



2014

BEVERLY, "MUSIC MISSES YOU": A BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO AMERICAN MEZZO-SOPRANO BEVERLY WOLFF'S CAREER AND HER SUBSEQUENT IMPACT ON AMERICAN OPERA AND ART SONG

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BEVERLY, “MUSIC MISSES YOU”: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERFORMANCE
GUIDE TO AMERICAN MEZZO-SOPRANO BEVERLY WOLFF’S CAREER AND
HER SUBSEQUENT IMPACT ON AMERICAN OPERA AND ART SONG

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts in the School of Music
at the University of Kentucky

By
Sarah Catherine Downs Trail

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Everett McCorvey, Professor of Voice

Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT FOR DMA PROJECT

BEVERLY, “MUSIC MISSES YOU”: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO AMERICAN MEZZO-SOPRANO, BEVERLY WOLFF’S CAREER AND HER SUBSEQUENT IMPACT ON AMERICAN OPERA AND ART SONG

American mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff has not received the credit or respect that she deserves in operatic history. Her career began in 1952 and flourished until her retirement from the stage in 1981. Her intense characterizations, innate musicianship, and intelligence made her one of the most sought-after performers from the 1950s to the 1970s. For thirty years, she worked with some of the operatic world’s finest musicians, including Leonard Bernstein, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, Beverly Sills, Norman Triegle, Placido Domingo, among others.

She was represented by Columbia Artists Management Inc (CAMI), one of New York’s oldest and most prestigious management companies, and maintained an active performance schedule that often included operatic, concert, and recital performances in the same week. She trained at the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia and was inducted into its Hall of Fame. She performed in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, New Orleans, and Atlanta and was an active member of the New York City Opera, Handel Society, Tanglewood, and the Handel Society of Washington, D.C.

Wolff is credited with over sixty recordings. She also appeared on several of NBC’s live operatic programs, which brought opera to the masses. Perhaps most importantly, she created and debuted several important roles in American opera. Few have heard of her; the purpose of this document is to fill in this gap in operatic history, and to clarify and correct misinformation about her. In this document, I will answer the following questions: What determines a performer’s worth? What secures a performer’s place in history? Finally, and more specifically, what imprints did Beverly Wolff leave for posterity?

KEYWORDS: Beverly Wolff, *Songs of Love and Rain* by Ned Rorem, *Trouble in Tahiti* by Leonard Bernstein, *Carrie Nation* by Douglas Moore, Mezzo-Soprano

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June 18, 2014

Date

BEVERLY, “MUSIC MISSES YOU”: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND PERFORMANCE
GUIDE TO AMERICAN MEZZO-SOPRANO BEVERLY WOLFF’S CAREER AND
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of my father, Thomas William Downs. Special thanks also go to Professor Cliff Jackson a man who has served as a constant inspiration to me as a performer and a person. I would also like to thank Dr. Joanne Filkins for constantly supporting me through this entire process, and Dr. David Sogin for helping me work through the process. I would be lost without the support of Glenn Trail my husband, friend, and rock, and Sandra Downs Pittman, my mother and best friend, who never let me give up on this project and more importantly on myself. Lastly, Audrey Jean Trail, my heart, I finished this for you! Never give up on your dreams no matter how difficult and challenging they are!

I would also like to thank my committee members: Dr. Karen Bottge, Dr. Ben Arnold, Dr. Noemi Lugo, Dr. Everett McCorvey, Professor Robert Haven, Dr. Nancy Jones, Dr. Lance Brunner, and Dr. Richard Domek.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Project Overview

Introduction

The following telegram was sent every year from 1953 to 1958 on New Year's Eve: "Music Misses You—Lenny." The person that sent the telegram was the world famous composer and conductor, Leonard Bernstein. He sent those three significant and meaningful words to mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff. At that time, Wolff had stepped out of the limelight, from what was the start of a significant performance career, in order to start a family. When someone as powerful and important as Bernstein notices the absence of one person, it causes one to stop and ask why was this person so special.

Scope and Goal of Research

In this document, I will investigate important biographical details in Wolff's extensive performance career. The document also focuses on her collaboration with composers Leonard Bernstein, Douglas Moore, and Ned Rorem, each of whom composed specifically for Wolff: Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*; Moore's *Carry Nation*; and Rorem's song cycle, *Poems of Love and Rain*. Because few have heard of Wolff, my goal is to make her better known among singers and shed light on her life and career.

Need for Study

Wolff's singing career began in 1952 and flourished until her retirement from the stage in 1981. Her intense characterizations, innate musicianship, and intelligence made her one of the most sought-after performers during her time. For thirty years, she worked with some of the operatic world's finest musicians including Leonard Bernstein, Gian-Carlo Menotti, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, Beverly Sills, Norman Triegle, and Placido Domingo, among others. Represented by Columbia Artists Management, Inc, one of New

York's oldest and most prestigious management companies, Wolff maintained an active performance schedule that often included operatic, concert, and recital performances in the same week.

She trained at the American Vocal Academy (AVA) in Philadelphia. Several years later Wolff was inducted into the AVA Hall of Fame. She performed most notably in the United States such as in New York, Boston, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, New Orleans, and Atlanta. She also had a busy performance schedule in Europe. Wolff was an active performer with the New York City Opera, Handel Society of New York, Tanglewood, Brevard, and the Handel Society of Washington, D.C. Wolff was credited with over sixty audio recordings and appeared in several of NBC's live operatic programs, which brought opera to the masses. Perhaps most importantly, she created and debuted several important roles in American opera. In short, she was an important artist and her career merits notice.

Limitations of Study, Methodology, and Sources Used

Source material was collected from performance reviews, newspaper articles, press releases, program biographies, interviews, and journal entries. Archival information from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Ravinia Festival, New York Philharmonic, New York City Opera, and Carnegie Hall were used to provide structural support to the document. Since little has been written about Wolff, it has been somewhat difficult to establish her performance history.

The slogan, "One door leads to another," has been the case in this research project. One tiny kernel of information has led to another, which has culminated into this document. Electronic journals and e-sources used include *ProQuest Historical*

Newspapers “New York Times” articles; *JSTOR* for additional performance and audio reviews; full text articles from Music Index of *Opera News*; *Opera Quarterly*; *Musical Times*; *Tempo*; *Keynote*; and the *National Association of Teachers of Singing Bulletin*. Biographical information on Bernstein, Moore, and Rorem were consulted in reference to their respective works and interactions with Wolff.

I made two research trips to New York City,¹ where I visited the New York City Public Library Fine Arts Special Collections Room,² Carnegie Hall Archive, New York Philharmonic Archive, The Paley Center for Media, and Columbia University’s Rare Documents Library. I contacted the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s archival department to collect data and reviews from Wolff’s many performances with the notable orchestra. I also worked with the archive department for the Ravinia Festival. In order to have a fuller understanding, not only of my direct subject matter, but of the breadth and depth of knowledge, secondary research was conducted, which included investigating the composers, conductors, poets, stage directors, and contemporary musicians connected to Wolff. This amount of research has led me to have a true idea of what the pulse of music was like during this period in New York City.

¹During my second research trip, I had a chance encounter with Ned Rorem at the premiere of *11 Songs for Susan* at Carnegie Hall. I was able to confirm his deep appreciation and friendship with Beverly Wolff. During the brief conversation, he said, “She was a hell of a woman and performer. I miss her dearly.” [Carnegie Hall, May 11, 2009]

²City Opera and CAMI press releases are archived in the New York City Public Library Fine Arts Special Collections Room.

Chapter 2: Beverly Wolff Biography and Performance History

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines Wolff's personal and professional life, including her musical beginnings, training, and the early events that paved the way to her rise as an operatic star in the United States. This chapter also provides detailed information about significant events in her performance career, including her work with the New York City Opera, New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall performances, Festival work, and much more.

Chapter 3: Three Greats in American Music and their Collaboration with Wolff:

Leonard Bernstein, *Trouble in Tahiti*, Douglas Moore, *Carrie Nation*, and Ned Rorem, *Poems of Love and Rain*

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines three monumental figures in American music—Bernstein, Moore, and Rorem—and explores how each composer collaborated with Wolff. Bernstein was highly influential in Wolff's early career; they worked together several times throughout the years, but nothing was quite as important as their collaboration in *Trouble in Tahiti*. This chapter also examines the opera, *Carry Nation* by Moore. Wolff worked closely with Moore throughout the entire compositional process. She created, debuted, and recorded this important and often overlooked American opera. Lastly, this chapter explores the close relationship between Wolff and Rorem. Together they introduced several art songs, performed in recitals, and collaborated on the song cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*.

Chapter 4: Performance Guide to the role of Dinah from Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, Carrie Nation from Moore’s *Carrie Nation*, and Rorem’s Song Cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I will analyze Dinah from Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti* and Carrie from Moore’s *Carrie Nation*. I will also examine the Rorem song cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*. More importantly, I will examine Wolff’s unique interpretation of each character and the choices she made on a technical and dramatic level. During her career, Wolff was closely associated with the three outlined compositions and was considered one of the leading interpreters of each respective work. Each composition also falls into different time periods of Wolff’s professional career and shows her enduring legacy.

Chapter 5: Wolff’s Instrument, Musicianship, Reputation, and Legacy

Chapter Overview

Wolff’s unique voice caught the attention of composers, conductors, music critics, and listeners. Her innate musicianship separated her from her contemporaries, and when coupled with her work ethic these qualities made her a quick favorite with composers, conductors, and opera companies alike. Her career and continual engagements were a direct result of the reputation that she created. Her instrument, musicianship, and reputation combined with her extensive teaching career created a lasting legacy in the musical world. This chapter will tie together interviews, reviews, and insights that will illuminate and help define Wolff’s instrument, musicianship, reputation, and legacy.

Chapter 2: Wolff Biography and Performance History

Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 6th, 1928, Beverly Ann Wolff was the tenth of eleven children Arthur McCane of the *Lakeland Ledger* adds more detail about the Wolff household, “Wolff grew up in an Atlanta household where someone was always playing the piano. Her father was a baker. Her mother, a passionate and energetic woman, was raised by nuns until she married at fourteen.”³ Her mother was a huge influence on her. In an interview, Wolff reflected about her mother, “She would yell at you and pop you on the head one minute and be laughing with you the next. She never held a grudge.”⁴

Money was sparse for the large family; however, Wolff’s parents placed significant value on music and provided private music lessons for each child. Wolff was quoted as saying, “My mother was a nut on the piano, and she had the idea that we should all do something musical and have family music together.”⁵ Wolff was immediately drawn to music, and when she was only four years old, she expressed a deep desire to study. Wolff ended up playing a trumpet that had been purchased and abandoned by an older sister. She began instruction and soon became proficient in the instrument. She reflected, “I learned the trumpet before I learned to sing, but Mother would say that I was ‘not to get the big head’ and that my talent was no more than my sisters’, who could sew.”⁶

³ Arthur McCane, “Former opera diva always put family before limelight,” *Lakeland Ledger*, Nov 29, 1993.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Michael Steinberg, “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist,” *Boston Globe*, Dec. 29, 1967.

⁶ Beverly Wolff, “The Other Beverly: An Interview,” interview by Harvey Phillips. *Opera News* 36, no. 10 (January 1972): 27.

Despite Wolff's acclaim as a mezzo-soprano, it was her skill with a trumpet that caught the attention of musical professionals in Atlanta. She was immediately recognized for her innate musical talent. Phil Spitalny, impresario of the All-Girl Orchestra, once offered her a position with his group; however Wolff's mother immediately turned down the offer because she wanted her daughter to have a normal childhood. Wolff continued with her musical training and was so dedicated that she would wake up at 7 a.m. in order to squeeze in a few hours of practice before school. Her hard work paid off. When she was only a junior in high school, she became the first chair trumpeter of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra.⁷ The trumpet was her principle instrument for eleven years.

When Wolff was thirteen, she expanded her musical studies to include voice lessons. Wolff recalled that she seemed to always be drawn to singing: "I can't remember when I didn't sing. I sang for my mother's Sunday school class when I was five years old. That's when I got hooked on it."⁸ In Atlanta, Wolff studied under the tutelage of the renowned voice teacher, Gertrude Blanchard McFarland, who taught Wolff the fundamentals of singing and artistry. Wolff attended and sang in the junior choir where McFarland served as organist and choir director. The two remained in close contact throughout Wolff's professional career and in 1985, Wolff invited McFarland to Philadelphia for her induction into the American Vocal Academy's American Opera Singer Hall of Fame.⁹

⁷ Columbia Artist Management Press Release, *Beverly Wolff, Mezzo-Soprano*, 1976-77.

⁸ McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

⁹ Susan Harte, "The Metropolitan Opera in Atlanta," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), May 5, 1985.

In 1946, Henry Sopkin, the conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, discovered Wolff's singing voice and immediately hired her as a soloist in its Christmas program. In the program, she sang three classical selections accompanied by her orchestral colleagues.¹⁰ This concert served as her first major professional venture as a concert soloist. The choir director of the Episcopal Church heard this performance and offered her a job as a soprano soloist.¹¹ Although Wolff loved music and was extremely successful as a musician, she maintained the importance of a well-rounded education. She received a scholarship to attend the University of Georgia, where she studied literature. In 1950, Wolff received a full scholarship to study voice at the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia, where she studied under Sidney Dietch and Vera McIntyre.

While at the AVA, Wolff competed in Philadelphia's Youth Auditions and won the competition. Part of her prize was the opportunity to perform with conductor Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in concerts to be held in Philadelphia and New York City. On April 15, 1952, Wolff joined Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra in New York City on stage at Carnegie Hall for a performance of Honegger's *Le Roi David*. This performance was a major launching point in her early career, as it was her first professional concert in Carnegie Hall with one of the finest conductors in the world. In 1952, she also appeared on the television show, *A Chance of a Lifetime*, and won a prize of \$1,000.

Wolff graduated from AVA in 1953; upon graduation, she married Henry Dwiggins and decided to leave music in order to start a family. In an interview with

¹⁰ Derrick Henry, "Obituaries: Lakeland, FLA.: Wolff, ASO founding member," *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, GA), Aug. 20, 2005.

¹¹ McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

Arthur McCane from the *Lakeland Ledger*, Wolff added insight into her decision to marry:

As her musical career was blossoming, Wolff had to make a choice in her personal life. She was certain that John Dwiggins, a man she met when she was 19, was the man she should marry. And she felt his patience was wearing thin. Like so many other aspects of her life, this one also began in the church. Dwiggins heard her sing in the choir. “She was just beautiful,” he remembers, “just like angel.” Wolff looked hard at other people who had put their personal lives on hold so they could establish a career. She decided she didn’t want to do that. So, after a five-year courtship, she and Dwiggins were married.¹²

Wolff had two sons, David and Donald, and loved every minute of being a wife and a mother; yet, she could not completely walk away from performing. In an interview with *The Boston Globe*, Wolff recalled that during her “sabbatical years”, she performed in countless concert versions of Brahms’s Alto Rhapsody. She stated that she performed Brahms’s Alto Rhapsody “around the South, wherever there was some sort of an orchestra and somebody had a few boys to sing the choral part.”¹³

Likewise, at the urging of several close friends and colleagues, Wolff avoided stagnation by using this time to learn new repertoire and work on her vocal technique. Finally, in 1958, Wolff and her husband decided that Wolff should pursue her musical career: “She talked with her husband, and they agreed: She needed to be judged on a professional level. Wolff called Columbia Artists about a new contract, and the company signed her on.”¹⁴ Wolff remarked, “The talent was at a certain level that I could re-enter, if you don’t know that, you are practicing false humility.”¹⁵ Her new contract stated the following terms: for every two weeks that she worked, she spent three weeks at home

¹² McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

¹³ Steinberg, “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist,” *Boston Globe*.

¹⁴ McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

¹⁵ Ibid.

with her family.¹⁶ Wolff joked on several occasions that she returned to the stage once her sons were over the mumps and measles. She relied on her husband, family, and community to help while she was away. “Dwiggins’ parents would come and stay with the family when Wolff was gone. And people in the community would pitch in.”¹⁷ Wolff said, “A career is more than one person’s doing, and if you think that, you’re a damn fool. You could not be doing it, without people’s support and caring.”¹⁸

Wolff’s family was the most important priority in her life, and although she worked consistently as an opera singer, soloist, and recitalist, she never let her career invade into her private life. In an interview, she once said, “The only future is your children and rearing them is not a part-time job.”¹⁹ Her home, her husband, and her children mattered most to Wolff. She said, “When I worry a lot, my husband says to me, ‘If it doesn’t work out, come on home and say to hell with it.’ I’m not entirely enchanted by the idea of a life centered on music.”²⁰

Clearly, her ability to remain genuinely grounded and confident brought in a supportive audience. Her personality, moral fiber, and work ethic also prompted opera companies, symphonies, and orchestras to hire and re-hire her frequently. When her children reached their late teens, Wolff once again began performing more frequently; and she began accepting further reaching engagements in some of Europe’s finest opera houses. In Europe, she appeared in Italy in cities such as Florence, Rome, Milan, Venice, Turin, Perugia, Palermo, and other notable towns. She also performed in England and

¹⁶ Steinberg. “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist,” *Boston Globe*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Phillips, 27.

