendan Nguyen in his place.

Brendan and Patti's interview was based on an interview that Cher gave on David Letterman's late night talk show in 1986 where she notoriously accused him of being unfriendly to guests that he didn't care much for.<sup>24</sup> In the interview, Letterman begins with really asinine questions about her perfume and lifestyle, and immediately, she puts him on trial. Her body language is stand off-ish, and Letterman tries desperately to get her to warm up to him. He keeps prodding her about why she had, for the longest time, avoided appearing on his show until she finally blurts it out that she felt he was an "asshole." Letterman gets flustered, and can't quite figure out how to turn the conversation around until he finally decides to begin asking questions about her appearance.

It's an interesting piece of television. Cher deliberately calls into question his authority over his guests, and chastises him for it. I was really drawn to the way Cher could calmly disarm the host on his own territory, and I wanted Patti to do the same,

---

<sup>23</sup> The Andrews Sisters. "I Can Dream, Can't I?" Decca, 1949.

<sup>24</sup> Cher. "Interview with David Letterman." *The Late Show With David Letterman*. CBS. 22 May. 1986. Television.

though much less calmly. Since Patti is such a nervous wreck, she could pose a real threat to Brendan, as he would never suspect it. I chose portions of this interview and mixed it with other quips and quotes that both Cher and Lenny Bruce had given over the course of their careers about identity and craft.



*Figure 3.5: Cher defeats Letterman with a single word.*

Patti's speaking voice was a bit of an accident. During the dress rehearsal, I ended up doing a Mid-Atlantic accent popularized by actors in early talking motion pictures during Hollywood's *Golden Era* of the 1930s (Katherine Hepburn, Orson Welles, Bette Davis). It was an accent that began with British ex-patriots, and then became mixed with the New York accent (Humphrey Bogart, Bugs Bunny, Mae West, Groucho Marx). I associate it mostly with the fast-talking, no-nonsense type of character or persona, which is not who Patti Cassidy is. She's not high born, she's certainly not confident in the same



way that Katherine Hepburn or Bette Davis were, and I didn't necessarily want Patti to appear as though she were lifted directly from a Frank Capra film. But this way, Patti could continue to fumble her words, choosing to emphasize mini-punch lines within her interview, never allowing Brendan to assert his dominance the way he was able to do with Lindley.

And who other than Cher would end with such a zinger as, "Darling, we're all inventing ourselves, some of us just have better imaginations?" Campy women who perform exaggerated femininity: Katherine Hepburn, Mae West, Edie Bouvier Beals, RuPaul, etc. All of these women were associated with this accent, with the exception of RuPaul. But she does an amazing Cher, so she *has* to be included. So, the accent wasn't necessarily an accident and perhaps more of an unconscious decision.

**CHAPTER 4:**  
**RITA LA MER**



*Figure 4.1: Rita la Mer promotional photograph.*

Rita La Mer retains an austere professional distance. Afraid to reveal too much even though her career demands that she enact vulnerability in service of the score. Although she performs a work written specifically for her voice, her connection with the piece reveals her own inner struggle with perfection and her conflict between her subjective and objective voice. So personally invested is she with performance and perfection, that any perceived flaw in her execution is equivalent to a public shaming. She represents the challenges involved in presenting work as a personal statement in which the vocalist is not merely a vessel for a composition, but intimately involved in a collaboration based on the personally embodied vocal instrument, the composition, and

the performance. All the preceding stands at odds with the expectation of exterior beauty that is foisted on female gendered body in addition to her internal struggles; Rita has to navigate a complicated artistic personal space while having to 'look pretty.'

Each of the other characters began as a genre archetype first. Lindley is pop, Patti is comedy, Beverly is opera, but Rita's origin story was difficult to devise and situate. In thinking about each of these women as alter egos, Lindley represents a version of my teenage self, Patti is a version of what I thought I would become, and Beverly is what I was in my most recent life. Rita, then, had to be the most current representation of myself: someone whose job is to interpret contemporary music scores via close collaboration with composers. In keeping with the modern representation of my own life and history, I had this idea of a singer who's had a very public fall from grace and is trying to make a comeback. I approached composer, Nicholas Deyoe, with the concept and we immediately began searching for texts. After passing back and forth a few options, we decided on a few poems written by his tattoo artist, Ace Farren Ford.

Nicholas Deyoe and I had worked together the previous year on a piece for the La Jolla Symphony, and I loved the way he wrote for my voice. The process for that piece was much more intimate, he really took the time to get to know the strengths of my voice and wrote something that fit like a glove, though it was not without its challenges. However, writing for voice and symphony is entirely different than writing for voice and piano.

Deyoe's music explores extremes in pitch and dynamic range, and microtonality plays a major part in his harmonic language. With the symphony piece, I was free to let the bigness of my voice carry. When dealing with such large forces, dynamics become

more relative than absolute in order for the piece to remain balanced and discernable. The piece he wrote for this show is the exact opposite of the symphony piece, and I had to re-work my vocality in order to allow for the heightened intimacy to really speak.

The *Ace Farren Ford* songs are about a general feeling of emptiness, intense insecurity, and paralyzing fear of revealing too much. As such, the vocal writing mimics natural speech patterns and is scored in a range that is more closely related to my speaking voice, than my bel canto singing voice resulting in a sound more active and less sustained. As a mezzo-soprano, my comfort zone is right in the middle of the female voice and anything beyond that, while possible, is treated as an extension. I am not an alto, whose voices more comfortably exist in the lower-to-middle part of the female voice. While each of these voices can reach pitches above and below what is indicated, the image below shows the comfortable tessitura of the three types of female and male voices.



Figure 4.2: Vocal ranges of men and women.

Nicholas Deyoe's piece features long passages in the lower extension of my voice, and upon receiving the score, I initially felt a little betrayed. My voice just doesn't sit comfortably in the lower extremities, and I was having a bit of a crisis in figuring out how to sing it. Not only were long stretches of material notated so low, Deyoe also writes

precise tuning. As I started working the piece into my voice, I realized that relationship between the voice and piano reflects a desire to remain hidden, never drawing attention to one's self. The piano texture is sparse and celestial, which means I could then treat these low passages as if I were speaking or whispering, accepting that my sound would be brittle or unstable.

The image displays two systems of a musical score. The first system, starting at measure 7, features a vocal line (M-S.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The vocal line includes lyrics: "I will glad - ly en - ter in to for a few mo - ments of roy - al a - muse - ment...". The piano part consists of sparse, ethereal chords with dynamic markings such as ppp, p, and pppp sempre. A sustain pedal instruction (Ped.) is shown with an arrow pointing to the right. The second system, starting at measure 12, continues the vocal line with lyrics: "the sha - llow of my writ - ten word the emph - a - sis on ro - mance...". The piano accompaniment continues with similar sparse textures and dynamic markings like pppp, p, and pp. A second sustain pedal instruction (Ped.) is also present.

Figure 4.4: Excerpt from *1. all purpose*

The first song in the set, “all purpose,” begins with a list of agitations set to a low-set, falling vocal line punctuated by soft cluster chords that vary in registration. The entirety of this song is played with the sustain pedal depressed so that these chords can continue to linger like an unwelcomed guest overstaying their welcome. Rhythmically, the vocal line follows a very natural speech pattern with no extremes in duration allowing

for the syllables remain unambiguous. The two times a syllable is allowed to sustain, it's done so to indicate uneasiness. Each of those is also pitched at either a quartertone sharp or flat. In order to sing these pitches absolutely in tune, I have to smooth out the texture of my voice, creating a sound that cuts like a laser beam without sacrificing breath.

The image displays a musical score excerpt for Figure 4.5, consisting of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 30 to 32, and the second system covers measures 33 to 35. Each system includes a vocal line (M-S.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.).

**System 1 (Measures 30-32):**  
 - **M-S.:** The vocal line begins at measure 30 with the lyrics "quite the way... he thought it was or wanted it to be". It features a melodic line with several five-note slurs (marked with a '5') and a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 32.  
 - **Pno.:** The piano accompaniment starts with a dynamic marking of *(p/mp sempre)* and includes a pedal instruction *(Ped.)* with an arrow pointing right. A note in measure 32 is marked with *(repetitions remain p/mp)*.

**System 2 (Measures 33-35):**  
 - **M-S.:** The vocal line begins at measure 33 with the lyrics "ord-in - ar - i - ly act - ing u - pon ov - er due yes - ter - days wan - ton wish - es on - ly". It includes tempo markings *slight accel* and *a tempo*, and a five-note slur in measure 35.  
 - **Pno.:** The piano accompaniment continues with *(p/mp sempre)* and *(Ped.)*, ending with a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking.

Figure 4.5: Excerpt from 2. part one, part two, part three.

The second song is broken up into three parts, each dealing with not feeling good enough for your lover. The insecurity is presented by a menacing ostinato figure played in the highest register of the piano, which is where the piano loses all richness in tone and sounds entirely metallic. As well as this figure, the piano also has accented high B's, which sound like gunfire. They're startling and invasive and function to sever any memory of what preceded it. As I hear it, I feel that these intrusions wipe the slate clean, giving the voice a fresh start for the next melodic figure.

Each of the vocal phrases through all three parts of the third song mimic false starts. The phrases are truncated and centered on the B, to varying degrees. The natural and flat signs with arrows attached to them indicate a slight lowering or raising of the pitch, much in the way our voices raise and lower as we emphasize certain words or syllables when we speak. I thought of the spaces between the phrases as a way to create a sense of personal disappointment. I hear the vocal part as defeated, and the nagging ostinato in the piano drags the voice along with it.

The image displays a musical score excerpt for two systems, labeled 81 and 85. Each system consists of a vocal line (M-S.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.).

**System 81:**  
 - **M-S.:** The vocal line features a melodic phrase with three triplet markings. The lyrics are: "a - no-ther cup of coff-ee drains down past where no blood bo-thers to pump".  
 - **Pno.:** The piano accompaniment is mostly silent, with a few notes in the right hand starting at measure 84. Dynamics include *pp* and *p* to *mp*. A pedal marking "(Ped.)" is present at the end of the system.

**System 85:**  
 - **M-S.:** The vocal line continues with three triplet markings. The lyrics are: "blood run thin through va-cant veins ha-llow ex-cept the luke-warm red wa-ter that does not e-ven bleed".  
 - **Pno.:** The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic ostinato in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp*, *ppp*, and *mf*. A pedal marking "(Ped.)" is present at the beginning of the system.

Figure 4.3: Excerpt from Nicholas Deyoe's *Ace Farren Ford Songs*.

The third song begins with a chordal figure in the piano that limps – the rhythmic figure is unstable and the dynamics shift drastically from chord to chord – to the vocal line. This song lingers in the lower register, sagging slowly into the absolute bottom of the female voice. The text reads like a hangover, someone is so physically raw that each drop of coffee can be felt as it enters and travels through the body. As soon as the singer

tries to recall an event or feeling, she is reminded that she needs another cup: “eyes blink blank as blankets covering lies, eyes the next cup.” This song is soggy, slow and empty; it hangs in the air without any sudden outbursts.