²⁰ Ibid.

Austria. Wolff also appeared as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* at the Vatican for Pope Paul VI before an audience of over seventy thousand.

For the next twenty years, Wolff managed to have a major operatic career singing in America's finest opera houses. In the United States, Wolff performed in New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, San Diego, Houston, Atlanta, New Orleans, San Francisco, North Carolina, and South Carolina, among others. Wolff's true operatic home, however, was on the stage of the New York City Opera under the direction of Julius Rudel. She appeared in countless productions at City Opera, performing various roles from Cherubino and Siebel to Carry Nation and Carmen. She also performed with the company in the famous *Guilio Cesare* in 1966 with Beverly Sills, Maureen Forrester, and Norman Treigle, which is considered to have been among the first productions in New York that led to the rise in popularity of Handelian opera and its inclusion in the standard operatic repertoire. Wolff was a managed artist by the highly respected company, Columbia Artists Management Inc, and appeared on their roster from 1968 to 1983.

She performed as a concert soloist with several fine orchestras, including New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Montreal Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and the National Symphony, among numerous others. In an interview, Wolff explained her love of performing as a concert soloist: "What I can do in concert is closer to the intellectual idea of myself as a singer. Besides, singing concerts is easier, because I can pay complete attention to my voice."²¹ She quickly became a favorite with orchestral conductors and appeared with almost every major orchestra in the United States.

²¹ Ibid.

During an interview with *The Boston Globe*, Wolff discussed the importance of mutual respect between conductor and soloist: “We singers aren’t the dumb clucks anymore we’re made out to be, and there’s nothing worse than the conductors who treat us without respect, who just lay down the law, who don’t listen to what we’re doing...what it should be is, you tell me what you know, and I’ll tell you what I know.”²² Not only was she well respected and continually re-engaged with the same symphonies and orchestras, Wolff forged lasting relationships with the conductors of these symphonies and orchestras, including Thomas Schippers, Julius Rudel, Eric Leinsdorf, Leonard Bernstein, Colin Davis, Thomas Dunn, Zubin Metha, and James Levine.

In an interview with *Opera News*, she described what she learned from working so closely with these conducting greats:

I’ve learned so much from symphony conductors. Steinberg taught me to be true to the page, and Leinsdorf made me happy with Bach for the first time. He showed me that Bach can be sung in my own voice. Schippers, I should add, is incredible for singers. He just knows more about *bel canto* than anyone else. And Julius (Rudel)—well, he taught me to cool it.²³

On a separate occasion, Wolff stated, “Erich Leinsdorf and Bernstein are among the conductors it is a special joy for singers to work with, and some of the younger ones have it too, Donald Johanos in Dallas, Thomas Dunn in New York and Seymour Lipkin.”²⁴

Wolff was a featured artist in renowned festivals such as Tanglewood, Ravinia, Caramoor, Spoleto, Brevard, Salzburg Opera Festival, and the International Opera Festival in Mexico City. She was also known as a well-regarded recitalist, specifically as an interpreter of American art song. Her recital work with Phyllis Curtain, Donald

²² Steinberg. “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist,” *Boston Globe*.

²³ Phillips, 27.

²⁴ Steinberg. “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist,” *Boston Globe*.

Gramm, and Ned Rorem was the most influential. She took part in many world premieres including, Moore's *Carry Nation*; Menotti's *Labyrinth* and *The Most Important Man*; Rorem's one-act opera, *Bertha*; and song compositions, *Some Trees*, and *Gloria*. Later in her career, she took several extended recital tours throughout the United States, Mexico, and Europe.

Wolff was also a well-known interpreter of oratorio. She sang a myriad of Handel's *Messiah*, Bach, cantatas and requiem masses. She was highly praised for her interpretation of Handel, Rossini, Berlioz, Mozart, and J.S. Bach; however, it was her work with American opera and art song that resonated the strongest with her as an artist. She believed that the United States had some of the best musicians, conductors, and composers. She fiercely defended and promoted American music.

In 1981, Wolff officially retired from singing and began her long career as a voice teacher. In an interview with the *Lakeland Ledger*, Wolff explained her decision,

[S]he quit, when she heard something new, something unsettling in her voice and, without shedding a tear moved into a new phase in her career at the age of 52. She taught. She has not sung since. Not even around the house. "I didn't want people to say, 'That was all right, but you should have heard her...'" Wolff says, "I didn't want anyone to listen to me out of affection. You have to hang it up. You have to hang up the vocal chords sometime."²⁵

She taught briefly at the Academy of Vocal Arts and then settled permanently in Lakeland, Florida, at Florida Southern College, where she was artist in residence for twenty-four years. In an interview in 1970, Wolff spoke of transitioning to a teaching

²⁵ McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

career, “Eventually I want to teach what I have learned to others. This is much more satisfying than constantly getting up in front of a bunch of strangers.”²⁶

Wolff recalled that the transition from performance to instruction was not as simple as she anticipated, “You have to understand, to be a good teacher you have to learn your craft. I don’t think I was too hot when I started. You discover that you can learn, and you do get better . . . Florida Southern gave me the opportunity to be bad a couple of years.”²⁷ Wolff quickly excelled as an instructor; she was very hands-on and her students were successful. Her studio was the most popular voice studio on campus for several years. Longtime friend and Florida Southern colleague, Robert MacDonald, recalled, “Her students adore her. It’s almost like a guru walking around with her disciples.”²⁸ Although she was frequently courted by other colleges, Wolff’s roots were firmly planted at Florida Southern. She remained on the faculty for over twenty years. In 2000, Florida Southern recognized her excellence by awarding an honorary Doctorate of Music, and named her Honorary Chancellor.

New York City Opera

Wolff appeared on the roster of the New York City Opera from 1958 to 1971. On April 6, 1958, Wolff made her City Opera debut as Dinah in Bernstein’s one act opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*. The composer also served as the conductor for this performance. Her next role came in the fall of 1963 with City Opera’s production of Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro* in English. Wolff sang the role of Cherubino and received wide acclaim; The *New York Times* reviewer, Raymond Ericson, had this to say: “Two members of the company,

²⁶ Beth Brown, “Modern Music,” *The News and Courier*, Charleston, S.C. March 21, 1970.

²⁷ McCane, Nov. 29, 1993.

²⁸ Ibid.

singing their roles at the City Center for the first time, fitted easily into the ensemble. Beverly Wolff was an entrancing Cherubino, handsome in her male uniform and a singer of taste and sensibility.”²⁹

In 1964, she reprised the role of Cherubino and *The New York Times* writer, Howard Klein, reviewed her stating, “An early highpoint was Beverly Wolff’s sensitive singing of what would normally be ‘Voi, che sapete.’ It drew sustained applause for both its lovely legato and intense characterization. Miss Wolff, consistently winning as Cherubino, was a main reason for the success of the evening.”³⁰ Interestingly enough, during this period, Wolff appeared as Cherubino in the *Marriage of Figaro* and as Siebel in Gounod’s *Faust*. Her schedule included performances of the *Marriage of Figaro* on October 2, 11, and 24, and in *Faust* on October 18, and 24 and November 13.

Of special interest, in the course of a week, she appeared in three separate operas with different musical styles, characterizations, and staging; an amazing accomplishment for any opera singer. On October 24, 1964, Wolff appeared in a matinee performance of *Faust* and then turned around for an evening performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. She was reviewed during the matinee by *The New York Times* writer, Raymond Ericson, “There was some beautiful singing by Wolff as Siébel; her one aria has seldom been sung so well hereabouts and she looked handsome, besides.”³¹ The production of *Faust* ended on November 13. The following evening, Wolff made her debut as Carmen in the City

²⁹Raymond Ericson, “Marriage of Figaro,” *New York Times*, Oct.12, 1963.

³⁰Howard Klein, “City Opera Presents ‘Figaro’ Donald Gramm in Title Role,” *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1964.

³¹Raymond Ericson, “City Opera gives its Second ‘Faust’,” *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1964.

Opera's production of Georges Bizet's *Carmen*. Raymond Ericson once again reviewed Wolff:

Of principal interest was the appearance of Beverly Wolff in the title role. The young mezzo-soprano had sung it with the company in an out-of-town engagement, and she seemed well acquainted with the stage business. She was a Carmen easy to look at, youthfully mobile and yet suggesting some of the toughness conventionally associated with the character. The toughness seemed more assumed than spontaneous at times, but this is a quality that Miss Wolff may learn to project with greater depth as she grows into the part. What was best about an admirable performance was the singing: strong, secure and vocally rich. She let her attempts to color the tone twist her French pronunciation at times and the lowest notes lacked steadiness, but these were small points in such fine, professional singing. Thus, the City Opera has two fine American mezzo-sopranos to present in its *Carmen*, the other being Shirley Verrett, and the company can consider itself fortunate in such bounty.³²

In the fall of 1965, Wolff appeared with the company in productions of Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Gounod's *Faust*, and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Her performance schedule was hectic and often involved flipping rapidly between languages, and musical styles.

Wolff's laurel wreath did not come until the following year with City Opera's monumental production of Handel's opera, *Giulio Cesare*, featuring Beverly Sills as Cleopatra, Maureen Forrester as Cornelia, Wolff as Sextus, and Norman Treigle as Julius Cesar. Two days later, Wolff appeared in yet another production of Bizet's *Carmen*.³³ In 1967, City Opera reprised *Giulio Cesare* in hopes of recapturing the same sense of awe and accomplishment that the opera had received the previous year; however, this production unfortunately missed the mark. In 1968, Wolff performed the title role of Moore's opera, *Carry Nation* with New York City Opera.

³²Raymond Ericson, "Wolff Sings Title Role in Fourth City Opera 'Carmen'," *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1964.

³³The upcoming star Placido Domingo replaced the originally casted Don José.

In 1970 and 1971, Wolff sang the role of Sara in Donizetti's opera, *Roberto Devereux*. *Times* critic, Schonberg wrote, "There are spots in *Roberto Devereux* where Donizetti almost hits it off. The 'Ah! Quest'addio fatale' duet between Roberto and Sara has moments of extreme beauty. . . . Miss Wolff used her big, bold voice with confidence. She produces a very big sound of good quality—more [of] a Verdian than a *bel canto* sound, perhaps—and she acts with conviction."³⁴ She also appeared in the world premiere of *The Most Important Man* by Menotti. Schonberg reports, "It would be hard to think of a superior cast of singing actors, including minor roles. Eugene Holmes as Ukamba was a sturdy, forceful baritone capable of producing a big sound—but no bigger than that produced by Wolff as Leona. . . . Miss Wolff is one of the admired City Opera regulars."³⁵

In a 1970 interview, Wolff added insight into one of the major reasons for her continued relationship and loyalty to the New York City Opera: "There is no star system. The singers and the audience are younger and more adventuresome. We do contemporary works that are much better attended than anything the Met would do on the same order."³⁶

Other Major Opera Houses in the U.S.

Throughout Wolff's performance history, she sang in many of the leading opera houses in the United States. She made frequent appearances in Chicago, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, San Francisco, New Orleans, and Boston, among others. A couple of memorable performances include Washington, D.C.'s production of *Vanessa* in 1963,

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Beth Brown, "Modern Music," *The News and Courier*, Charleston, S.C. March 21, 1970.

which featured Wolff as Erika. Menotti directed the production. Wolff was applauded in a *New York Times* review of the performance: “The audience reacted enthusiastically to the contemporary American work, especially to the emotional music of the last act. There were prolonged cheers for two of the principals, Beverly Wolff as Erika, the niece, and Francesca Roberto as Vanessa.”³⁷ Her performance of the title character in Georges Bizet’s *Carmen* with Richard Tucker for Atlanta Opera in 1965 was a triumphant success,³⁸ as were her performances with the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia in 1963, 1967, 1970, and 1972.

New York Philharmonic

If the New York City Opera was Wolff’s operatic home, then the New York Philharmonic was definitely her home as a concert soloist. Between 1965 and 1978, Wolff performed regularly as a concert soloist with the Philharmonic. She appeared under the baton of conductors Thomas Schippers, Leonard Bernstein, and Zubin Mehta, as well as guest conductors Sir Malcolm Sargent, William Steinberg, and Colin Davis. Wolff thrived as a concert soloist and earned the impeccable reputation of a mezzo-soprano, whose “articulation is faultless; her phrasing superb; her interpretation tremendously right; and her ability to create and sustain a mood of sheer witchery.”³⁹

On January 14, 1965, Wolff made her New York Philharmonic debut with Martina Arroyo, Tito del Bianco, and Justino Díaz, with Thomas Schippers serving as the

³⁷“8th Opera Season Opens in Capital: Samuel Barber’s ‘Vanessa’ Presented at Howard U,” *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1963.

³⁸ Richard Tucker is quoted as saying Wolff was “absolutely one of the finest interpreters of the drama that he had ever heard.” Columbia Artist Management Press Release, *Wolff, Mezzo-Soprano*, June, 1966.

³⁹Information found in New York Philharmonic Program from November 15, 1965 performance.

conductor in Rossini's famous oratorio *Stabat Mater*, during which she earned a favorable review as mezzo-soprano soloist who was "absolutely ravishing work in her big cavatina."⁴⁰ Columbia Records recorded the New York Philharmonic performance and upon its release, it immediately became the leading recording of the work. *Gramophone Magazine* reviewed the record and had this to say of Wolff: "outstanding among the soloists . . . a singer whom we ought to hear more."⁴¹ The performance was repeated on January 15 and 17.

Her next performances with the Philharmonic occurred during December 9 through the 11, 13, and 15, 1965. Bernstein assembled a promising lineup of concert soloists for his performance of Mahler's Symphony No. 8, more popularly known as the "Symphony of a Thousand." The work demanded brilliant soloists on all four traditional parts and featured sopranos Saramae Endich and Ella Lee, mezzo-sopranos Jennie Tourel and Wolff; tenors George Shirley and John Boyden, and bass-baritone Ezio Flagello. *The New York Times* reviewed the performance as "One of the noblest hours in New York's musical life."⁴²

One of Wolff's next major achievements as concert soloist occurred in November of 1967 with the New York Philharmonic, during which William Steinberg conducted Berlioz's orchestral work, *The Damnation of Faust, a Dramatic Legend*, Op. 24. The lineup of concert soloists included Wolff as Marguerite, Ernst Haefliger as Faust, Gerard Souzay as Méphistophélès, and Raymond Michalski as Brander. Wolff was once again

⁴⁰Columbia Artist Management Press Release, *Wolff, Mezzo-Soprano*, October, 1970.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

praised for her work: “Miss Wolff used her big, colorful voice to good advantage, and turned in some sensitive singing in the ‘Amour’ aria.”⁴³

Interestingly enough, her next performance with the Philharmonic occurred the following year in another rare Berlioz symphonic work, *Cléopâtre*. This time Wolff appeared as the singular soloist under the baton of the world-renowned conductor Colin Davis, who appeared as guest conductor with the New York Philharmonic. *New York Times* music critic, Schonberg reviewed the performance:

In England, Colin Davis and Berlioz have become all but synonymous. Thus it was no surprise, when on Mr. Davis’s first appearance with the New York Philharmonic, he devoted his entire program to music by the French romanticist. . . Beverly Wolff was the mezzo-soprano last night, and she was happiest when she could let her big voice ride over the orchestra. In quieter moments her voice did not consistently come into focus.⁴⁴

Wolff’s final performance with the New York Philharmonic took place in 1978, ten years after her appearance with Maestro Colin Davis. In her final performance with the Philharmonic, Wolff appeared with Kathleen Battle, Seth McCoy, and Simon Estes. The program included Schubert’s Mass No. 5 in A-flat Major, and Bruckner’s *Te Deum*, conducted by Zubin Mehta.

Columbia Artists Management Inc

Wolff was a managed artist under the prestigious firm, Columbia Artists Management Inc, which represents the finest operatic and concert artists in the United States. Its illustrious roster has included Leontyne Price, soprano; Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano; Renata Tebaldi, soprano; Risë Stevens, mezzo-soprano; Marian Anderson, contralto; Jussi Bjoerling, tenor; Mario Lanza, tenor; Richard Tucker, tenor;

⁴³Schonberg, “Music: *Damnation of Faust* in Concert,” November 17, 1967.

⁴⁴Schonberg, “Music: Philharmonic Offers Evening of Berlioz,” November 1, 1968.

and George London, bass-baritone.⁴⁵ Wolff appeared on their roster from 1968 to 1983.⁴⁶ It was with this firm that Wolff worked out her operatic contract, which allowed her to maintain a healthy balance between her performance schedule and her home life.⁴⁷

Handel

Throughout her career, Wolff was continually called upon for her ability to interpret the operas and oratorios of George Frederic Handel. On December 30, 1951, Wolff performed the alto solos in Handel's *Messiah* at the Church of Ascension in New York City. Season after season, she was engaged to sing the alto solos with some of America's leading symphonies and orchestras. Wolff even performed the alto solos from the *Messiah* in Italian at her 1963 debut in the famous Spoleto Festival under the baton of Thomas Schippers.⁴⁸ In December of 1963, Wolff, along with Saramae Endich, Charles Bressler, and Donald Gramm, served as soloists under the direction of Thomas Dunn for six consecutive performances of Handel's *Messiah* in New York City.