The image shows a musical score excerpt for a song. It consists of two staves: a vocal line (M.S.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 66. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The vocal line starts at measure 121 and contains the lyrics: "Oh the su- mmer win- ter oh the late fall breeze oh the spiced ale a frail". The piano accompaniment starts at measure 121 and includes the instruction "p sempre" and "(Ped.)". The score shows a change in time signature from 4/4 to 3/4 at the end of the excerpt.

Figure 4.6: Excerpt from 4. the incomplete pleasure

The fourth song is a welcome change to the emptiness of the previous song. In this, the voice and piano complement each other a little better, rhythmically, and it is the first time that I could fully sing out. The interval of the minor 6<sup>th</sup> provides the melodic structure for the entire movement. It appears throughout, and oftentimes the voice and the piano are a half step apart. Again, with the piano written so high in register, it sounds metallic and less full. The text uses the metaphor of changing from Fall to Winter to indicate a hopefulness in the next phase of life. It’s time to close one chapter and look towards the next.

The final song is the most directly self-reflexive while the rest deal exclusively in metaphor. It is confrontational, and directly points the finger at a failed relationship. This is also the most vocally active and includes references to material that appeared throughout the work as a propulsion device. Though, once the singer is done with the analysis of what went wrong, it changes tone by switching to an analysis of the singer’s ability to love and trust. Out of motion comes a dead stop by the sudden emergence of a



solo vocal line, followed by a succession of open chords that ends in the first sudden frustrated outburst of the entire piece:

[allow most resonance to fade away, but  
begin while there is still sound present]

185 M-S.  my warmth\_ is art - i - fic - ial as I see\_ that the rain\_ clears\_ the dens-est smog (spoken) always starting over  
(Ped.)

188 Pno.  Slightly Slower  
(Ped.)

A Tempo

190 M-S.  f mp  
I don't know where my love is go-ing some de-ser-ted acc-ount with your name on it  
(Ped.)

Figure 4.7: Excerpt from 5. why why not is not is

After this sudden outburst, the voice returns to half-heard mutterings about love lost and an inside joke about not being famous. Eventually the chordal funeral march returns and relentlessly remains through the rest of the work. By the end of it the vocal line matches the persistence of the piano by remaining on a single D and expressing the bitterness of broken trust.

201

M.S. who can blame<sup>5</sup> you... for choo-sing ma-ny o-ver one with so li-ttle<sup>5</sup> faith in time

Pno.

(Ped.)

204

M.S. warmth diss-a-pates the cold sets in<sup>5</sup> (very slight hesitation)

Pno. *f* *p* *pp*

(Ped.)

208

M.S. how can you trust a world like this with-out<sup>5</sup> pri-or know-ledge<sup>5</sup>

Pno. *pppp* *sempre* *p* *pp* *p* (*pppp*)

(Ped.)

Detailed description: The image shows three systems of a musical score. Each system consists of a vocal line (M.S.) and a piano accompaniment (Pno.). The first system (measures 201-203) features a vocal line with lyrics 'who can blame you... for choo-sing ma-ny o-ver one with so li-ttle faith in time' and a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system (measures 204-207) has lyrics 'warmth diss-a-pates the cold sets in' and includes dynamic markings *f*, *p*, and *pp*. The piano part has a more complex texture with sixteenth-note runs. The third system (measures 208-211) has lyrics 'how can you trust a world like this with-out pri-or know-ledge' and includes dynamic markings *pppp*, *sempre*, *p*, *pp*, and *p*. The piano part continues with intricate patterns. Pedal markings (Ped.) are present at the beginning of each system.

Figure 4.8: Excerpt from 5. why why not is not is

In retrospect, I think that the difficulty I had situating this character within the context of the show had everything to do with the lack of theatricality in concert vocal repertoire. The songs are atmospheric and emotionally charged, but they are not narrative nor are they vocally flashy. These songs belong to a tradition that is so fundamentally anti-television because it is historically an *aural* tradition and not a visual one. By placing

this piece in a comedy show about vain women, it destabilizes the authority of the work by drawing attention to the persona.

Solo non-operatic vocal music for the classically trained voice was originally written for very intimate performance settings: parlors, churches, and living rooms. It wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century that opera stars realized they could gain wider recognition if they performed in solo recitals that featured music of the canon as well as music of their contemporaries, giving exposure to intimate repertoire via the selling of a persona. However, as the century shifted, Europe was entered the first World War, and composers began to abandon tonality, audiences began to resist concerts that featured new music in favor of the standard repertoire of the Romantics. "A new musical acclimatization, similar to the change from polyphony to harmony in the seventeenth century, was taking place (and has yet to be completed)."<sup>25</sup> Sonntag and Emmons argue that that since compositional practices changed so rapidly throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, audiences grew weary of suffering through each new musical idea. While the vocal recital began as a way for divas to broaden their exposure, concerts that featured contemporary music ended up associated with the Academy and inner circles only.

The vocal recital comes with its own codes of conduct and dress. Given that it began as a PR tool for the reigning operatic divas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the performance style is coded in glamour. At the Conservatory I attended, there was a mandatory seminar regarding voice recital attire. It was simple:

**Women:** no bare legs (think of pantyhose as makeup for your legs); high heel no higher than 3 inches; if its an afternoon recital, you are free to

---

1. <sup>25</sup> Emmons, Shirlee, and Stanley Sonntag. "The Song Recital: Evolution." *The Art of the Song Recital*. New York: Schirmer, 1979. Pg. 2. Print.

wear a shorter gown but make sure it hits your knees, otherwise, it must be floor-length; your hair must be out of your face; don't wear any perfume; bare shoulders are fine, but remember that wearing a shawl or wrap can be distracting, so please avoid it.

**Men:** please wear a tie; doesn't necessarily have to be a tuxedo.

It's no wonder that the vocal recital was incredibly popular in America at times when the diva was a main attraction, and glamour was a major selling point. During the 1940s and 50s these women appeared in films, wrote beauty columns for newspapers, and also appeared regularly on television to promote their appearances on operatic and concert stages. "It was not unusual to see a concert artist arrive with her entourage, among which were a maid, a PR man, two Borzoi dogs, and a suspiciously unattached young male."<sup>26</sup>

These women were putting the persona ahead of the material being performed, which is a likely reason "difficult" contemporary repertoire was excluded. Yet, this piece and this persona are about the internal conflict and not the external presentations, and therefore, not suited for television. This show is gaudy and flashy, and this piece has no surface-level entertainment value. However, it is this lack of flash that allows for the piece to be the main focus, allowing the audience to forget Brendan, my silly disguise, and me. It's just a voice and a piano. Any voice. Any piano. This performance uses conventions of television and recital performance practices of the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, then immediately ignores them as the piece begins by scoring the voice in the speech register and the use of extreme softs in the piano, shifting the focus from the external to the internal.

---

<sup>26</sup> Emmons and Sonntag. Pg. 3.

**APPENDIX 4.1:  
ACE FARREN FORD SONGS TEXT**

1. **All Purpose**  
 the pacing around  
 the building of tolerance  
 the gathering of regrets  
 the willingness to be foolish  
 the hopelessness of situations  
 i will gladly enter into  
 for a few moments of royal amusement  
 the shallow of my written word  
 the emphasis on romance  
 the depths of pattern  
 the attraction to impossible  
 the useless wanting  
 the idle tumor  
 the surrogate love  
 the reason for living  
 the excuse of desire  
 trying to recall  
 why i'm waiting 8 million years  
 or exactly what  
 i'm waiting for.
  
2. **part one, part two, part three**  
 part one:  
 shyly laced up  
 not quite the way he thought it was  
 or wanted it to be  
 ordinarily acting upon  
 overdue yesterdays  
 wanton wishes only  
 lust to shine  
 glitter to dust.  
  
 part two:  
 shinely lacquered up  
 non acutely thinking  
 he was ordinary  
 wantonly wanton  
 acting upon  
 overdue dawn  
 wonders where the meatballs gone.

Part three:  
 the third ring made her quiet  
 the morning music  
 the magic moon  
 the severed sun  
 the cloud like air creatures  
 appeared as the day was done.

**3. the hallow heart**

another cup of coffee drains down past  
 where no blood bothers to pump  
 blood run thin thru vacant veins  
 hallow except the luke warm red water  
 that does not even bleed  
 the sullen eyes            stares n' lies  
 sunken sockets            looks n' lies  
 and lies they don't see  
 and me  
 and doesn't get  
 and forgets to forget  
 and fore goes it.

and far-be-it from me  
 to see past it  
 and far-be-it from me  
 to see past.

see its way through  
 another cup  
 eyes blink blank as blankets  
 covering lies  
 eyes the next cup.  
 can't imagine  
 the things that i do  
 can't believe the forest  
 for one, small potted tree.

**4. the incomplete pleasure**

O' the summer winter  
 O' the late fall breeze  
 O' the spiced ale  
 a frail  
 another tale i hesitate to tell  
 the early progress report  
 the unfinished business

the incomplete pleasure  
 the equinox  
 pandora's box  
 lock the latch case closed  
 on one more chapter  
 HOPEFUL  
 in spite of the indications  
 crossed fingers & a rabbit's foot  
 against the yule tide odds.

- 5. why why not is not is**  
 you're young i know  
 forever is a myth to you  
 distant and unpromising  
 and you can't trust in simplicity  
 if i had tears to cry in silence  
 they'd be the ice in my whiskey melting down  
 it's not the communication  
 it's not the sullen sorrow  
 goodbye to what looked like a good thing  
 its meaning lost  
 in a jumble of what's here now  
 at your disposal  
 nothing as simple  
 as two lives together  
 weaving their future  
 according to each other  
 take into account  
 circumstances, needs, variables  
 as they apply to the two  
 acceptance without exceptance  
 excluding either for either  
 every chance can look like a prison  
 freedom can be a prison  
 once chained to it  
 my warmth is artificial  
 as i see that the rain clears  
 the densest smog  
 always starting over  
 i don't know where my love is going  
 some deserted account with your name on it  
 neither of us are famous now  
 now it won't be simultaneous  
 and maybe it won't be at all  
 and who can blame you for choosing

many over one  
with so little faith in time  
warmth dissipates  
the cold sets in  
how can you trust a world like this  
without prior knowledge.



**CHAPTER 5:**  
**BEVERLEY SHRILLS**

“A woman sings with her ovaries – you’re only as good as your hormones.”

– Soprano, Carol Neblett<sup>27</sup>



*Figure 5.1: Beverley Shrills promotional photograph.*

Beverley Shrills is a mess. She exists in prescriptive mode of performance that deems the musician just a vessel: a necessary evil for the dead composer's “master vision.” She is bound to a confined notion of what coloratura can represent in opera: emotionally destitute, optimistic and youthful, and the epitome of codified ideas of hysteria and the 'illness of femininity'. This tradition of operatic practice intertwines the expectations of inherent feminine self-damage with performed musical beauty.

---

<sup>27</sup> Mordden, Ethan. *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984.