Another notable performance of Handel's *Messiah* took place on November 13, 1966, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent. The soloists in this performance included Saramae Endich, Wolff, John McCollum, and Simon Estes, and took place in New York City at the Philharmonic Hall. Raymond Erickson of *The New York Times* reviewed the performance and soloists, stating, "Miss Endlich, Miss Wolff, and Mr. McCollum are

⁴⁵"CAMI information," accessed July, 7, 2013, <http://www.cami.com>.

⁴⁶Fact verified by *Musical America*.

⁴⁷When Wolff's children were young, her contracts included the following stipulation: for every two weeks worked, the artist would have three weeks of unscheduled time with her family.

⁴⁸"Visconti to stage Opera at Spoleto: 'Traviata' Honoring Verdi, Opens Festival June 20," *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1963.

young veterans of the oratorio field. They showed it in their poise, sense of style, [and] clear enunciation of the text.”⁴⁹

An additional *Messiah* performance took place on December 9, 1982 in Washington, D.C. with the National Symphony. *The Washington Post* singled out both Wolff and soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson in a glowing review the following day:

Soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson and mezzo Beverly Wolff were in fine form, and never more so than in that stunning melody that comes near the end of the first part, “He shall feed His flock,” which the mezzo sings first and which is then picked up by the soprano. It occurred to one that if only Bryn-Julson’s strong ringing highs and Wolff’s rich lows could be combined in one voice, it would really be something.⁵⁰

Wolff also performed several of Handel’s leading mezzo-soprano roles, including Sesto and Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Ruggerio in *Alcina*, as well as the title roles in *Poro*, *Radamisto*, and *Rinaldo*, among others. She performed frequently with the Handel Society of New York under the direction of Stephen Simon and Brian Priestman, and Washington, D.C.’s Handel Festival under the direction of Stephen Simon.

On March 27, 1972, the Handel Society New York City presented Handel’s forgotten gem, *Rinaldo*. This production was a momentous occasion because it was the first performance of *Rinaldo* in New York City. Wolff performed the title role of Rinaldo.

The New York Times reviewed the performance:

The Handel Society of New York, which is working its way through the mountain of Handel opera (he wrote more than 40 of them), brought *Rinaldo* to Carnegie Hall in concert form Monday night with a prevailingly strong cast under the baton of Stephen Simon. Beverly Wolff, as Rinaldo, the part that made a London hero

⁴⁹Raymond Ericson, “Sargent Directs ‘Messiah’ Here,” *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1966.

⁵⁰Lon Tuck, “NSO’s Messiah Is Grace and Light,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 9, 1982.

of the castrato Nicolini, had her work cut out, but her dusky and sizable mezzo stood up quite respectably to the coloratura demands of the marital arias, and she made an affecting episode of the tearful Largo, 'Cara sposa.'⁵¹

Wolff later reprised the title role in Washington, D.C. in the 1977 production of *Rinaldo* during the annual Handel Festival under the direction of Stephen Simon. Paul Hume of the *Washington Post* reviewed the performance, "To Beverly Wolff in the title role, though she was singing music originally written for a celebrated castrat[o], equal amounts of gold leaf for the nobility of her "Cara sposa," one of Handel's supreme inspirations. And to Wolff, as to Valente, further praise for their sense of style."⁵²

In another performance with the Handel Festival of Washington, D.C., Wolff performed the title role of Poro in the American premiere of the opera. The auspicious performance took place on January 9, 1978. *The Washington Post* had this to say about Wolff's performance: "Wolff nearly made up in dignity and intelligence what she lacked in agility and sheen." The review continues:

Wolff, in the title role of Porus, a king who fought Alexander the Great both on the battlefield and in a love triangle, gave a particularly brilliant performance of uncommonly challenging music. A few of the low notes originally written for a brilliant castrato were beyond her most comfortable range, but the only sign of that was a slight loss of power, not of accuracy. . . . Both she [Balente] and Wolff should be specially complimented for the excellent ornamentation of their vocal lines.⁵³

Throughout her career, Wolff loved the challenge of answering all of the questions about the character and making strong musical choices that were uninhibited by previous performers.

⁵¹Dohnal Henahan, "Rinaldo Has Everything a Baroque Opera Needs," *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1972.

⁵²Paul Hume, "Rinaldo: Superb but Splotchy," *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 1977.

⁵³Joseph McLellan, "A Masterful U.S. Debut for Handel's Poro," *Washington Post*, Jan. 9, 1978.

Berkshire Music Festival-Tanglewood

Wolff was a featured artist under the direction of Eric Leinsdorf with Tanglewood for several summer series from 1952 to 1971. In addition to *Trouble in Tahiti*, she performed such works as Mozart's *Requiem*; Bach's *Magnificat*, BWV 243, *St. John Passion*, BWV 245, *Cantata No. 146*, "Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal," BWV 146, *Cantata No. 70*, "Wachet! betet! Seid bereit allezeit," BWV 70, and *Cantata No. 35*, "Geist und Seele wird verwirret," BWV 35; Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*: Act II, Scene 2; and Haydn's "Lord Nelson Mass," Mass in D minor.

Brevard and Ravinia Music Festivals

An early career highlight included Wolff's work at the Brevard Music Festival. Her Brevard performance of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in the summer of 1959 was highly regarded. The following year, Wolff performed the mezzo-soprano solo in Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony No. 1, and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*. Through Brevard, she also had the opportunity to perform for President John F. Kennedy in 1961.⁵⁴ *New York Times* correspondent, Tom Wicker, was there to capture details about the special concert: "A musical program that ranged from Aaron Copland's 'Hoedown' to Brahms' 'Lullaby' entertained 345 physically handicapped children today on the south lawn of the White House. . . . The main attraction was President Kennedy."⁵⁵ Wicker also provided details about the manner in which Wolff announced each of her selections: "Beverly Wolff, the mezzo-soprano, was the soloist. She introduced each of her numbers

⁵⁴Brevard's youth orchestra received a special invitation to perform for handicapped children on the south lawn of the White House; Jackie Kennedy planned and organized the event, in which Wolff was the featured soloist.

⁵⁵Tom Wicker, "Youth Symphony Charms Kennedy," *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1961.

by giving the children such bits of information, as that Brahms was ‘a very simple gentleman whom they called Papa.’”⁵⁶ Wolff, a featured guest on the 1962, twenty-fifth Anniversary Program, performed arias from Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Debussy’s *L’Enfant Prodigue*. Wolff returned to Brevard for several seasons, and after her retirement from the stage, was a guest clinician. She also served on the Board of Trustees for several years.

Wolff was also a featured artist for several seasons in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s prestigious Ravinia Festival. She made yearly performances with this festival from 1974 to 1978. One notable Ravinia performance was, July 13, 1975, Wolff performed Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 with Maestro James Levine at the baton. Another remarkable Ravinia performance took place on June 24, 1976. Wolff joined forces again with Levine and fellow singers Carol Neblett, Robert Nagy, Ragnar Ulfung, Nico Castel, and Arnold Voketaitis to present Schoenberg’s *Gurrelieder* the first time the Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed this work. In 1976, Wolff was featured again as the Alto soloist in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125.

Spoleto and other notable European performances

In 1963, Wolff made her Spoleto Festival debut under the direction of Thomas Schippers. She performed the alto solos in Handel’s *Messiah* among other works. *The New York Times* described the 1963 Spoleto season:

The annual outdoor concert, given in the town square, will be Handel’s *Messiah* in Italian. Thomas Schippers, the festival’s artistic director, will conduct. . . . Rounding out the Spoleto music will be daily noontime chamber concerts. Among the performers at these events will be the Beaux-Arts Quartet, Beverly Wolff and Judith Blegen, singers; Barbara Blegen, Mr. Schippers and Jean Claude Pennetier,

⁵⁶Ibid.

pianists; a wind quartet of young Philadelphia musicians and Alberto Lysy and Ivry Gitlis, violinists.⁵⁷

She revisited Spoleto in 1970 for a production of the rarely performed opera *Il giuramento* by Saverio Mercadante. Thomas Schippers conducted the work. According to her 1970 CAMI press release, her performance was a huge success, “She made an extraordinary impression, resulting in her being engaged by RAI of Rome for the role of Sextus in ‘Clemenza di Tito’ and an offer from La Scala, Milan. Both of these appearances ‘first-times’ for the mezzo-soprano.”⁵⁸ Wolff’s 1976–77 CAMI press release adds the following details about her performance:

A favorite in Italy since the summer of 1970 when she made her heralded Spoleto debut in *Il Giuramento*, once again the press was rapturous: ‘Wolff showed herself to be above praise’; ‘displayed her magnificent vocal and interpretive gifts’; ‘an admirable, marvelous voice. She is an interpreter of great musical style and is theatrically bewitching.’⁵⁹

Wolff received wide acclaim for her performances in Italy. She later went on to perform Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila*, and Sara in *Roberto Devereaux*. Her 1978–79 Press release adds:

In 1975, she was featured in the Verdi Requiem before a crowd of over seventy thousand people in the Vatican. Each season she returns to Italy for extended opera, concert, and recital engagements throughout the country in Rome, Florence, Venice, Turin, Perugia, Palermo and other cities.⁶⁰

International Opera Festival in Mexico City, Mexico

Wolff also performed at the International Opera Festival in Mexico City, Mexico in 1969 and 1970. In 1969 Wolff, performed the role of Adalgisa in Bellini’s *Norma*; and

⁵⁷“Visconti to stage Opera at Spoleto: ‘Traviata’ Honoring Verdi, Opens Festival June 20,” *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1963.

⁵⁸Columbia Artist Management Press Release, 1970.

⁵⁹CAMI, 1976–77.

⁶⁰CAMI, 1978-79.

in 1970 she performed the title role of Bizet's *Carmen*. Her success in both productions was noted in her Columbia Artists Management Press Release:

Her success was triumphant. The delirious audience chanted her name with unaccustomed insistence for her to appear alone on stage once the curtains were down to acclaim her warmly and repeatedly in a manner our audiences save only for the great bel canto singers. La Wolff is one of them,' declared the critic for *Informacion de Todo*. The impact Wolff had on her audience there resulted in a medal being struck in her honor—a rare tribute, indeed.⁶¹

Carnegie Hall

Most performers only dream of having the opportunity to perform at Carnegie Hall. Wolff not only realized that professional dream, but performed there twelve times during her career. Her first performance at the illustrious venue came on April 15, 1952 with conductor Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Together they performed Honegger's *Le roi David*; Wolff was the mezzo-soprano soloist for the concert. Eleven years later, she performed the alto solos in Handel's *Messiah* under the direction of Thomas Dunn. On October 14, 1964, Wolff participated in the U.S. premiere of Henry Purcell's *The Indian Queen* at Carnegie Hall under the baton of Thomas Dunn.

One of the highlights of her performance history at Carnegie hall was the performance with the Pittsburg Symphony, conducted by William Steinberg of Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*. *The New York Times* reviewed the performance:

Mahler's 'Songs of a Wayfarer' cycle was the novelty, and it was well sung by Wolff, the City Opera mezzo-soprano. Miss Wolff's voice sounded best in the breathlessly operatic 'Ich hab' ein glühend Messer,' but the low register in soft passages was a little rough. Miss Wolff and Mr. Steinberg were loudly applauded by the appreciative audience, however.⁶²

⁶¹CAMI, 1970.

⁶²Klein, "Steinberg Conducts His Ensemble Here." Nov. 3, 1966.

One of the finest casts of singers that Wolff had the opportunity to perform with came the following year when Wolff combined with Beverly Sills, Placido Domingo, Ara Berberian, and the Rutgers University Choir to perform the “Schöpfungsmesse,” Mass in B-flat major by Haydn and the final scene of *Daphne* by Richard Strauss. Eric Leinsdorf with the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted the performance.

Chapter 3: Three Greats in American Music and their Collaboration with Wolff:

Leonard Bernstein, *Trouble in Tahiti*, Douglas Moore, *Carrie Nation*, and Ned Rorem, *Poems of Love and Rain*

Trouble in Tahiti

Leonard Bernstein began work on his first operatic composition in the summer of 1951 while vacationing in Mexico. His trip was cut short by the devastating news that his long-time mentor, Koussevitzky was gravely ill. Bernstein went directly to the airport and twenty hours later sat at his mentor's bedside recounting memories of past triumphs and failures. The next day, Koussevitzky died; Bernstein was devastated by the loss.

Alas, the opening of Tanglewood was less than a month away and Bernstein was thrown head first into the new position as Principal Conductor in residence. He set further work on *Trouble in Tahiti* aside, and did not get a chance to revisit the composition until his honeymoon in August 1951.⁶³ However odd it might have seemed to write an opera about the disintegration of a marriage during the literal honeymoon portion of his personal life, Bernstein had no problem drawing a clear line between fact and fiction.

In June 1952, Bernstein's career took on a new dimension when he took up residency at Brandeis University. His first major project at Brandeis was planning the First Festival of Creative Arts, where he served as organizer, brainchild, moderator, composer, and conductor. It was at this festival that Bernstein, out of time restrictions and necessity, presented his one-act opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*. Shortly before the world premiere of *Trouble in Tahiti* on June 12, 1952, Bernstein had this to say about his work: "It's a

⁶³On August 12, 1951, Leonard Bernstein married Felicia Montealegre; the couple then spent their honeymoon in Mexico.

lightweight piece. The whole thing is popular-song inspired and the roots are in musical comedy, or, even better, the American musical theatre.”⁶⁴ The night of the premiere was an auspicious occasion, only slightly marred by the fact that the procession of speakers who preceded it delayed the curtain until 11 p.m.:

Trouble in Tahiti did not please all listeners at its first hearing (what opera does?) Some felt that it sounded hastily written—which, of course, it was. It was certainly heard under unfavorable conditions at its premiere. Conceived as an intimate opera, it was wholly unsuited to performance in a large outdoor amphitheater. But Bernstein, like so many harassed artists before him, needed a new work in a hurry and this was the only one at hand.⁶⁵

August 8, 1952, *Trouble in Tahiti* was performed at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood. On August 6, 1952, The Northampton, Mass. Hampshire Gazette, reported:

For friends of the Berkshire Music Center, *Trouble in Tahiti* by Leonard Bernstein will have its second and third performances Friday night. Its first was at Brandeis University in the spring. Its music revised and libretto rewritten since its premiere, the opera is a satire on suburban life. A movie titled, “*Trouble in Tahiti*,” proves the turning point in the difficulties of a young couple. The composer describes it as “an experiment in simplicity.”⁶⁶

For the Tanglewood production, renowned stage director, Sarah Caldwell directed the performance; Seymour Lipkin conducted; Wolff sang the role of Dinah; and Arthur Schoep sang the role of Sam. Bernstein was present during the entire production process. The production was reviewed by several newspapers and journals, including the *Toledo Blade*, which ran a review with the heading, “Two Singers Bring Rewards in Leonard Bernstein Opera, Performances Of Mezzo And Baritone Praised In Berkshire Music

⁶⁴Gruen, *The Private World of Leonard Bernstein*. 148.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶“Berkshire Festival Has Many Programs on this Weekend,” Aug. 6, 1952.

Unit's *Trouble In Tahiti*." *Blade* reporter, Julian Seaman, although complimentary of the two principals, found many faults with the work. He stated the following:

The score is obviously derivative, doggedly bizarre and seems to constitute an injudicious marriage of boogie-woogie to German "sprechstimme... This spate of disconnected and dreary sound evoked two rewards, however—the admirable voice and singing of Beverly Wolff, mezzo, and the expert acting and singing of Arthur Schoep, baritone. All trials have their virtues and these, in my dazed opinion, can count as such in the lexicon of experimental opera. Otherwise—Mr. Bernstein has blazed no trails and Puccini, Wagner et al still reign in my benighted brain.⁶⁷

A member of the Associated Press reviewed the opera and had this to say of Wolff's performance, "Assigned a slightly larger share of the dual responsibility, she was personable, vocally assured, and in command of her scenes."⁶⁸ *New York Times* also reviewed the performance and reported, "Wolff showed how accomplished a performer she is, for as well as recreating humorous verisimilitude, she also was sadly and touchingly inward when she sang of her unhappiness."⁶⁹ Wolff was only twenty-three and from this moment on, she became closely associated with the interpretation of the role of Dinah. On November 16, 1952, Bernstein finally had a chance to perform his work in an ideal setting; on NBC's newly created opera series. For the production, Wolff joined forces with David Atkinson and Leonard Bernstein. Their goal was to create a new American opera.⁷⁰ The performance was immensely successful and brought the new sound of jazz inspiring idioms into the homes of the American public.

⁶⁷Julian Seaman, "Two Singers Bring Rewards In Leonard Bernstein Opera: Performance Of Mezzo and Baritone Praised in Berkshire Music Unit's 'Trouble in Tahiti'," Aug. 9, 1952.

⁶⁸ CAMI Press release, 1976.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰David Atkinson was in the original cast of the Brandis performance in 1952.