Simultaneous to this antiquated legacy is the contemporary remediated representation of the operatic diva, with all the expectations of beauty and body image associated with actors and models on television. By the mid 20th century, sopranos were featured regularly on televised variety shows in performing vocally demanding works while draped in their finest ball gowns. Dressed as though they were attending an operatic performance themselves, these TV sopranos emoted and executed their arias with incredible precision: perfect representations of artistic and vocal refinement that seemed untouchable by mere mortals. In this way Beverly has much in common with the societal expectations put upon Lindley La Roo: we have, in a way, come full circle.

I was interested in the emotionally removed performances given by operatic stars in appearances on television. Specifically, I was curious about the emotional intensity required of the coloratura mad scene, and the need to not allow that intensity to infect the physical body and voice in order to maintain the perfect sound. During her performance of Ophelia's mad scene from Ambroise Thomas' operatic adaptation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Beverly is haunted and eventually overcome by visions representing the expectations of her as a performer and female body. She begins with the technical specificities related to the aria and by the end, she is destroyed vocally, emotionally, and physically.

Musically, this operatic excerpt has been repurposed to include electronic invasive elements, in which Brendan is complicit. The effect of this musical assault is that Beverly can no longer compete vocally and loses control over the voice that is so central to her identity. She succumbs to this nightmare with fits of escalating screams and

eventually crumbles into a heap of taffeta and velvet. After her final tragic performance, the curtain closes and the show ends.

This piece was a struggle from conception to execution. The final product didn't fully realize anything that I had hoped to accomplish and I feel that, more than anything, this piece suffered from a lack of objective eyes and ears. Even with some distance, it remains excruciating to watch and listen to.

The idea for the piece came out of my love of divas' performances on variety shows from the 1950s – 1970s. Television, like film before it, offered an incredible platform for these divas to appear as themselves and sing. Beverly Sills stated that in one night, "more people would hear you sing than heard Caruso in his whole lifetime."<sup>28</sup> These performances, removed from the contexts of narrative, appear to generate an unnatural physicality. These singers adequately execute the vocal demands, but it reads more like emotional pantomime and less like fully fleshed beings in order to feature the "pure" voice without all the distractions. By having the stars appear separate from the trappings of operas, it diminishes the importance of context in favor of worshipping at the altar of the operatic voice.

---

<sup>28</sup> Rosenblum, Ira. "From Ed Sullivan, 'Rilly Big' Opera Stars." *The New York Times*. 17 Aug. 1997.



*Figure 5.2: Lily Pons performing "Je Suis Titania" on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1956*



*Figure 5.3: Maria Callas performing "Vissi d'arte" on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1956.*

Opera stars of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century performed regularly on Ed Sullivan's show, where the aim was to feature "great singers doing great arias from great operas, presented with no frills, reflecting a time when a close-up seemed like fancy camera work. Most of the performances are done out of costume and without sets. There is no idle chitchat. The focus is, pure and simply, on the singing."<sup>29</sup> Two of the most notable performances early on in the show's run featured a retiring Lily Pons and Maria Callas in her prime (which happened to be her only American television).

For Lily Pons, the transition to television seemed completely natural. She was ending her career on the stage and starred in a handful of very successful films during the 1930s. She appeared on eight variety shows from 1950 – 1958 as she was inching her way towards official retirement from live performance in 1960. This allowed her to sing the arias that made her famous without all the technical difficulty of having to maintain her aging voice throughout an entire opera. In excerpts, Pons could be as flashy as she wanted – hit the highest notes and wear the fanciest gowns – without having to suffer through in-depth characterization.

Maria Callas' relationship with television was less symbiotic or even necessary. Her fame was mythologized from the start, and the discussion that surrounds Callas almost always involves some sort of dig at the quality of her voice. She was unique in that audiences flocked to her performances to witness her incredible depth of character, regardless of whether her voice could meet the demands of the role or not.

Her secret is in her ability to transfer to the musical plane the suffering of the character she plays, the nostalgic longing for lost happiness, the anxious fluctuation between hope and despair, between pride and

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

supplication, between irony and generosity, which in the end dissolve into a superhuman inner pain. The most diverse and opposite of sentiments, cruel deceptions, ambitious desires, burning tenderness, grievous sacrifices, all the torments of the heart, acquire in her singing that mysterious truth, I would like to say, that psychological sonority, which is the primary attraction of opera.<sup>30</sup>

Callas also regularly switched vocal fach (a big “no-no” in classical singing) in recital appearances as well as on the dramatic stage, leading to a notorious decline in the quality of her sound towards the end of her career. She would move from the very heavy Brünnhilde to the extremely light Rosina to the very UNSOPRANO ROLE, Carmen, with tremendous vocal inconsistency, but no one really seemed to mind since her dramatic interpretation was so iconic, fluid, and natural.

It was this type of personification that I wished to represent. Whereas Lily Pons presented herself as the epitome of glamour favoring the beauty of the voice and body over a natural characterization, Callas was an actress first, who happened to be beautiful, and whose voice suffered because of it. Brendan’s introduction of my operatic alter ego is succinct, implying an extra-human quality to the persona by virtue of her operatic voice: “Our last guest needs no introduction, just off the heels of a prolific season, she has graced the great concert halls of the world with her magical, operatic voice. The one, the only: Beverly Shrills.”<sup>31</sup>

The female body anchors the female voice. It “confers upon it all the conventional associations of femininity with nature and matter, with emotion and irrationality.”<sup>32</sup> It implies a mythic relationship between gender and vocality. In literature, the female voice

---

<sup>30</sup> Gara, Eugenio. “The Callas Debate.” September – October 1970.

<sup>31</sup> Nguyen, Brendan.

<sup>32</sup> Dunn, Leslie C., Nancy A. Jones, ed. “Introduction.” *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Pg. 3

is presented as the threat to male power (sirens, banshees, Delilah): it's seductive, destructive, and high pitched. "Such narratives testify to the persistent desire of male artists to control through representation the anxieties aroused but the female voice, even while they license the display, and the enjoyment, of its powers."<sup>33</sup>

In thinking about these assumptions of voice, gender, and the operatic Diva, I felt that the aria performed *had* to be a coloratura soprano aria. The coloratura is the highest and most agile of the voice types, and its repertoire moves very quickly throughout the extremes of the vocal range, favoring (fetishizing) the high note. These arias also carry with them assumptions about psychological instability that don't exist in the repertoire for other voice types in the same way.

Ophelia's mad scene from Ambroise Thomas' adaptation of *Hamlet* is a perfect representation of all these things. In the play by Shakespeare, Ophelia's mad scene is interrupted by singing. In the context of a spoken play, the fact that she sings represents an exaggeration of her mental state. In the play, there are characters in the room that attempt to subdue her by engaging her in conversation, but Ophelia resists this level of engagement through her singing. The structure of the aria mimics the invasion of song via the inclusion of cadenzas, a folk song, and all the frills of frivolous French Grand Opéra.<sup>34</sup>

The very process of vocalization is exaggerated or intensified; the voice seems to have less mediated relationship to the body, perhaps because there

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. pg. 3

<sup>34</sup> French Grand Opéra is a genre of French opera produced from the 1820s to the 1860s. These operas were tragic, very large in scale, featuring large orchestras, choruses, and ballets, and the lead characters usually sang excessively florid vocal lines. Grand Opéra composers included Rossini, Meyerbeer, early Donizetti and Thomas.

is literally more body in the voice, more breath, more diaphragm muscles, a more open mouth.<sup>35</sup>

Except, there's a major problem: I'm *not* a coloratura soprano. While I can sing high B's and D's, my mezzo-soprano voice does not enter that region with the lightness needed to sing coloratura. I attempted to retrain my voice working regularly with my voice teacher, Sarah Agler, for about six months. We were able to achieve the light flexibility needed, but my insecurity in this repertoire manifested in a performance that was stringent, constrained and vocally very tight.

I anticipated that this would happen – knowing my history in performance to favor the dramatic needs, discarding all of the technical progress made in lessons and practice – so I decided to include artificial forms of invasions, designed by Joe Cantrell, that were separate from my own voice. This way, I could build into the piece moments where I could rest and also moments where I could actually destroy the instrument. It was a bit of a safety net, and ended up being my own downfall.

The piece begins with a typically 1950s Diva-on-TV tableaux: Soprano on a set draped in fabric, beautiful ball gown, hair styled very stiffly. Brendan begins playing the introduction as Beverly waits for her entrance. She begins the first greeting of the scene speaking in metaphor regarding the larks hovering in the air at which point she sings her first cadenza (figure 5.5).

---

<sup>35</sup> Dunn, Leslie C. "Ophelia's Songs in *Hamlet*: music, madness, and the feminine." *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Pp. 52-53





Figure 5.4: Beverly Shrills performs Ophelia's Mad Scene.

287

- et - te, avant l'aube éveil - lé - e, Planait dans l'air,

rit. dim.

suivez.

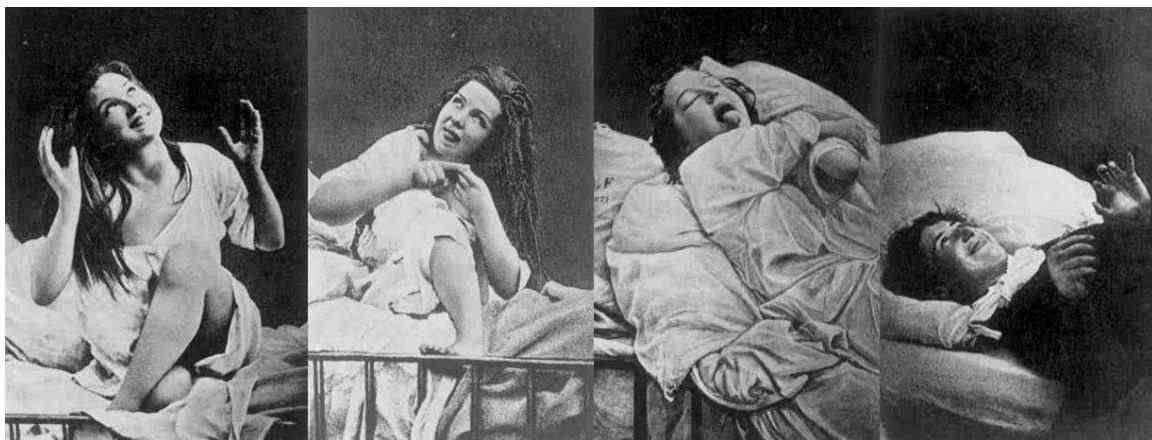
f p

pp

Figure 5.5: First instance of coloratura in Ophelia's Mad Scene by Ambroise Thomas.

The next section is a typical Viennese waltz, which is begun by Brendan. Ophelia begins to distribute her flowers, her most iconographic moment, as she says, “Partagez-vous mes fleurs!” (“Share my flowers!”). Musically, this provides a stark contrast to what has preceded it. Here, we have a light-hearted waltz, which is a cheap representation of the mentally ill, a symptom of a 19<sup>th</sup> century misunderstanding of psychology and mental health. In preparation for this aria, I came across the work of neurologist Jean-Michel Charcot and his patient, Augustine. Charcot was among the first scientists to study “female hysteria” in patients at the Salpêtrière women’s hospital in Paris, and as an amateur photographer, he documented his work thoroughly.