In 1955, *Trouble in Tahiti* was performed on Broadway, as a part of *All in One*; a production that also featured a one-act play by Tennessee Williams and dances by Paul Draper. The Broadway production ran for 48 performances and was hugely successful; so successful in fact, that it caught the attention of Julius Rudel, the general director of the New York City Opera. Rudel invited Bernstein to present *Trouble in Tahiti* in the spring of 1958. Bernstein once again recalled his close connection with Atkinson and Wolff and had no other singers in mind for the New York City Opera debut.

Wolff, however, had semi-retired from the music business, and was happily married with two children. After several conversations with Bernstein, Wolff returned to the stage. On April 6, 1958, Wolff, Atkinson, and Bernstein were reunited in the New York City Opera's debut of *Trouble in Tahiti*. *Tahiti* was double-billed with the one-act opera, *A Tale for a Deaf Ear* by Marc Bucci. The double bill was a perfect pairing; both operas centered on marriages that were quickly unraveling before the audience's eyes. From this moment on, Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* remained in the standard American operatic repertoire.

In 1958, Wolff and Atkinson also came together to record *Trouble in Tahiti* on MGM's record label. Conducted by Arthur Winograd, the recording was reviewed by the *New York Times*, "As a short opera about the emptiness of two people's lives. The music is trite, perhaps purposely so. A jazz idiom predominates, and everything is slick, slick, slick."⁷¹

⁷¹"Comment in Brief." *New York Times*, Jul. 13, 1958.

Carry Nation

In 1962, Moore received an invitation from Thomas Gorton, Dean of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Kansas, to write an opera in honor of the university's centennial celebration, which was to be held in 1966. During an important planning meeting, the Dean advised Moore that the University preferred that the libretto of the opera be based on a Kansas subject.

Moore faced a serious challenge. In order to receive the commission, he first had to find a suitable story. He searched in vain for weeks, reading and re-reading Kansas history books. Finally, he began to have the glimmer of an idea. He became fascinated by the Civil War period in Kansas and its two rival capitals: one in support of slavery and one against. The major character would fall to the historical figure, John Brown. Yet, Moore had his doubts, “[John Brown] seemed a little grim for an opera.”⁷² In another planning meeting with the Dean, Moore expressed his frustration at finding a suitable subject. The Dean responded by inviting Moore to Kansas for an “inspiration trip,” during which he also asked if Moore had considered Carry Nation. Moore had not realized that Mrs. Nation had such a strong relationship with Kansas, and set off to find out more about her life, specifically during her time in Kansas. On his return trip, he bought a copy of Carry Nation's autobiography.

Moore found the book too dull and repetitious. His initial observation of Carry Nation was that she had been “hypnotized into thinking of herself as a great moral crusader.”⁷³ He did not think she could stand as a main character in an opera, and that the acting of busting saloons could in no way sustain an audience's attention. In the summer

⁷²Ibid., 110.

⁷³Ibid.

of 1963, Moore was about to admit defeat when he discussed the problem with a new acquaintance, William North Jayme.

Jayme immediately began researching Carry Nation and found a new angle that Moore had overlooked; Carry's first marriage to Dr. Charles Gloyd, a civil war doctor who had died from alcoholism:

Jayme went to Cutchogue with a scenario based on a short chapter he had found, which described Carry's tragic marriage to a Civil War doctor who was an alcoholic. He was the only man she ever loved and Moore related that when Carry was pregnant, she left him when he was in dire need of her. He died six months later and she felt responsible for his death.⁷⁴

The premise behind the opera was "scratch a fanatic and you find a wound that never healed."⁷⁵ The synopsis found in the vocal score furthers this idea, "Deep within any fanatic there is usually a wound, often self-inflicted, that has never properly healed. At the end of the century, such a wounded soul swept out of Kansas—behind her a trail of shattered saloon glass, before her a niche in history."⁷⁶

Finally, Moore had found his operatic subject and accepted the commission from the University of Kansas. Since Jayme had been instrumental in the investigation process and worked as a freelance writer, Moore insisted that he serve as librettist. Moore received the completed first scene in the fall of 1963. By the summer of 1964, Moore and Jayme had a complete vocal score. Moore insisted on gaining as much knowledge on the real life historical figure of Carry Nation. He visited her home in Medicine Lodge, Kansas, the boarding house where she had worked at for three years, in Eureka Springs,

⁷⁴Ibid., 111.

⁷⁵ Fran Grace, *Carry A. Nation: Retelling the Life*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

⁷⁶ Douglas Moore, *Carry Nation*. Libretto by William North Jayme. New York and London: Galaxy Music Corporation, 1968.

Kansas; and finally he visited her grave in Belton, Missouri. He also met several of her remaining relatives, including two of Mrs. Nation's granddaughters, a grandson, and a niece.

In 1965, Moore completed the orchestration and returned to Kansas, where he played the entire score for the production team involved in the centennial celebration. The university was pleased with the composition and offered Moore, the Rose Morgan Professorship for the spring semester of 1966. Moore accepted the position. During his residence at the University of Kansas, he focused on the production and gave numerous lectures. He was impressed by the university's cooperation. Weitzel said, "The entire experience was one of the happiest of Moore's life. He was greatly impressed that a large celebration should center on an American opera and do honor to an American composer. He called this innovation."⁷⁷

The premiere performance took place on April 28, 1966, in Lawrence, Kansas, with additional performances on April 29, 30, and May 1. The professional cast included, Wolff as Carry, John Reardon as Charles, Patricia Brooks as the mother, and Ken Smith as Carry's father.⁷⁸ *Carry Nation* was widely acclaimed and reviewed as being, "100% American Opera on a homespun subject, with dramatic music, haunting love duets, spirited and comic small ensembles, rollicking catchy choruses and a book that fits the music hand-in-glove[;] small wonder that its premiere received ovation after ovation.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸The production also included additional understudy cast consisting of students from the University of Kansas, which relieved the principals during the second performance, as well as a performances a week later in Wichita and Kansas City, Kansas; the student cast featured: Doris Peterson, David Holloway, Norma Sharp, and Michael Riley.

Carry and her hatchet made a smash hit.”⁷⁹ *The New York Times* reviewed, “The legend of Carry Nation is only slightly dimmed by the fact that Miss Wolff, in the title role, is winsome and properly rounded and sings like an angel. Mrs. Nation was burly and cantankerous. Then after the prologue, the legend disappears. It suddenly transforms into a pathetic love story and stays that way to the end.”⁸⁰

Soon thereafter, *Carry Nation* was given its first professional premiere in San Francisco by the San Francisco Opera Company on June 14 and 17; the cast included Wolff as Carry, Richard Fredericks as Charles, Ellen Faull as Carry’s mother, and Ken Smith as Carry’s father. The production was directed by Frank Corsaro and conducted by Hebert Grossman. Again, the opera was well-received and was granted numerous ovations by the supportive audience. The *Los Angeles Times* reviewed Wolff, “She acted with sympathetic intensity, never stooped to caricature and sang with a marvelously powerful and expressive mezzo.”⁸¹

Carry Nation received its East Coast premiere on March 28, 1968 with additional performances given on April 2 and 7, with Corsaro serving once again as the stage director, and Samuel Krachmalnick as conductor. The New York City Opera cast included: Wolff as Carry, Julian Patrick as Charles, Ellen Faull as Carry’s mother, and Arnold Voketatis as Carry’s father.

Times reviewer, Schonberg, stated:

Carry Nation was composed two years ago and had its world premiere at the University of Kansas. Last night was the New York premiere, as presented by the City Opera at the State Theater.... *Carry Nation* received a well-sung, superbly

⁷⁹Joseph Wilkins, “Carry Nation,” in *Topeka Daily Capital* (Topeka, KS), 1966.

⁸⁰Theodore Strongin, “Opera by Moore Bows in Kansas: ‘Carry Nation’ Intertwines Love Story and Legend,” *New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1966.

⁸¹CAMI Press Release, September, 1966.

acted performance. The big-voiced Wolff was in the title role, and she sang and acted with intensity. This is one girl who knows how to move, to make every gesture and expression count, without overdoing it. Big league stuff, in short.”⁸²

A recording of the opera was made by Desto Records and was created in honor of Moore’s 75th birthday. The recording featured the New York City Opera cast and orchestra. It was reviewed as being, “one of the most viable of all American operas;”⁸³ and John Freeman, a writer for *Opera News*, reviewed the record stating that, “[it] says something about the tragedy of Puritanism, the scars of the Civil War and the torment of souls stung by alcohol.”⁸⁴ Freeman observed, “The opera gives a backward perspective on our nation’s adolescence.”⁸⁵

⁸²Schonberg. “Opera: The Folk Heritage of a Young Carry Nation in Missouri,” March 29, 1968.

⁸³Phillip L. Miller, “Carry Nation,” *American Record Guide*, XXXV (February, 1969), 454.

⁸⁴John W. Freeman, “Carry Nation,” *Opera News*, XXXIII (February 1, 1969), 35.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

Carry Nation soon fell out of the American opera repertory. Problems with pacing, plot, libretto, and musical language seem to be the culprits behind the opera's obscurity. The libretto also lacks dramatic conflict. The minor conflict that does exist, the tension between Charles and Carry's father, is almost commonplace in American opera. *New York Times* critic, Raymond Ericson adds to this idea,

The father tries to prevent the marriage and in the end separates his daughter and her baby from her husband, but Carry's rigidly moral father and pitifully demented mother have become rather stock figures in the American theatre...but the opera concentrates on the domestic situation, which lacks subtlety and genuine interest.⁸⁶

Mary Campbell of the Associated Press adds, "The opera 'Carry Nation' by Douglas Moore, is a well-researched slice of Americana, musically not modern, although only two years old, and musically uneven, peaking right in the middle."⁸⁷ She continues, "The music has long, spun-out melodies, without dissonance. Much of it is lighter than most melodic modern opera, about the weight of tunes from 'Carousel.'"

Perhaps, Ned Rorem⁸⁸ puts it most succinctly:

[The] [p]remiere last night of Douglas Moore's *Carry Nation* with the extraordinary Wolff. She is not exactly a silk purse, nor is Douglas' opera a sow's ear, but Wolff made something big out of something medium-sized, and I'm thrilled at the prospect that we'll be collaborating next December. I'm 100 percent sympathetic with the language Douglas speaks through song, though he sometimes uses an awfully corny accent.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Raymond Ericson, "Behind Carry Nation's Hatchet," *New York Times*, January, 26, 1969.

⁸⁷ Mary Campbell, "Carry Nation Opens in New York," *Lawrence Journal World*, March, 29, 1968.

⁸⁸ Ned Rorem attended the NYC premiere of *Carry Nation* and wrote about it in his diary.

⁸⁹ Ned Rorem. *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem, 1961-1972*. (South Boston: Da Capo Press, 1974), 253.

Rorem and the Mezzo-soprano

Throughout his career, Rorem featured the mezzo-soprano voice type in a number of his vocal works. He has worked with several well-known mezzo-sopranos and written specifically for their individual voices, including Susan Graham, Dolores Ziegler, Nell Tangeman, Regina Sarfaty, and Wolff. In an interview with *Opera News*, Rorem discusses his attraction to the voice type. After having written several songs for the famous mezzo-soprano, Tangeman, Rorem states, “I became geared to the notion of a mezzo-soprano range and timbre.”⁹⁰ Likewise, as a child he was greatly influenced by the low smoky sounds of jazz singer’s Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith:

I was raised on pop music, in the thirties and early forties, the swing era—the era of the great blues singers. I loved it and never questioned its value. Billie Holiday and Bessie Smith were far more crucial in my writing of vocal music than any opera singer. Their bending of a preexisting tune so that it became their tune, their way of giving words more than the meaning they contained in themselves.⁹¹

He further demonstrates his attraction to the voice type in the “Composer’s Notes,” found at the beginning of the cycle, *Poems of Love and Rain*. Rorem states: “Regina Sarfaty’s voice and physique were constantly in my mind as I worked. She is brooding and beautiful, and her voice resembles herself—rich and dark, dramatic and anguished.”⁹²

Poems of Love and Rain: Background information

The Ford Foundation commissioned the writing of the cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*, which was composed between December-March 1962-1963 and dedicated to the mezzo-soprano, Regina Sarfaty. The work had its premiere in Madison, Wisconsin, on

⁹⁰Patrick O’Conner, “Imagination Shared” in *Opera News* 53 (October 1988): 25.

⁹¹Patrick O’Connor, “Ned Rorem at 65: the composer reflects on his long career,” in *Opera News*. Vol. 53, No. 4, October 1988.

⁹²Ned Rorem, “Composer’s Notes” in *Poems of Love and Rain*.

April 12, 1964, with composer Rorem at the piano. The pair also debuted the work in New York City at the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium of the Metropolitan Museum on April 9, 1965;⁹³ that same year they also recorded the cycle.

During the composition of this cycle, Rorem, as usual, was keeping a personal diary; portions of which were published in *Ned Rorem: The Later Diaries 1961-1972*. It is interesting to compare the diary entries with the compositions themselves. The combination reveals the composer's innermost thoughts, feelings, frame of mind, and mood. A few important entries are included below:

December 5, 1962

Déprimé, L'envie de pleurer. Nulle raison. Ou plutôt la raison habituelle.⁹⁴
(Depression, the desire to cry. Without reason. Or rather usual reason.)

December 28, 1962

Tears for what? Well, for W, of course, who for fifty-two days has occupied my sober thoughts. Terms are never satisfied because no one can enter another's mind. So I shall "break it off" during intermission tomorrow at *Ariadne*, along the red velvet of Sherry's lounge...⁹⁵

Jan 6, 1963

Not that a love affair failed again, but that love failed. No matter how I insist that work's the only faithful friend, tears streak the stupid staves. Earlier this windy evening after leaving James Purdy's in Brooklyn I detoured to Pierrepont Street and looked up at W's window. A light shone, but no shadows moved: I felt cold. (Antonioni, in depicting such cold, becomes the most interesting artist today.) Yet it's less for W I die than for them all.

The maddest torture is noise (for musical ears), but the subtlest is silence (for janitor hearts)...⁹⁶

⁹³Kathleen Mauer. "Ned Rorem's Poems of Love and Rain and Paul Hindemith's *Hin un zurück*: an Analysis of Two Twentieth-century Vocal Works With an Emphasis On the Use of Mirror Form." Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2007, 15.

⁹⁴Ned Rorem, *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem, 1961-1972.*, 52.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid., 57.

The journal entries capture a vivid snapshot of the composer's personal anguish during the early composition of *Poems of Love and Rain*. Rorem, himself was experiencing the heartbreak of a failed relationship. Therefore, his settings, which already are sensitive to the poetry, are elevated to an even higher plane of poetic truth; the writing of which must have been therapeutic at times and a nightmare at others. Rorem worked on the cycle for an entire year and certainly experienced happier moments. He clarifies the misconception of the anguish so often found in his compositions and their bearing on his personal life:

When people say, "I loved that work by you. How sad you must have been when you wrote it," they don't realize that it takes sometimes months to compose a piece. If you're really sad, your tears will fall on the page and smear the ink. I don't know if I write sad music, and who is going to define what sad music is? But assuming there is music that has to be called sad, do I write it out of my own sadness or out of what I know about sadness? A singer, likewise, doesn't have to commit a murder in order to portray Lady Macbeth.⁹⁷

Rorem selected eight different American authors for the cycle; all, except for Dickinson, were close contemporaries. They are as follows: Donald Windham, Wysten Hugh Auden, Howard Moss, Emily Dickinson, Theodore Roethke, Jack Larson, and Edward Estlin Cummings. Rorem felt a close connection to these authors and featured the poetry of Auden, Larson, Moss, and Roethke and in several compositions.⁹⁸ The texts are unified by the theme of unrequited love and lend themselves as the perfect canvas for Rorem to explore the pyramidal and mirror forms.

⁹⁷Patrick O'Connor, "Ned Rorem at 65: the composer reflects on his long career," *Opera News*, October 1988.

⁹⁸ Mauer, 19.

Wolff as a recitalist with Ned Rorem

Wolff was always attracted to modern American compositions; she found them to be extremely rewarding artistically and technically. She also loved presenting works that did not have a strong performance history so that she had the chance to create a fresh interpretation that was undaunted by previous performance history. Wolff preferred being a recitalist over other performance genres. In an interview, she stated:

Opera is the most challenging. It uses all of your talents, but for just the sheer joy of the audience getting to know all the facets of your talents and you getting to know the audience,” she prefers recitals. “When you’re in recital, everything you do is very exposed. When you sing a really crummy note, you’re really standing there with egg on your face. In opera, you can cover it up a little.⁹⁹

On December 12, 1968, Wolff and Rorem presented the *Poems of Love and Rain* in their entirety with other selections performed by Phyllis Curtain and Donald Gramm. *New York Times* reviewer, Theodore Strongin, reviewed the performance and had this to say:

Ned Rorem has to be a happy man today. Last night, a program of nothing but his songs, were given at Town Hall. A capacity audience of ‘in’ people attended and the singers were of a caliber that most composers wait a lifetime for and never get. Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano, then gave Mr. Rorem’s extended cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*. To top it all, the three singers formed a trio to give the first performance of *Some Trees* a setting of three poems by John Ashbery.¹⁰⁰

Rorem reflects a day later on the evening in his personal diary:

Can a composer imagine a more satisfying experience than mine last night in Town Hall? A capacity crowd listened carefully as I accompanied three friends in a whole program of my songs. Donald Gramm in white tie sang a group of Theodore Roethke and Paul Goodman poems. Beverly Wolff in green satin sang

⁹⁹ Nora Coyne, “Beverly Wolff Primed for Mahler Solo,” *Reading Eagle*: Reading, PA. January 11, 1981.