In the following photos, the women are baring their tongues or grinning maniacally, arms either outstretched or contorted. By including a dance towards the beginning of a scene where a woman is coming undone, it’s as if Thomas is scoring this shallow assumption of madness. During this part of the aria, the soprano tends to bounce around the stage, tossing flowers to and fro in a display of total silliness. As she does this, she begins an extended passage of coloratura that sounds like maniacal laughter (figure 5.8). Charcot’s work would later be discredited, as it was discovered that his patients were often posed.



*Figure 5.6: "Hysteria" photographed by Jean-Michel Charcot*



*Figure 5.7: Joan Sutherland performs Lucia's mad scene from Donizetti's Lucia di Lamermoor on the Bell Telephone Hour in 1968.*

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The vocal line begins with a trill (tr) and a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The piano accompaniment also features a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The second system, labeled 'Variante', shows a more intricate piano accompaniment with trills (tr) and fortissimo (f) markings. The vocal line in this system is more melodic and includes a trill (tr) marking.

Figure 5.8: Implied laughter in the vocal line.

During the prelude to this waltz section, Cantrell introduced the second portion of electronic disturbance, a sped up recording of the same piano interlude. With this layered on top of the live piano, the resulting sound was disorienting as you couldn't quite tell where each sound was coming from. As the waltz continues, the disruption begins to intensify, and Beverly begins to suspect that Brendan is actively trying to derail her. Her own sound grows more and more metallic through vocal processing, causing her to cover her eyes.

As the waltz ends, the remnants of the piano and voice are left lingering in the air, as if a record was skipping and the needle were simultaneously grinding a hole into it.

She crumbles to the floor as she sings a ballad of warning about the sirens who live underneath the water in the lake, waiting to drag her under. As she continues, her voice get more and more shaky and defeated. She plops into a heap of taffeta, as if Beverly is trying to calm her own nerves with a soothing song (much in the way Patti decided to sing to calm her own nerves).

This moment of repose is met with a flash of madness and another cadenza that mimics laughter. She then begins to sing to herself another song of soothing, but Brendan simply won't let her be. He begins to play more aggressively, improvising a dense soundscape of cluster chords and key slaps under a distorted sample of a very high trill in the piano. The air clears briefly, as the tonality shifts to a major chord, with a slight distortion on her voice, causing it to echo throughout the room. As she begins to approach the next high B, she is completely overcome, and eventually shrieks, burying her face in her hands.

Emerging from this intensity is a bit of stillness as Beverley recovers from her momentary loss of control. Beverly and Brendan take pause, and an eerie recording of the piano part spliced into micro loops and pitch shifted using granular synthesis is heard playing. Brendan takes a sip of his martini as he prepares for the next and final onslaught. Beverly pants in exasperation. Then we begin to hear additional sopranos' voices singing various portions of the aria, which were pre-recorded and also spliced and pitch shifted. This layering of distorted piano and voice are unsettling and further complicate Beverly's ability to perform.

She returns to the song about the underwater sirens, this time singing more under her breath until Brendan interrupts her with a keyboard assault. The extra voices and

distorted piano grow in volume and intensity as she tries to shut it all out by singing louder. But the voices take over, singing through the finale with greater ease, drowning out her own voice. She tries to sing the finale, but just can't commit. Each phrase is exasperated, weaker than the last, and the only thing left to do is scream. The aria wins and Beverly is utterly defeated.

I genuinely wanted to sing this piece well, but the end result was vocally embarrassing and incredibly tough to watch. I had hoped to enact all of the poses of hysteria, adding a broader physical element of pantomime to the piece, but I felt defeated within the first few bars and went into vocal diagnosis mode. Instead of re-enacting the televised performances of Pons or Callas, I was immediately distracted by my vocal inadequacies. I was vocally exhausted from the week of long days, long rehearsals, and a full-voiced dress rehearsal the night before that I had nothing left to give. I wanted to pull a Maria Callas and sing out of my f\*ck, but lacked the confidence and ability to do so. Also, I have no business singing coloratura.

I think, though, I can comfortably put this caricature to rest. I've performed the hysterical woman too many times to count, that I fear that's all people think I can do. While I treasure music's ability to explore complex human emotions, this particular trope has been done to death. I have hope that composers will stop fetishizing the emotionally compromised female in favor of more complex personifications.

Beverly Shrills is dead.

I hope.

## CONCLUSION:

### THE FUTURE

Though this initial incarnation of the show was successful in many ways, it suffered in some areas due to my being spread too thin. As producer, director, designer, costumer, writer, singer, and actor, I could never fully devote my attention to any one thing. This production turned out to be an incredible learning experience. I realized that maybe I don't need to be in total control of everything, in order to provide enough time to really work pieces into my voice and body. The show as it currently exists in a theater space retains the comfortable and conventional delimitations of audience and performer. For the next incarnation of the project, it is apparent that this boundary needed to be challenged.

Future productions of *Vanity Run Amok* will also incorporate the transference of the live TV variety show format from the virtual space of the screen or theater, directly into the private homes of the audience. This practice resists the mediated tendencies of contemporary performance tradition, as it is directly confrontational to audiences. Through proximity, the attractive qualities of the diva are forced into a closer examination in which all the hideous flaws are brought to bear in front of an intimate audience.