¹⁰⁰Theodore Strongin, “3 Stellar Singers, at Town Hall, Present a Ned Rorem Program,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1968.

Poems of Love and the Rain and Phyllis Curtain in black velvet sang a miscellany. Then together we performed the premiere of *Some Trees* (John Ashbery) for three voices and piano, and everyone clapped long and loud, after which we all went to Virgil's at the Chelsea for cold salmon, cheese, white wine and chocolate cakes (paid for by Boosey & Hawkes). This morning *The Times* is approving, while Beverly on the phone apologizes for not having come to the party because she had performed with a temperature of 103°. ¹⁰¹

Another notable performance between Rorem and Wolff took place on November 26, 1973. Wolff, among others, joined together for a two-night celebration in honor of Rorem's 50th birthday. Wolff and Rorem collaborated on his recently composed one-act opera, *Bertha*. Wolff took on the title role with the author, Kenneth Koch, serving as the narrator, and Rorem at the piano. *New York Times* critic, Donal Henahan, reviewed the premiere of *Bertha*:

Ned Rorem is 50 years old and in a celebratory mood, obviously. It is necessary to say at once, too, that the performances, on both Sunday and Monday nights sounded polished and dedicated... and Beverly Wolff's crazily portrayal of the mad queen in *Bertha* a 1968 chamber opera. *Bertha* consisting of 10 blackout scenes depicting the rise and decline and eventual triumph of a completely loony ruler whose chief talent is 'toughing it out there' while the kingdom disintegrates around her, was narrated with dry, deadpan wit by the author of the play, Kenneth Koch. This was the opera's first performance, and its 10 singers were excellent in every way. *Gloria* (1970), in which Mr. Rorem accompanied Miss Curtain and Miss Wolff, had some lighthearted liturgical moments in a Poulenc vein, but like his *Trio* (1959) and *Last Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1972), lacked individuality and character. ¹⁰²

Finally, her first major solo recital took place on December 10, 1977, in Town Hall with Donald Hazzard serving as pianist. They presented a recital of songs by Brahms, Richard Strauss, Wolf, and, once again, Rorem's cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*.

¹⁰¹Ned Rorem, *The Later Diaries, 1961-1972*, 257.

¹⁰²Donal Henahan, "2 Nights with Later-Day Rorem," *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1973.

The following day, *The New York Times* published one of the longest and most insightful reviews about Wolff's performance:

Although Beverly Wolff has been singing in concerts and operas in New York for many years, the recital she gave at Town Hall on Tuesday night was apparently her first in the city. Not surprisingly, it revealed the mezzo-soprano to be the very epitome of conscientiousness in her work and a performer whose intensity could scarcely be surpassed. In everything she did, her voice sounded best at the top of its range, where it took on a brilliance that worked to splendid effect in climactic passages.

But the strongest impression left on this listener was the amount of effort and intensity put into the singing and interpretations. So much of the time it seemed as though Miss Wolff was trying to make every phrase a monumental statement. As it was, this listener was most taken by her delivery of Version II of Rorem's "The Apparition," which started quietly and built gradually in a finely controlled line. In a program sung as intelligently and, generally, as expertly as this one, there were obviously other fine moments, but on the whole, things might have been far more compelling if the drive to make everything overwhelming had been reduced by about half.¹⁰³

Although the *Poems of Love and Rain* were not written for Beverly, after the initial performance by Regina Sarfaty, Wolff became widely celebrated for her interpretation of this work. She performed the composition several times throughout her career often with the composer at the piano. In 1969, Rorem called on Wolff to be involved in the recording of this work. It is this recording that is perhaps the most widely available recording of Wolff.

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¹⁰³Allen Hughes, "Wolff's Singing Marked by Intensity," *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1977.

Chapter 4: A Closer Look at Dinah from Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Carry from Moore's *Carry Nation*, and Rorem's song cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*

In this chapter, I will examine the characters Dinah from Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and Carry from Moore's *Carry Nation*. I will also study the Rorem song cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*. More importantly, I will look at Wolff's unique interpretation of each character and the choices she made on a technical, musical, and dramatic level. During her career, Wolff was closely associated with the three outlined compositions and is considered to be one of the leading interpreters of each respective work.

Dinah

Dinah is a complex character. She epitomizes the role of the pent-up fifties housewife that is stuck in suburbia. On the surface, her marriage and family are perfect; but behind closed doors, the truth comes out for the audience in "screaming silence" and unkind words expressed between husband and wife. In the libretto, we learn that Dinah first met her husband when they were only seventeen years old. Sustaining the love they once shared has become a palpable challenge that both Sam and Dinah are struggling with.

They now have a child and home and are rooted to their suburban reality and the gender roles that come along with it. Dinah is in charge of the child rearing, cooking, cleaning and the household. Sam is the provider and is in charge of the finances. While he is generous with his friends and co-workers, he treats Dinah as if she were a financial burden. The marriage between Sam and Dinah is tense; the libretto hints at a marital indiscretion between Sam and his secretary. On the surface level, Dinah is the "perfect"

housewife, but deep down she is coming apart at the seams. She is having horrible nightmares and can only find relief by diverting her attention in mindless activities, such as going to the movies. Sam also uses the movies as a way to fill the silence between them.

Wolff's interpretation of Dinah

Wolff performed the role of Dinah when she was only twenty-three years old. Her performance was honest, clear, simple, and direct. It was also gutsy in that the work was a direct commentary on the gender roles that defined the American household of the 1940s and 50s. Not only did she perform this work on stage at Tanglewood and the New York City Opera, she was part of the NBC cast that was televised nationwide. Wolff also recorded the work in 1958.

I had the invaluable opportunity to view a recording of the NBC televised production of *Trouble in Tahiti* at the Paley Center in New York. Wolff's performance was stirring in its simplicity. Her voice and her interpretation was authentic, straightforward, gentle, and natural. She moved with poise and sang with grace. I was deeply moved, in fact, brought to tears by her unassuming characterization.

Wolff's voice in the role of Dinah is forward, bright, and direct. She maintains constant connection to her instrument and provides a consistent performance. She intelligently mixes her vocal registers to achieve an intense characterization that never gets away from her on a technical level. She is in control of her instrument and uses her solid vocal technique to explore ideas, emotions, and emphasizes the text. Her intonation is spot on and never sags. She makes good use of vowel modification which allows her to serve the text and music simultaneously. Every word is clearly understood. The diction

was not only important to Wolff, but was also important to Bernstein. In his notes on the production, Bernstein stated, “For all five characters, the chief consideration is diction. Every word and idea must be projected clearly.”¹⁰⁴ He continued, “If the words are not heard, there is no opera.”¹⁰⁵

Her attention to the details of the score, including dynamic and rhythmic details, is masterful; she wholeheartedly serves the music and libretto. This is one of the major reasons why Wolff was consistently hired and re-hired. It is also one of the reasons why Bernstein leaned on Wolff for further performances throughout both of their careers. There was a mutual respect between Wolff and Bernstein. Her performance is genuine and feminine. Her characterization is vulnerable to the point of almost being broken by the harsh reality of her situation. She expresses anger, frustration, sadness, and regret; yet, she also hints at a glimmer of hope that one day they will be able to move forward in their relationship. In the meantime, she is simply trying to survive and do the best that she can with the lot she has been given.

Wolff remained regarded as the main interpreter of this role and even after her professional retirement, she was frequently interviewed and consulted by opera companies in the United States and in Europe. For example, in 1990, Orlando Opera brought Wolff in as a principal consultant. During an interview, she offered this insight into the relationship between Dinah and Sam, “Anybody who has any experience with married life understands the point people get to where communication is zip.”¹⁰⁶ Sam is

¹⁰⁴ Leonard Bernstein, *Trouble in Tahiti: An Opera in Seven Scenes*, (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1953), ii.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Steven Brown, “Nuptial Woes Fuel 2 Opera Contemporary Themes Lend Air of Immediacy to Orlando Opera Company’s Double Bill of Vintage Operas.” *Orlando*

preoccupied with work and his hobbies, and Dinah needs more attention from her husband but cannot seem to find a way to connect. Wolff added, “Neither of them are trying hard enough, and they realize it... You know that they’re capable of changing something in the relationship... I think everybody can identify with the truth in it.”¹⁰⁷

Wolff maintained that although the couple was not able to settle their differences by the end of the opera, that in the famous “Rain Coat Scene,” the two come together by recalling the things they share in common. For a brief moment, there is a glimmer of hope that the two will one day make it back, “to a quiet place.”

Her honest and simple characterization is different from other interpretations of the role. For instance, Stephanie Novacek, also well-known for the role of Dinah, makes stronger character choices. Novacek implies that Dinah is close to, if not already suffering from, a nervous breakdown. She medicates through alcohol and is brash in her conversations with her husband. I prefer Wolff’s subdued performance. I feel that it is a closer depiction of what a woman would express during that time period versus Novacek’s over-the-top caricature.

**A closer look at Wolff’s performance of the Arias “There is a garden” or
Scene III, IIIa, and “Trouble in Tahiti or Scene VI”¹⁰⁸**

Scene III takes place at Dinah’s weekly appointment with her psychiatrist. She is describing a dream that she has had. The details of her dream are vivid as she remembers

Sentinel (Orlando, FL), Oct. 1, 1995.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Leonard Bernstein, *Trouble in Tahiti an opera in seven scenes*. Beverly Wolff. David Atkinson. Arthur Winograd, Miriam Workman, Robert Bollinger, and Earl Rogers. ©1986, by Hamburg: Polydor International. OCLC: 22912573. CD.

every detail, emotion, and word. There is a clarity that makes me believe this is a recurring dream that haunts her frequently. In Wolff's performance, she slowly and steadily lays out the details. She uses the consonants to add extra weight to the libretto almost as if it were onomatopoeia. For instance, she emphasizes the "t" sounds in the text "twisted trees," the "b" sound in "black and bare," and the "d" sound in "dead and dry." She closely observes the tempo and dynamic markings in the score.

At rehearsal number 2, she employs a heavier chest mixture on the repeated d4's on the text "I wanted to go, but there was no way." The darker coloring adds to the building dramatic tension. At rehearsal number 3, a new melody emerges, which is a much needed break from the tension that was building. To match the new material, Wolff creates beautiful arcing lines of legato resonance. Every word spins, every line of text builds until it reaches the climax on the text, "Then love will lead us" and finally "to a quiet place." At rehearsal numbers 6 and 7, the anxiety returns, her lines are short and frantic. Wolff again uses more chest connection on the lower tones of the phrases. She also uses final consonant sounds to add extra dramatic weight, an effect that can be most clearly noted on the buzzing sound of her final "s" of the word flies.

In the middle of Dinah's dream, the scene shifts to Sam's office where he is asking his secretary, "Now tell me the truth. Have I ever made any passes at you?" To which she evidently replies that he has, Sam responds, "I'd forgotten that! Well, it wasn't much more than an accident. Was it? Miss Brown, simply forget that the incident ever happened." He then adds, "The letters can wait. That's all." The scene returns to Dinah. Her dream analysis has continued and her details have gotten even clearer and more emphatic. At rehearsal numbers 12 and 13, the dynamic markings of *agitato*, *marcato*,

and forte appear predominantly. The lines are set in the higher portion of her voice, and each short thought is interrupted by a rest or breath mark in the score, which adds a feeling of breathlessness to the overall mood.

The war between tension and release is most prevalent in this aria. The dream is riddled with moments of near hysteria that quickly flips to moments of refined beauty, grace, and tranquility. Dinah's subconscious is warring. She is trapped in a "garden that has gone to seed" or a marriage where the love has been extinguished. She desperately wants to get out of the horrible landscape, as much as she desperately wants to find the love that she once had for Sam. In her dream, Dinah runs to a younger, purer, version of Sam, but he vanishes "like smoke." She is so close to touching his saving hand and yet, as soon as she gets close enough to touch it, she awakes. Likewise, as soon as Dinah and Sam get close enough to finally connect, they find a way to break off.

In this aria, Wolff's voice is perhaps at its loveliest. Her tone is perfectly rounded; her diction is clear, and she serves the music. Because of the internal struggle that is going on within the character, an interesting duality exists in this scene. At one moment, Dinah is agitated, anxious, and almost hysterical; in the next moment she is in control, at peace, and serene. Wolff handles this duality by using different colors in her instrument. To express the dramatic side, she adds chest, uses consonants, and allows her sizeable instrument to let loose in the higher register; to express the refined side, she uses seamless legato, arcs her phrases, and rounds her vowels.

Scene VI finds Dinah at a hat shop. She has just come from seeing a new movie, "Trouble in Tahiti." In the first few lines, she exclaims how horrible the movie was and that it was a complete waste of time. She starts to give the synopsis of the film and before

she realizes it, she is completely engrossed. This scene offers a bit of levity to the opera. When presented correctly, this scene also allows the audience to fall even more in love with Dinah as a character. She becomes completely uninhibited and just has an amazing time. She even shows her wonderful sense of humor.

The first note, “What” is extremely difficult to pull off. It is on an E5, which is right at a mezzo-soprano zona di passaggio. Beyond that, the dynamic is set as piano and builds to fortissimo. A combination of the vowel, where the note is placed, and the dynamic markings make it challenging. The entire first page of the aria is difficult, but it is also a lot of fun. How often does a singer get to sing, “What drivell! What nonsense! What escapist technicolor twaddle!!” I have listened to Wolff sing this first page hundreds of times and still cannot figure out how she manages to do it. It is so easy sounding, so matter of fact that she even sings a piano on the first note. This is one of the moments in my study that I wish I could conjure her up and ask exactly how she did that!

During the entire aria, Wolff focuses her voice forward, her vowels are closed, and her diction is impressively clear. Above all, she observes the dynamic marking and serves the text. As a result, by the end of the aria, her voice sounds the slightest bit fatigued. At rehearsal 3, Wolff really has fun expressing the word floating in its many forms. At rehearsal 4, she sets in to give an accurate run down on the action of the terrible movie. It is my opinion that she has already surrendered to the power of technicolor by rehearsal 5. At 6, 9, and 17, Wolff has fun with the “South Pacific” accent, which she colors with nasality and shades of chest voice. At rehearsal 10 and 18, she actually shouts, “Olé!” I realize it is noted in the score, but most singers are not willing to actually shout. By rehearsal 11, Dinah has completely lost herself in the story. Rehearsal

13 allows Wolff time to take a break from the action of the movie and sing a few lines of nice legato. The break, however, is brief and the action resumes in rehearsal 14. From 14-21, the crazy plot is expressed and Dinah is lost in the moment. At 21, Wolff's sizeable voice cuts over the orchestra and trio in beautiful arcing lines of legato singing. Unfortunately, Dinah snaps back to reality and realizes how embarrassed she is for reliving the crazy plot. She also remembers that she has a husband and has obligations. Wolff closes the aria just as beautifully and elegantly as she started with a perfectly placed F6 on the word "home;" a feat not many mezzo-sopranos are capable of achieving.

Carry

Carry Nation is an interesting figure that is plucked from American history. In the opera, Carry is a round character; she evolves before the audience's eyes from a naïve girl to a hatchet-wielding zealot. Although loosely based on fact, the opera focuses on her early life and marriage to Dr. Charles Gloyd. In the opera, Carry, an obedient daughter to an overly demanding and religious father finds herself caught between the love that she has for her husband, Charles, and the love that she holds for her father. The opening scene depicts the character that we are familiar with from history and we are transported to a saloon that Carry, along with other female supporters, are "smashing" apart. We do not glimpse that fanatic character again until the end of the opera, when her journey comes full circle.

In Act I, we are introduced to a young Carry who is devout, sheltered, and obedient. Her day revolves around prayer, helping her father run the household, and

looking after her mother.¹⁰⁹ She falls blindly in love with a man that is not able to provide her with the stability and support she needs. He himself is wounded beyond repair by the things that he saw and did during war. Carry is caught in a power struggle between love and duty. She eventually decides to follow her heart and marries Charles.

Soon after they are married, Carry realizes that she has made a terrible decision. She has lost her sense of security and finds herself in an uncertain position, where she is in love with her husband and is pregnant with their first child; yet, she realizes that Charles has a serious problem. Charles' reputation is spreading wildly in the small town and the local gossip has reached Carry's attention. She reaches out to her parents for monetary support. Her father comes to her and pleads for her to return with him. She is forced to make a decision. On one hand, she is in love with Charles and is having his child; on the other, she realizes that Charles can no longer take care of her and her unborn child. She ultimately chooses safety and security.