I am currently planning a *Vanity Run Amok: Home Invasion Tour*, which I will begin to workshop as early as April and May 2015. The performances will change from home to home, utilizing any stereo electronic equipment that exists in each space. I am developing a rolodex of travelling characters who will each perform with transportable equipment (DVD, boombox, toys, small instruments, fixed media), since we can't

guarantee there will be a piano in the homes. The characters will stay big, but the performances will be small.

The personae in this production put the personality before the music. Patti and Rita are two sides of the same coin. Patti, in using other peoples' words wishes to be seen, but lacks the confidence to speak for herself. Rita, on the other hand, wishes to withdraw. Lindley is someone with a lot to say, but lacks the cultural credibility to really be heard. Beverly exists in a system that idolizes and fetishizes the human voice and the person behind it, yet requires of her an emotional depth that is, at times, at odds with the purity of the sound. In collaborating with more composers, I hope to develop characters that rethink what is possible with the singing voice, as a way to not only challenge performance expectations, but to develop a repertoire for solo voice that is better suited for my instrument and its specific strengths.

Through this new performance practice, I hope to unearth (or, at the very least, reference) the antiquated 'high art' practice of salon performances prevalent in the 19th century. By making tangible the otherwise hyperperreal, *Vanity Run Amok* forces an inspection of the representation and valuation of standardized performance practices. It does this by presenting familiar female performance tropes and extending them to absurd proportions made even more explicit by choosing as a performance venue, the actual homes of participating hosts. In this way, the otherwise normative, accepted portrayals of female performativity are transformed into the realm of the ridiculous by placing them within the almost invisible ordinary expectations associated with the actual home environments of the audience.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. The Andrews Sisters. "I Can Dream, Can't I?" Decca, 1949.
2. Becker, Christine. *It's the Pictures That Got Small*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University press, 2008. Pg. 7.
3. Bruce, Lenny. "To is a preposition; come is a verb." *What I Was Arrested For: the Performances that Got Lenny Bruce Busted*. Douglas, 1970.
4. Cher. "Interview with David Letterman." *The Late Show With David Letterman*. CBS. 22 May. 1986. Television.
5. Deyoe, Nicholas. *Ace Farren Ford Songs*. Los Angeles, 2014.
6. Dunn, Leslie C. "Ophelia's Songs in *Hamlet*: music, madness, and the feminine." *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Pp. 50-64.
7. Dunn, Leslie C., Nancy A. Jones, ed. "Introduction." *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. Pp. 1-16.
8. Emmons, Shirlee, and Stanley Sonntag. "The Song Recital: Evolution." *The Art of the Song Recital*. New York: Schirmer, 1979. 1-22. Print.
9. Frith, Simon. "Look! Hear! The Uneasy Relationship of Music and Television." *Popular Music*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Music and Television (Oct., 2002), pp. 277-290. Web. Accessed 25 Jan. 2009.
10. Galinsky, Michael. *Malls Across America*. Göttingen; Steidl-Miles, 2013. Print.
11. Gara, Eugenio. "The Callas Debate." September – October 1970.
12. Jensen, Joli. "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization." *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Ed. Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge, 1992. Pg 9 - 14. Print.
13. Kallmyer, Ted, and James Foster. *Caffeine Informer*. Web. Accessed 8 Feb, 2015.
14. Lavatelli, Anna Chiaretta. "Artist Statement." [www.annachiaretta.com](http://www.annachiaretta.com). Web.
15. Mann, Denise. "The Spectacularization of Everyday Life: Recycling Hollywood Stars and Fans in Early Television Variety Shows." Pg. 62
16. McCallum, Clinton. *There No Here*. San Diego, 2014.

17. McNally, Karen. "Hollywood stars vs. variety show hosts: The incompatible case of Frank Sinatra on 1950s television." *European Journal of American Culture* 31:2, pg. 108
18. Meizel, Katherin. "Win or Lose: Success and Failure and the American Dream." *Idolized: Music, Media and Identity in American Idol*. Indiana University Press, 2011. Pp. 81 – 101. Print.
19. Mordden, Ethan. *Demented: The World of the Opera Diva*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984.
20. Nepty. "Kitchens of the Future." Online video clip. *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 Feb. 2008. Web.
21. Nguyen, Brendan. "About." *www.brendannguyen.com*. Web.
22. Penn, Guy. "Revisited a Decade Later: 'American Life'." *Guy Penn and the Gospel According to Madonna*. Wordpress, 13 Feb. 2013. Web.
23. Pierzak, Robert. "Bio/Vitae." *musicgrad.ucsd.edu/~bob*. Web
24. Prensky, Marc. "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants." *On the Horizon*. MCB University Press, Vol. 9 No. 5, October 2001.
25. Quenqua, Douglas. "They're, Like, Way Ahead of the Linguistic Currrrve." *The New York Times*. 28 Feb. 2012, New York ed.: pg. D1. Print.
26. Respers France, Lisa. "The words and comedy of Sid Caesar." *www.cnn.com*. 12 Feb. 2014. Web.
27. Rosenblum, Ira. "From Ed Sullivan, 'Rilly Big' Opera Stars." *The New York Times*. 17 Aug. 1997.
28. Shugart, Helene A., and Catherine Egley Waggoner. "Introduction: Trail Map." "Camp Grounds: Histories and Characters of Camp." *Making Camp: Rhetorics of Transgression in U.S. Popular Culture*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama, 2008. Pp. 1-38. Print.
29. Sontag, Susan. "Notes on Camp." *Against Interpretation: And Other Essays*. New York: Dell Pub., 1966. 275-92. Print.
30. Thomas, Ambroise. *Hamlet*. Paris: Éd. Premières Loges, 2011.