Time goes by and Carry begins to have hope of resuming her happy married life with Charles. She wants nothing more than to walk hand in hand with Charles and have him meet his daughter. Her hopes are destroyed by news that Charles has died from his alcoholism; the news changes her. Gone is the sweet, carefree, child. She is embittered and hardened. She blames herself for Charles' death. She then turns to God and angrily pleads to give her a cause for her life. It is from these ashes that the historical figure of prohibition is born.

¹⁰⁹ In the course of the show we find out that Carry's mother is struggling with madness.

Wolff's interpretation of Carry

Wolff created, debuted, and recorded the title role in Moore's *Carry Nation*. She traveled to Lawrence, San Francisco and New York to perform the work. Written for the University of Kansas, the opera was performed on April 28, 29, 30, and May 1, in Lawrence, Kansas as a part of the University's centennial celebration in 1966. Soon after the premiere, the production traveled to San Francisco where it was performed on June 14 and 17. Two years later, March 28, 1968, the opera was debuted at the New York City Opera. The City Opera cast also recorded the work with Desto Records to commemorate Moore's 75th and pay tribute to the composer for his contributions to American music.

Wolff was consistently praised by the critics for her interpretation, acting ability, and singing of the role. *New York Times* critic Raymond Ericson wrote, "The performance is particularly well sung by Beverly Wolff in the title role. The mezzo-soprano has performed it in all the productions it has had so far, and she is equally successful conveying Carry's forcefulness and her softer qualities."¹¹⁰

Wolff's voice throughout the work is sensitive to the text and the plot. In the prologue, her voice takes on the strong persona from history a harshness that does not reappear until the final moments of the work. It is important to note that Wolff never allows herself to become a caricature of this over the top historical character. She brings a deep sincerity and believability to the role. Because of this commitment, Wolff is one of the most consistently praised performers in the cast. In Act I, Carry's voice is sweet, innocent, and angelic. Her vowels are balanced; her tone is even and warm. We hear little

¹¹⁰ Raymond Ericson, "Behind Carry Nation's Hatchet." *New York Times*, January, 26, 1969.

concern in her voice, as she trusts in God and in her father. Little by little, as the story unfolds, her belief system begins to shake; Wolff masterfully introduces more vocal colors to help advance the text and serve the drama. Once again, in this role, Wolff's voice is connected, clear, and brightly focused. Her voice is also more dramatic, her dynamics are larger in scope, and she introduces more chest tone. In fact, in more dramatic moments, it is not uncommon for Wolff to employ a heavier chest mixture above the melba point. This mixture is found most prominently in the opening prologue and in the final scene of the opera.

Wolff's intonation throughout the work is spot on. In dramatic moments, Moore employs the use of large leaps and tight chromatic passages. Wolff handles these moments with ease. Compared to other principle cast members, Wolff is one of the only musicians to handle these melodic passages accurately. Every utterance is clearly defined and understood; Wolff serves the libretto wholeheartedly. She also pays close attention to rhythm and maintains laser-like precision throughout the opera. In this work, her technique is solid. She is deeply connected to her instrument and understands how to make her voice work for her rather than against. She knows her boundaries dramatically and vocally, and stays within a comfortable range that enables her to serve the drama without upsetting the balance of her instrument. Her musicianship and interpretation in the role is world class. She is a standout in the cast and her work leaves a memorable impression on the audience.

A closer look at Wolff’s performance of the Arias “It was the Lord’s Day Morning” or Act I, Scene 1, and “Oh God! O Lord!” or Act II, Scene 4¹¹¹

The first glimpse that the audience has of the “young Carry” before she has become the hardened figure in history is in the beautiful aria, “It was the Lord’s Day Morning” (Act I, Scene 1). In the aria, she is reliving the moment she accepted God into her heart. It is a private moment between Carry and her father. She describes the experience with vivid details and remembers how she felt, where she was, and who was there as if it were yesterday. It is clear that this is an important moment to Carry and to her deeply religious father. In this aria, we also get a glimpse of Carry’s deeply seated mysticism. She believes that “God has put his mark upon me to save His sinning children.” She also reveals she is in a lull with her faith and that the closeness she once had with God is not quite as strong as before, “I wish that God would sing to me again.” Carry’s father immediately responds by criticizing her for sounding “foolish like your mother.”

Wolff delivers the aria with grace, dignity, and sweetness. She captures the innocent sweetness of Carry at this moment. Again, Wolff calls upon different vocal colorings to add dimension to her interpretation. She also draws descriptive text out from the libretto, like “silver headed preacher” and “blazing eyes on me.” At rehearsal number 43, she uses the melodic motion to depict her journey from her place in the congregation to the altar. Then she depicts the congregation’s response to her conversion, which is then

¹¹¹ Douglas Moore, *Carry Nation*. Beverly Wolff, Ellen Faull, Arnold Voketaitis, Julian Patrick, Samuel Krachmalnick, and Douglas Moore. ©1990. Culver City, CA: Bay Cities. OCLC: 21894095. CD.

echoed by her father, at “Shouts of Glory! Cries of Triumph!” At rehearsal 45, we find the upward leap of a ninth on the words “sinning children.” The large upward leap allows the word “children” to take on a celestial connotation. This effect is reversed on the final sentence of the aria, on the words, “me again,” of the text, “I wish God would sing to me again.” This time, the leap is downward which allows the separation that Carry feels from God to be expressed.

The overall color and mood that most comes through in this aria is pure, innocent, and angelic. Wolff achieves this effect by keeping her vowels properly balanced, shaping her phrases subtly, and arriving at a beautiful inward climatic moment on the text, “I wish that God would sing to me again.” It is interesting to note that while she does achieve a legato in this aria, she also breathes in almost every measure. I believe she consciously made this choice to give the entire aria the feeling of being engrossed in the moment of her conversion, and to illuminate the inward excitement it created in her soul.

“Oh God! O Lord!” or Act II, Scene 4 finds Carry in another inward moment conversing with God. This time, she comes full circle, and before the audience’s eyes, we see her change from a hopeful young woman to an emblazoned advocate for prohibition. In the moment leading up to this final aria, Carry has learned that her estranged husband, Charles, has succumbed to alcoholism and has died. She is wracked with guilt. She feels like she has abandoned God and her husband. She pleads for his soul and states, “He did what anybody does, he did the best he could.” She desperately wants to atone for her sin and repent. She asks for God to possess her life and give her a reason, a path, a way, a cause for living. She then moves into the anger stage of her grief. She moves from being angry at herself for the death of Charles, feeling guilty, trying to come to terms with it, to

being angry at alcohol, the vice that plucked Charles away from her. From this point forward, Carry puts on the cloak of fanaticism, and the fragile woman that was seen prior does not reemerge. She turns into the preacher with blazing eyes, bringing her congregation to its knees and causing them to repent. She is the crusader that is going to deliver the masses away from “devil liquor.”

Wolff handles this transformation brilliantly with her change of character and mindset in her voice. From rehearsal numbers 252-255, Carry is struggling with her guilt and she is pleading for the soul of her departed husband. She is talking directly to God and asking him to forgive her and to possess her soul. Wolff uses her dramatic instrument and wails the first line of text, “O God! O Lord! Jehovah!” She then pulls back into a fragile, grief stricken, place. Her thoughts come quickly, and Wolff sings every one of them as if they were the last.

At rehearsal 255, Wolff employs a beautiful inward piano on the word, “repay,” which then ushers in the next stage of her grief. She pleads for God to, “Show me a path! A way! A road to travel! Destination! Reason why I’m here!” She is trying to come to terms with the loss. In this section, Wolff begins adding in more chest voice. At first, she does not allow the heavy mixture above an F4. Yet, as the aria continues, you can clearly hear a heavy mixture that adds to the fervor of the moment. One of the instances where Wolff carries this mixture well above the melba point is found a measure before rehearsal 257 on the text, “The wherefore of my life!” She almost sobs the text out. From rehearsal 258 on, Wolff’s voice takes on a biting forwardness; her vowels are snarled out, and she flips quickly between head and chest mixture. In this section, Carry turns outward with her grief and blames alcohol.

At rehearsal 261, the upward leap of the ninth is expressed on the text, “Yes, I,” which shows that at last, Carry has found the closeness to God that she has been searching for. She is the one that will lead people out of sin and into salvation. Wolff’s voice once again cuts above orchestra and choir. She floats above on the text, “My soul.” The heavy mixture of chest voice that Wolff adds in to depict the darkening of Nation’s spirit is amazing. I am not sure how she was able to have such a heavy mechanism and still be able to deliver two beautiful tension-free A5’s in the final measures of the opera. Wolff understood the inner working of this character and knew the boundaries that she had within her own instrument. She successfully allowed herself to explore and take on the challenge of representing religious fervor and grief.

Poems of Love and Rain

The song cycle, commissioned by the William Ford Foundation, started out as a compositional exercise. Rorem felt that if a poem was truly good, he could find a way to set it twice as different as possible and evoke different moods, emotional responses, and an overall different sensation to the listener. In the compositional notes, Rorem states:

When the Ford Foundation in 1962 commissioned an extended work for mezzo-soprano and piano, I became suddenly free to indulge a fantasy that had long plagued me. After years of writing a hundred miscellaneous songs, or cycles based on random selections of poetry, I felt a conflicting frustration: that all I had said all I had to say in this small form, yet that I had said nothing. If a poem were good, really good, wasn’t there more than one way of musicalizing it?...I had toyed with the notion of how it might be for a single composer to set one poem several times, in different speeds and styles, draining the words of their multiple implication...I began the big bizarre affair that turned into *Poems of Love and Rain*.¹¹²

¹¹² Ned Rorem, “Notes by the Composer,” liner notes for *Poems of Love and Rain* PHCD108 (New York: Poems of Love and Rain, 1989), 2.

The compositional challenge created a unique song cycle that sets eight American poems to music twice. The musical settings are as different as possible, Rorem uses contrasting registers, dynamics, and meters; he also changes the melodic and rhythmic components greatly. The theme of the cycle is unrequited love with a constant background of rain. The only song that is not repeated is the pivotal interlude; otherwise, each poem is repeated in a pyramidal fashion. In the cycle, Rorem sets the text syllabically so that it follows normal speech patterns. He only repeats text if it is repeated in the poem or if it is necessary dramatically.

Wolff's interpretation of *Poems of Love and Rain*

In general, Wolff was a huge proponent of American singers performing American art song and opera. She strongly believed that the United States had some of the finest musicians and composers in the world. In the 1960s, Wolff established a close and long lasting relationship with Rorem. She was one of the few singers that Rorem looked to whenever he wrote a new work. He trusted her unwavering musicianship and valued her commitment to advancing American art song. She performed and recorded *Poems of Love and Rain* with Rorem; in fact, this is one of the most widely available recordings of Wolff. She felt a deep connection to the cycle and for several years featured it on many of her recital performances throughout the United States and Europe.

Wolff's tone throughout the cycle is consistent; she masterfully custom tailors her voice to each song within the cycle. Her intonation in the cycle is flawless. Even at the highest peak of dramatic moments, Wolff remains in full control of her instrument; every utterance is clearly defined and serves the poetry and music. Her rhythms are clean and

serve as a launching point in serving the text. This song cycle is one of the finest examples of Wolff's immense musicianship. She is in complete control of her voice and brilliantly interprets each piece. Her vocal technique allows her to explore the outer edges of dynamics and registers with ease.

**A closer look at Wolff's performance of Selections¹¹³ from
*Poems of Love and Rain*¹¹⁴**

1. Prologue: From *The Rain*- Donald Windham
2. Stop All the Clocks-W.H. Auden
4. Love's Stricken "Why"- Emily Dickinson
5. The Apparition- Theodore Roethke
13. The Apparition- Theodore Roethke
14. Love's Stricken "Why" - Emily Dickinson
16. Stop All the Clocks-W.H. Auden
17. Epilogue: from *The Rain*- Donald Windham

The cycle begins and ends with a line of prose from the book, *Emblems of Conduct*, by Donald Windham. The text is excerpted from a chapter entitled, "The Rain," in which the author recalls the everyday thunderstorms of his childhood in the South and how he spent countless hours watching the storms. The chapter begins as follows:

A summer downpour. I am sitting on the back porch, watching the rain fall. At the corner, the rain pipe is broken, halfway between the porch and the ground six feet below. The rain barrel that used to be there is gone; the water, gushing out makes a pool; on it bubbles form, then float on little rivers across the back yard toward the oak tree, . . . The rain, an object that is also an event, is one of the things to which it responds. No one else is much interested in these downpours but my awareness is sharpened by them.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ I have excerpted eight selections from the cycle to discuss. I chose these settings because I feel that they are incredibly important to the cycle and also because they stand out as Wolff's strongest interpretations.

¹¹⁴ Ned Rorem, *Poems of Love and Rain and Four Madrigals; From an unknown past*. Beverly Wolff, Ned Rorem, Ned Rorem, Ned Rorem, and Ned Rorem. ©1989. Phoenix. OCLC: 21511073. CD.

¹¹⁵ Donald Windham, *Emblems of Conduct*, Athens and London: Brown Thrasher Books and The University of Georgia Press, 1963,75.

It is from this quiet awareness of nature and the symbolization of a storm in the physical and emotional sense that Rorem's painting of a tonal landscape begins to emerge. He describes the tempo as "Unbearably slow," and uses the marking $J=40$ or less. The piano part is given the descriptive, "blurred and limpid" and "bathed in pedal"; he also assigns a dynamic marking of pianissimo. The audience immediately is introduced to the rainstorm in the distance. In measure two, he allows the storm, personified by the left and right hand of the piano line, to resound further by assigning two fermatas over rests prior to the voice's entrance in measure three. The voice is assigned the dynamic marking of piano and given the instruction, "soft, but with sincere projection." Set in the lower part of Wolff's register, she sings the text, "Everywhere the impossible is happening." Repeated triplet figures symbolize the fat, slow, raindrops. Her voice is smooth, seamless, and rhythmically clean. In the next line, "two things, the rain and the landscape, are occupying the same place at the same time," the piano and voice come together in waves of crescendo and decrescendo. The afternoon storm is swelling but, by measure 9, is beginning to fade.

Just as you think the storm is gone it attacks with vengeance in measure 12, which leads directly into the next song, No. 2, *Stop All the Clocks*. In one measure, the environment shifts dramatically from a peaceful stillness to a violent storm. Rorem assigns the dynamic marking of fortissimo to the voice and piano. Wolff's voice is forward, dramatic, and almost busting out of the seams. Rorem uses the rhythmic pattern of a quarter, followed by a dotted quarter, and eighth, to provide the structure of the storm. He also employs marcato markings in the voice and piano to further develop the slow-moving storm.

The storm that is being expressed in this song is the emotional loss of a loved one. The beloved person was the narrator's soul mate and now the loss has created a wound that will never heal. In the first section, the narrator is giving commands. He wants the world to stop and take notice of the loss. He wants his beloved to be mourned like nobility. In the second section, the words are focused on what the person meant to the narrator, which was everything, "He was my north, my south, my east, and west, my working week and my Sunday rest." In the final and most dramatic section, the narrator turns to nature, "The stars are not wanted now, put out everyone; pack up the moon and dismantle the sun; pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods; for nothing now can ever come to any good."

Song No. 4, "Love's Stricken 'Why'" is a beautiful miniature that in just six measures summarizes the entire cycle. This song allows the singer and audience time to dry off between rainstorms. The idea being that the word "love", which is only a syllable, has the power to break even the hugest of hearts. Wolff keeps her voice simple and really allows for the "h" of "hugest hearts" to color the text.

No. 5, "The Apparition" took Rorem the longest to compose. This song represents the most violent storm in the cycle. The tempo marking of *allegro agitato* adds to the overall tension of the internal and external storm that is represented. The storm, which is clearly represented by both hands of the piano, spills over into the voice; both thunder and lightning are personified in the music. In measure one, the piano projects a flash of lightning, which is then quickly followed by a huge crash of thunder.

The use of huge leaps, chromatics, and loud and soft dynamics allow the voice to join in the emotional storm. The text, "Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn? He walks by, he

walks by,” captures the outward heartbreak and rage of the person. The person is devastated by the breakup and yet, they see their former love walking around as if nothing ever happened. In order to successfully perform this piece, the singer has to remain in control and constantly think ahead.

No. 13 is the reiteration of Roethke’s “The Apparition.” Rorem changes this landscape dramatically from the violent storm of No. 5 to a more inward, restrained storm in No. 13. This setting is placed in the lower register for the voice. The right hand of the piano has a repeated eighth note pattern that is centered on “g,” while the left hand mirrors the melody found in the voice. The repeated figure in the right hand reflects the constant drizzle of rain, which also symbolizes the tears expressed by the singer. A soft and slow dynamic build occurs over several measures; climaxing again on the text, “Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn?”, which is assigned the dynamic marking of forte with *più agitato*. This time, the melody and text is brought back inward, and the singer delivers the final text, “He walks by”, almost devoid of emotion.

The reiteration of Dickinson’s “Love’s Stricken ‘Why’” follows. In this setting, Rorem creates a wall of sound with the piano. He transforms the quiet simple setting found in No. 4 to a very different and intense experience in No. 14. Again, luckily the tension created is short lived.

No. 16 is again a completely different experience compared to No. 2’s setting of Auden’s “Stop All the Clocks.” Rorem assigns the tempo marking, “Wildly fast and angry ($\text{♩}=144$)” and changes meter in almost every measure. The phrases are short and unpredictable, and are interrupted by bolts of lightning depicted in measure 6, 12, and again in measure 20. This time, the three different stanzas are not given different

treatment. Rorem maintains the wild and anguished storm from the first measure to the last. One of the most dramatic releases is found in the final measure of this setting, where the voice and piano come crashing down.

After a long pause, to clear out the previous musical and emotional storm, Rorem reintroduces the text from Windham's *The Rain* in the form of the Epilogue. This is the only setting that uses the same musical treatment. Rorem provides the instruction, "As at the beginning (or even slower), once again we return to the lazy, summer rainstorm that started the cycle. We have traveled a long, emotion-packed distance between the prologue and epilogue. Within the course of the cycle, the singer arrives one person and departs another. I believe the singer is at peace with their anguish.

Chapter 5: Wolff's Voice, Musicianship, Reputation, and Legacy

Wolff's unique voice caught the attention of composers, conductors, music critics, and listeners. Her innate musicianship separated her from her contemporaries; and when coupled with her work ethic, made her a quick favorite with composers, conductors, and opera companies alike. Her career and continual engagements were a direct result of the reputation that she created. Her instrument, musicianship, and reputation combined with her extensive teaching career, created a lasting legacy on the musical world. In this chapter, I will tie together reviews, interviews, and insights to depict the prior stated characteristics that separate Wolff from other performers.

Wolff's voice has been reviewed by numerous listeners and critics have reviewed Wolff's voice. Many attempt to characterize her unique instrument and capture in descriptive words their auditory experience. Her voice was described as being rich, creamy, lovely, beautiful, sumptuous, glowing, full-bodied, richly-hued, warm, opulent, and splendid. Overall, in looking through several reviews, critics circled on Wolff's innate vocal beauty and her powerful, large instrument.

One review that stands out in defining her voice is, "Mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff is an uncommonly gifted singer; her voice has a beautiful quality and a center of steel; she has a keen sense of the dramatic, and sang the two recitatives with much style. She also, perhaps unfortunately, sings each aria as if it's to be her last one."¹¹⁶ Another

¹¹⁶ George Gelles, "Beverly Wolff Impresses at Symphony," *Morning Globe* (Boston, MA), Dec. 30, 1967.

example, “[Wolff] has a beautiful mezzo voice with a rich creamy quality which she used with the greatest skill and musicianship.”¹¹⁷

Her voice was sizeable. Several reviews start by pointing out the sheer size of her voice. For instance, “The big-voiced Beverly Wolff was in the title role, and she sang and acted with intensity. This is one girl who knows how to move, to make every gesture and expression count, without overdoing it. Big league stuff, in short.”¹¹⁸ As well as, “Miss Wolff used her big, colorful voice to good advantage, and turned in some sensitive singing in the ‘Amour’ aria.”¹¹⁹

Another review states, “Beverly Wolff was a paragon of achievement in the vocal part. Her diction was flawless and her voice a delight. She has a bigger sound than most altos, and for a minute there, I thought she could drown the orchestra if she wanted to. She didn’t, of course, being more an artist than a showoff.”¹²⁰ Lastly, “Miss Wolff used her big, bold voice with confidence. She produces a very big sound of good quality—more a Verdian than a bel canto sound, perhaps—and she acts with conviction.”¹²¹

Her voice was also defined as being powerful. Two instances of the power of her voice are, “...contralto, Beverly Wolff, who sings with great power, vocal beauty and

¹¹⁷ Edward French, “‘Lord Nelson Mass’ Is Highlight at Tanglewood,” *The Knickerbocker News* (Albany, N.Y.), Jul. 15, 1968.

¹¹⁸ Harold Schonberg, “Opera: The Folk Heritage of a Young Carry Nation in Missouri,” *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1968.

¹¹⁹ Harold Schonberg, “Music: *Damnation of Faust* in Concert,” *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1967.

¹²⁰ Milton Zapolski, “Tanglewood Continues Survey Of Baroque, Classical Music,” *Schenectady Gazette* (Schenectady, N.Y.), Jul. 15, 1968.

¹²¹ Harold Schonberg, “A Striking Production of Roberto Devereux,” *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1970.

strong feeling,”¹²² and “Miss Wolff seems to have acquired greater security, more power, and technical proficiency. Her singing of the cantata not only had vocal warmth, with real depth in the lower range, but also a good sense of style and emotional communication.”¹²³

Her sensitivity, intense characterizations, accuracy, intelligence, and professionalism were also closely connected to her reviewed performance. It is hard to find a review that, while mentioning her vocal characteristics, does not also touch on her musicianship and reputation. One such review, “Beverly Wolff sang with passion, intelligence, and exciting, highly individual vocal quality.”¹²⁴

In a 1972 interview, Wolff described her love of the trumpet and how it shaped her as a singer: “The brass section of an orchestra still turns me on. And though I would like to be a nuance singer, I have a big brass sound. My vocal cords are like that, and my singing, as a result, is very direct.”¹²⁵ In a separate interview, ten years earlier, Wolff once again likened her voice to the trumpet: “Sometimes I think I’m still trying to sound like a trumpet, and I have to tell myself to relax.”¹²⁶

Wolff was well-regarded for her outstanding musicianship. She always insisted that this was a direct result of years of study, hard work, and playing the trumpet. She was technically proficient, had clean and clear diction, and served the music wholeheartedly. She was an intelligent performer that was also very consistent and reliable. She

¹²² William C. Glackin, “Boston Symphony’s Great Summer Festival Has Big Second Week,” *The Sacramento Bee* (Norwich, CT), Jul. 15, 1965.

¹²³ Peter M. Knapp, “Traditional Summertime Baroque-shire Festival,” *Patriot Ledger*, Jul. 15, 1968.

¹²⁴ Michael Steinberg, “Steinberg at Symphony Hall,” *Boston Globe*, Sep. 29, 1972.

¹²⁵ Phillips, 27.

¹²⁶ Steinberg, “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist.”

became a favorite collaborator with conductors and composers alike. It is rare to find only one performance in a venue, or under the direction of a composer or stage director. The constant rehiring has to be one of the strongest testimonies of her musicianship. If she was not prepared, did not do a good job, and was not well-received, these consistent performances in the same venues, with the same conductors, and stage directors would not be found in her performance history. Another testimony to Wolff's musicianship is her performance schedule. In order to keep up with her, you would have to be a musician of utmost skill, and have a flawless understanding of your instrument. Otherwise, there is no way a person could maintain such a rigorous performance calendar.

Wolff had a sterling reputation. She was admired, revered, and respected within the arts community. Composers, conductors, colleagues, and critics alike held Wolff with the highest regard. This admiration came as a direct result from her consistent performance standard and her character in general. Every person who crossed paths with Wolff understood immediately her love of the craft. "Star or not, Beverly Wolff is a person who truly loves classical opera singing. She makes no bones about it; she loves what she does and has strong convictions about it. Singing is extremely important, and in her opinion, life without music would be a little poorer."¹²⁷ Her career was such that she, at any point, could have easily been a household name. Yet she maintained that she was not defined by her career; instead she defined herself as a wife, mother, and singer.

The legacy she left behind was not just what is preserved in recordings, or printed reviews. Her true legacy was the impact she had on her family, friends, colleagues,

¹²⁷ Jeff Kline, "Beverly Wolff's Family Comes Before Her Singing," *Lakeland Ledger*, (Lakeland, FL), April 21, 1974.

students, and the musical community at large. Her close friend and colleague, Beverly Sills, remarked, “She was a great colleague, a lot of fun to be with and very gentle lady; she was one of the few gentle women that I knew throughout my lifetime.”¹²⁸ Her Florida Southern colleague and friend, Robert MacDonald, remarked on how lucky the college was to have Wolff as an artist in residence. “The really unusual thing about it was, in a relatively small department of music, to have a person who was both a top professional artist and a person who loved to teach, she approached [teaching] with the same resolve that she had with her vocal career. And that, of course, was wonderful for the college.”¹²⁹

Conclusion

Wolff had a major performance career, which spanned over thirty years and covered the entire United States and Europe. She performed at the White House for John F. Kennedy and the Vatican for Pope Paul the VI. Her true operatic home was on the stage of the New York City Opera under the direction of Julius Rudel. She appeared in countless productions at City Opera, singing everything from Cherubino and Sibel to Carry Nation and Carmen. Wolff also performed in the famous *Guilio Cesare* in 1966 with Beverly Sills, Maureen Forrester, and Norman Treigle. *Cesare* was one of the first productions in New York that led to the rise of Handelian opera in the standard repertoire.

She also performed as a soloist with several fine orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Orchestra among others. She took part in renowned festivals such as Tanglewood and Spoleto. She also

¹²⁸ Bill Dean. “Opera Singer, FSC Artist in Residence Wolff Dies,” *Lakeland Ledger* (Lakeland, FL), Aug. 16, 2005.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

became known as a well-regarded recitalist; specifically as an interpreter of American art song. Her recital work with Phyliss Curtain, Donald Gramm, and Ned Rorem were perhaps the most influential. She took part in many world premieres including Moore's *Carry Nation*, Menotti's *Saint of Bleecker Street*, *Labyrinth*, and *The Most Important Man*, Rorem's one-act opera: *Bertha*, and song compositions: *Some Trees*, and *Gloria*.

Wolff was also a well-known interpreter of oratorio, singing countless *Messiah*'s, Bach cantata's and requiem masses; she specifically received acclaim for her interpretation and accuracy in Handel, Rossini, and J.S. Bach. In 1981, Wolff officially retired from singing and began her long career as a voice teacher. She taught briefly at AVA and then settled in Lakeland, Florida at Florida Southern College where she was an artist in residence for twenty-four years. In 2000, Florida Southern named her as the Honorary Chancellor and awarded her an honorary Doctorate of Music.¹³⁰

The imprint she left on the musical world is substantial. Her legacy as a performer of lesser known works and new compositions helped bring new works into the standard repertoire. She was a force to be reckoned with and merits inclusion into the realm of other great American and European singers of this time period. Her work covered as much ground as her performance schedule. She would often sing in multiple languages, styles, and time periods; not to mention the fact that on any given week, she could be found performing on stage in an operatic production, as well as, in concert with an orchestra, and finishing out her week by giving a recital.

Her busy performance schedule would have been overtaxing mentally and physically for any singer. It becomes clear that Wolff was not just a quintessential

¹³⁰“Honorary Degrees and Citations,” *Florida Southern College*. Accessed August 17, 2013, <http://www.flsouthern.edu/library/archives/honorarydegrees.htm>

performer of this era; she was a quintessential artist who embraced not just the singular performance of an opera, but the whole culture and history of opera. She was highly regarded by singers, composers, stage directors, and conductors. It seems everyone that crossed paths with Wolff has a long lasting impression of her, including myself.¹³¹

I have spent almost a decade researching and documenting this remarkable woman's life and career because of the imprint she left on an awkward teenage me. In our brief encounters, she talked to me about learning my craft, having courage, a steel spinal column to accept failure and move forward, art song and opera, and the overall love of music. I never had the opportunity to study with her. Yet, she took the time to greet me every week while I waited for my voice lesson, and ask me what I was working on. I have no idea why she took notice of me, but I was thrilled and terrified; I am pretty sure my legs shook the first time I realized that she was talking to me. Our conversations have shaped me; this research and work has shaped me as a scholar and musician. Wolff could have easily been one of the most well-known American singers of her generation; certainly my research highlights many of her amazing contributions and achievements within her career. Wolff chose to have the life and career that she wanted. She had the courage to take time for her family; to step away and return when she was ready; she constantly placed her husband and children ahead of her career. She had the conviction to support American opera and art song. Most importantly, she had the joy of music and it spilled over to every person she encountered.

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¹³¹ When I was in high school I had the opportunity to have several conversations with Mrs. Wolff at Florida Southern College.

Appendix A

Trouble in Tahiti music and libretto by Leonard Bernstein

Scene III and IIIa

Dinah: I was standing in a garden,
A garden gone to seed,
Choked with every kind of weed.
There were twisted trees around me,
All black against the sky;
Black and bare and dead and dry.
My father called: "Come out of this place."
I wanted to go, but there was no way:
No sign, no path, to show me the way:
Then another voice was calling:
It barely could be heard.
I remember ev'ry word:
"There is a garden:
Come with me, come with me,
A shining garden:
Come and see, come and see:
There love will teach us
Harmony and grace, harmony and grace.
Then love will lead us
To a quiet place."
Then I ran to find the singer;
I longed to see his face.
He could free me from this place.
Ev'ry step I took was terror;
The ground beneath me burned;
Stones were ev'rywhere I turned.
And worst of all, there was the noise,
Angry shouts: furious cries:
And a roar like the roar of millions of flies!
Through it all his voice was calling,
But now it seemed quite near
Soft and warm and strong and clear:
"There is a garden:
Come with me, come with me"

Sam: Miss Brown? Will you come in please.
Uh, won't you sit down, please, right there.
No, it's only a question that I want answered.
Now tell me the truth, have I ever made any passes at you? Answer the question! I'd forgotten that! Well, it wasn't much more than an accident. Was it? Miss Brown: Simply forget that the incident ever happened! The letters can wait. That's all.

Dinah: Then desire took hold inside me
To touch his saving hand;
Just to touch his tender hand.
And I knew what he would look like;
So handsome, so serene;
Just my age, just seventeen.
I saw him then; I saw his face;
I ran to him; he vanished like smoke;
I reached, I called, and I awoke.
“There love will teach us
Harmony and grace; harmony and grace.
Then love will lead us
To a quiet place, to a quiet place.”

Scene VI “What a movie!!”

What a movie!! What a terrible, awful movie!
It’s a crime what they put on the screen!
I can hardly believe what I’ve seen!
Do they think we’re a lot of children?
It would bore and four-year-old!
What drivel! What nonsense!
What escapist Technicolor twaddle!!
“Trouble in Tahiti,” indeed!
“Trouble in Tahiti,” imagine!
There she is in her inch or two of sarong,
f-floating, f-floating, f-floating, all among the
f-floating f-low’rs...
Then she sees him, the handsome American;
(I must say he’s really a man: Six feet tall, and each foot just incredible!)
Well, they’re madly in love,
But there’s trouble ahead:
There’s a legend:
“If a princess marry white man,
and rain fall that day, then the white man
shall be sacrifice without delay.”
Sure enough, on the night of their wedding day, There’s a storm like nothing on earth;
Tidal waves and siroccos and hurricanes;
And to top it all off, The volcano erupts.
As the natives sing: Ah! Ah! Ah! Olé!
They go crazy with the drumming and the chanting and ritual dance,
While the lovers sing a ballad of South Sea romance.
It’s so lovely, I wish I could think of it: Da da dee da da dee da da.
It was called “Island Magic,” I think it was.
Oh, a beautiful song! I remember it now:

“Island Magic, Where the midnight breezes
caress us, And the stars above seem to
bless us, That’s Island Magic,
Island Magic,”

Well, in any case, the hero is tied to a tree.
(Did I tell you he’s a flyer who got lost at sea?) Anyway, all the natives are crazy now,
Running wild with lances and knives;
Then they pile up the wood for the sacrifice,
And the witchdoctor comes,
And he sets it on fire. As the natives sing:
Ah! Ah! Ah! Olé!

But at this point come the good old U.S. Navy, a singin’ a song; They come swarming
down in parachutes, a thousand strong!
Ev’rything now is cleared up and wonderful; Ev’ryone is happy as pie; And they all do a
great Rhumba version of “Island Magic” of course! It’s a dazzling sight;
With the sleek brown native women
Dancing with the U.S. Navy boys,
And a hundred piece symphony orchestra:
“Island Magic!! Where the palm trees whisper together, And it’s always midsummer
weather, That’s Island Magic, Island Magic! With the one I love very near; Island Magic,
whisp’ring native words in my ear. Island Magic, Only you, my darling, could weave it,
And I never ever will leave it, And I simply cannot believe it really is mine!
Island Magic! Island Ma-”

What a terrible, awful movie!!!
How long have I been standing here chattering?!
If I don’t get going this minute, there won’t be any dinner
When Sam comes home!

Carry Nation music by Douglas Moore and libretto by William North Jayme

“It was the Lord’s Day Morning” or Act I, Scene 1

It was the Lord’s Day morning,
and you had taken me to meeting.
The silver-headed preacher
looked like God himself.
The elders took up singing and the hymns
began to throb, and tears rolled
down my cheeks.
The preacher fixed his blazing eyes on me,
and held his arms wide open.
Then a power lifted up my body and moved me to the aisle.
Slowly I was wafted forward, forward
until at last I sank exhausted on the mourners’ bench.

Shouts of glory! Cries of triumph!
Echoed through the church.
I said no word.
I could not speak for fear I’d break that peace that passeth understanding!
Then I knew that God had put
his mark upon me to save
his sinning children.
I wish that God would sing to me again.

“Oh God! O Lord!” or Act II, Scene 4

Oh God! Oh Lord! Jehovah!
Do you still know me? Carry?
Take me back into your house
For I have strayed apart...
Abandoned you... abandoned him...
When most he needed me.
My dear, beloved Charles...
Accept his soul, O Lord!
He did what everybody does...
He did the best he could.
It’s I who have done wrong...
Abandoned you... abandoned him...
This punishment, so harsh!
But I deserve it. Yes! Deserve it!
How can I atone?
Repent my sin? Repay?
Possess me, God, possess me!
Show me a path! A way!
A road to travel! Destination!

Reason why I'm here!
A faith to hold, a hope to get
Me through the days, the nights!
A cause, dear Lord, a cause!
Your mark upon me!
Born from nowhere, headed nowhere,
Lonely, empty, hollow...
The purpose, God, the reason!
The wherefore of my life!
Possess me, God, possess me!
Show me a path, a way, a way!
So men can say that once on earth
There was my face, my soul!
Link me with the living!
A path, a way, a cause...
...for someone has to pay...
Someone has to pay:
Pay for the warping of mind and soul
That leads to self-destruction.
It's you! Yes, you! And you!
You who have hated! You who have killed!
Thieving the lives of others...
You are the ones who must pay!
You are the ones to atone!
Fall on your knees!
Confess yourselves sinners!
Bleed 'til you're clean!
Purify! Weep! Repent! Repent!
Throughout the land
A cry is arising
Voices of mothers and wives
The innocent, frightened,
And wounded. In numbers
Their strength shall increase.
They shall be like an army,
Advancing, advancing,
Warring on sin,
Smashing corruption,
And I,
Yes, I.
It is I who shall lead them!
A cause!
O Lord
Possess me!
Possess my soul!

Poems of Love and Rain

1. &17. Prologue and Epilogue from “The Rain” Text by Donald Windham

Everywhere, the impossible is happening;
two things, the rain and the landscape, are
occupying the same place at the same time.

2. &16. “Stop All The Clocks”
Poem by W.H. Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy
bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message, He is
Dead, Put crêpe bows round the white necks
of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton
gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and
West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever:
I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every
one:
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun; pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods:
for nothing now can ever come to any good.

4. &14. Love’s Stricken “Why”
Poem by Emily Dickinson

Love’s stricken “why”
Is all that love can speak—
Built of but just a syllable
The hugest hearts that break.

5. &13. The Apparition
Poem by Theodore Roethke

My pillow won't tell me
Where he is gone,
The soft-footed one
Who passed by alone.

Who took my heart, whole,
With a tilt of his eye,
And with it my soul,
And it like to die.

I twist, and I turn,
My breath but a sigh.
Dare I grieve? Dare I mourn?
He walks by. He walks by.

Appendix B: New York Philharmonic Performance Table

1978

November 22,24,25, and 28 1978	Battle Wolff McCoy Estes	Zubin Mehta	Schubert: Mass No. 5, A flat Major Bruckner: Te Deum
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1968

October 31, and November 1,2, and 4, 1968	Wolff	Colin Davis	Berlioz: La Mort de Cléopâtre
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1967

November 16,17,18 and 20, 1967	Wolff Haefliger Souzay* (ill) Flagello (Replacement) Michalski	William Steinberg	Berlioz: The Damnation of Faust Dramatic Legend, Op. 24
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1966

November 15, 1966	Endich Wolff McCollum Estes	Sir Malcolm Sargent	Handel: Messiah
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1966

February 24, 25, 26, and 28, 1966	McIntyre Bullard Wolff Marsh Montes de Oca Bauer Hirst Chall	Thomas Schipers	Mendelssohn: Elijah
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1965

December 9, 10, 11, 13 and 15, 1965	Endich Lee Tourel Wolff Shirley Boyden Flagello	Leonard Bernstein	Mahler: Symphony No. 8, Eb Major
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Appendix B: New York Philharmonic Performance Table (continued)

1965

January 14, 15, and 17, 1965	Wolff Arroyo del Bianco Diaz	Thomas Schippers	Rossini: Stabat Mater
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Appendix C: Boston Symphony Orchestra Performance Table

Day	Date	Conductor	Venue	Work
Fr	12/1/1972	W. Steinberg	Philharmonic Hall (Lincoln Center)	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
We	11/29/1972	W. Steinberg	Philharmonic Hall (Lincoln Center)	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
Tu	10/3/1972	J. Silverstein W. Steinberg	Symphony Hall	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
Sa	9/30/1972	J. Silverstein W. Steinberg	Symphony Hall	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
Fr	9/29/1972	J. Silverstein W. Steinberg	Symphony Hall	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
Th	9/28/1972	J. Silverstein W. Steinberg	Symphony Hall	MAHLER: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, "Resurrection"
Su	8/8/1971	C. Davis	Tanglewood - Shed	MOZART: Requiem in d K626
Sa	8/7/1971	C. Davis	Tanglewood - Shed	MOZART: Requiem in d K626
Su	7/14/1968	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirrt" BWV 35
Sa	7/13/1968	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	HAYDN: Mass in D minor, H. XXII:11 "Lord Nelson Mass"
Sa	7/13/1968	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirrt" BWV 35
Tu	1/2/1968	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirrt" BWV 35
Sa	12/30/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirrt" BWV 35
Fr	12/29/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirrt" BWV 35
Sa	3/25/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: St. John Passion, BWV 245
Fr	3/24/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: St. John Passion, BWV 245
Th	3/23/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	BACH: St. John Passion, BWV 245
Sa	3/4/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Carnegie Hall Rutgers Univ	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat major H. XXII:13, "Creation Mass"
Th	3/2/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Carnegie Hall Rutgers University	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat major H. XXII:13, "Creation Mass"
Sa	2/25/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat major H. XXII:13,

				"Creation Mass"
Fr	2/24/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat major H. XXII:13, "Creation Mass"
Th	2/23/1967	E. Leinsdorf	Symphony Hall	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat major H. XXII: 13, "Creation Mass"
Su	7/17/1966	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: Magnificat, BWV 243
Sa	7/16/1966	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: St. John Passion, BWV 245
Sa	7/16/1966	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: Magnificat, BWV 243
Su	7/11/1965	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	BACH: Cantata No 146, "Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal BWV 146 BACH: Cantata No. 70, "Wachet! betet! Seid bereit alle BWV 70
Sa	7/10/1965	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	GLUCK: Orfeo & Euridice: A BACH: Cantata No. 140, "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme BWV 140
Sa	7/10/1965	E. Leinsdorf	Koussevitzky Music Shed	GLUCK: Orfeo & Euridice: A BACH: Cantata No. 140, "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme BACH: Cantata No 146, "Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal BWV 146 BACH: Cantata No. 70, "Wachet! betet! Seid bereit alle BWV 70

Appendix D: Carnegie Hall Performance Table

1980

2/18/1980	Kennedy Center Handel Festival Orche Handel Festival Orchestra Stephen Simon, conductor Wolff, mezzo soprano <i>Radamisto</i> Hilda Harris, mezzo soprano <i>Zenobia</i> Kenneth Bell, bass <i>Farasmane</i> Richard Lewis, baritone <i>Tiridate</i> Benita Valente, soprano <i>Polissena</i> Nancy Shade, soprano <i>Tigrane</i> Linda Mabbs, soprano <i>Fraarte</i>	Main Hall	HANDEL: <i>Radamisto</i> <i>New York premiere</i>
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1978

5/27/1978	Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterda Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Bernard Haitink, conductor Faye Robinson, soprano Wolff, mezzo soprano Jacques Trussel, tenor Samuel Ramey, bass-baritone University of Maryland Chorus	Main Hall	BEETHOVEN: Symphony No.8 in F maj., Op.93 BEETHOVEN: Symphony No.9 in D min., Op.125
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1974

3/26/1974	Handel Society of New York Brian Priestman, conductor Cristina Deutekom, soprano <i>Alcina</i> Wolff, mezzo soprano <i>Ruggiero</i> Karan Armstrong, soprano <i>Morgana</i> Lucia Valentini, mezzo soprano <i>Bradamante</i> John Stewart, tenor <i>Orante</i> Paul Plishka, bass <i>Melisso</i> David Clenny, soprano <i>Oberto</i>	Main Hall	HANDEL: <i>Alcina</i>
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1973

2/27/1973	Handel Society of New York Stephen Simon, conductor Elinor Ross, soprano <i>Nitrocris</i> Wolff, mezzo soprano <i>Daniel</i> Elaine Bonazzi, contralto <i>Cyrus</i> Henry Grossman, tenor <i>Arioch</i> Seth McCoy, tenor <i>Belshazzar</i> Sean Daniel, baritone <i>A Messenger</i> Simon Estes, bass-baritone <i>Gobrias</i> Harry Wimmer, cello Alvin Brehm, contrabass Richard Foster, organ Elaine Comparone, harpsichord	Main Hall	HANDEL: <i>Belshazzar</i> Acts II and III WALTON: <i>Belshazzar</i> Feast
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Appendix D: Carnegie Hall Performance Table (continued)

1972

3/27/1972	Handel Society of New York Stephen Simon, conductor Murray Dickie, tenor <i>Goffredo</i> Lois Marshall, soprano <i>Almirena</i> Wolff, mezzo soprano <i>Rinaldo</i> Frances Bible, contralto <i>Eustazio</i> Raymond Michalski, bass-baritone <i>Arg</i> Rita Shane, soprano <i>Armida</i> William Wolff, bass-baritone <i>A Christi</i> <i>Magician</i> Leona Gordon, soprano <i>A Siren; Aralde</i>	Main Hall	HANDEL: Rinaldo <i>New York premiere</i>
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1968

3/14/1968	Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra/ Mahler Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra William Steinberg, conductor Veronica Tyler, soprano Wolff, mezzo soprano Rutgers University Choir	Main Hall	BRUCKNER: Overture in G minor MAHLER: Symphony No.2 in C minor ("Resurrection")
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1967-1966

3/4/1967	Boston Symphony Orchestra Erich Leinsdorf, conductor WolffSills, soprano Wolff, contralto Placido Domingo, tenor Ara Berberian, bass Rutgers University Choir	Main Hall	HAYDN: Mass in B-flat maj., H.XXII:13 ("Schöpfungsmesse") MOEVS: Et occidentem illustra <i>New York premiere</i> STRAUSS: Daphne, Op.82: Final Scene
11/2/1966	Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra William Steinberg, conductor Wolff, mezzo soprano	Main Hall	BEETHOVEN: Leonore Overture No.1 in C maj., Op.138 BEETHOVEN: Symphony No.6 in F maj., Op.68 ("Pastorale") MAHLER: Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen ("Songs of a Wayfarer") DEBUSSY: La Mer

Appendix D: Carnegie Hall Performance Table (continued)

1964

10/14/1964	Festival Orchestra and Chorus of New York Festival Orchestra of New York Thomas Dunn, conductor Wolff, mezzo soprano Charles Bressler, tenor Donald Gramm, bass-baritone Albert Fuller, harpsichord The Festival Chorus of New York	Main Hall	PURCELL: The Indian Queen <i>United States premiere</i> STRAVINSKY: Pulcinella Suite
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1963

12/22/1963	Festival Orchestra and Chorus of New York Festival Orchestra of New York Thomas Dunn, conductor Saramae Endich, soprano Wolff, mezzo soprano Charles Bressler, tenor Donald Gramm, bass-baritone Gerald Tarack, violin Alexander Kouguell, cello Robert Heinrich, trumpet Melvin Kaplan, oboe Albert Fuller, harpsichord Rodney Hansen, organ Morris Newman, bassoon The Festival Chorus of New York	Main Hall	HANDEL: Messiah
12/21/1963	Festival Orchestra and Chorus of New York Festival Orchestra of New York Thomas Dunn, conductor Saramae Endich, soprano Wolff, mezzo soprano Charles Bressler, tenor Donald Gramm, bass-baritone Gerald Tarack, violin Alexander Kouguell, cello Robert Heinrich, trumpet Melvin Kaplan, oboe Albert Fuller, harpsichord Rodney Hansen, organ Morris Newman, bassoon The Festival Chorus of New York	Main Hall	HANDEL: Messiah

Appendix D: Carnegie Hall Performance Table (continued)

1952

4/15/1952	Philadelphia Orchestra Eugene Ormandy, conductor Walter Abel, narrator Theodora Brandon, soprano Wolff, mezzo soprano David Poleri, tenor Helen Colbert, unspecified voice Temple University Chorus William R. Smith, organ	Main Hall	SWANSON: Short Symphony HONEGGER: Le roi David
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Appendix E: Beverly Wolff Performance Timeline

1928

- Born November 6 in Atlanta, Georgia.
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1945

- Played trumpet in the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra from 1945-1947.¹³²
 - Fall, attended Georgia State University, Majored in Literature.
-

1950

- Graduated in from Georgia State University 1950.
 - Received a full scholarship to attend the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia.
-

1951

- November 11, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (Part I) Church of the Ascension, Beverly Wolff, alto soloist.
 - 1951, December 30, Handel's *Messiah*, Church of the Ascension, Beverly Wolff, alto soloist.
-

1952

- April 15, Philadelphia Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Eugene Ormandy, conductor, Honegger's *Le Roi David*:
 - Walter Abel, narrator
 - Theodora Brandon, soprano
 - Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano
 - David Poleri, tenor
 - Temple University Chorus
- Wolff's operatic debut with the role of Dinah, in Leonard Bernstein's opera *Trouble in Tahiti*, she was 23.
- August 8, Berkshire Music Festival, Tanglewood, *Trouble in Tahiti*, Conducted by Seymour Lipkin; directed by Sarah Caldwell; Beverly Wolff as Dinah; Arthur Schoep as Sam. Two shows 8:15 PM and 9:45 PM Trio: Elizabeth Winslow, William Harder, Joseph Scott.

¹³² Wolff played trumpet from 1945-1947. The first concert by the Atlanta Youth Symphony was held 2/2/1945; on 1/26/47, the Atlanta Symphony changed its name to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Fact was verified by Atlanta Symphony Archivist, Bob Scarr.

- “For friends of the Berkshire Music Center, *Trouble in Tahiti* by Leonard Bernstein will have its second and third performances Friday night. Its first was at Brandeis University in the spring. Its music revised and libretto rewritten since its premiere, the opera is a satire on suburban life. A movie titled, *Trouble in Tahiti* proves the turning point in the difficulties of a young couple. The composer describes it as ‘an experiment in simplicity.’”¹³³
- “This item in Mr. Bernstein’s list of accomplishments has been altered, I am told, from its original version, performed twice before at Brandeis University, Waltham, Mass. It is rather consciously clever and, as Boris Goldovsky, head of the department, explained to a rapturous audience, is compounded of musical comedy, operetta, and what Mr. Goldovsky called ‘European opera,’ whatever that may be. Score Called Bizarre: The score is obviously derivative, doggedly bizarre and seems to constitute an injudicious marriage of boogie-woogie to German ‘sprechstimme.’ This form of inane parlando has been concocted more adroitly by less audacious and more imaginative brains. And just to be different—or, perhaps, to emphasize his own limitations—Mr. Bernstein has thought to express himself in 21 wood winds and a string quartet, scarcely an eloquent medium of the gods.¹³⁴ Praise For Singers: This spate of disconnected and dreary sound evoked two rewards, however—the admirable voice and singing of Beverly Wolff, mezzo, and the expert acting and singing of Arthur Schoep, baritone. All trials have their virtues and these, in my dazed opinion, can count as such in the lexicon of experimental opera. Otherwise—Mr. Bernstein has blazed no trails and Puccini, Wagner et al still reign in my belighted brain.¹³⁵
- November 16, 1952, *Trouble in Tahiti*, NBC Opera Broadcast, featuring, Beverly Wolff and David Atkinson:
 - “Nov. 16 will bring Leonard Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*, with the composer conducting. This presentation, it is said, will be the first ‘professional’ production of the opera and has been revised for television. The opera has been performed at Brandeis University and again during the Tanglewood Festival. Since playing time for the work is some forty minutes, the hour will be filled with a Bernstein ballet still to be selected.”¹³⁶

¹³³ “Berkshire Festival Has Many Programs On This Weekend,” *Hampshire Gazette* (Northampton, Mass.), Aug. 6, 1952.

¹³⁴ Julian Seaman, “Two Singers Bring Rewards In Leonard Bernstein Opera: Performance Of Mezzo and Baritone Praised in Berkshire Music Unit’s ‘*Trouble in Tahiti*.’” *Toledo Blade* (Toledo, OH), Aug. 9, 1952.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Sidney Lohman, “News and Notes of Television and Radio,” *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1952.

- November 25, 1952, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, de Falla (Ernesto Halffter, orch.): *Sept Chansons populaires espagnoles*
-

1953

- February 3, 1953, Honegger's *King David*, Beverly Wolff alto soloist, Church of the Ascension.
 - Wolff graduated from AVA.
-

1954

- March 30, 1954, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Verdi: *Messa da requiem*
-

1955

- March 28, 1955, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Honegger: *Le Roi David*
 - November 22, 1955, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Mahler: *Das Lied von der Erde*
-

1957

- Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Thomson: *Songs of William Blake*
-

1958

- Spring, April 3- May 11, New York City Opera Roster.¹³⁷
- April 6, Wolff made her New York City Opera debut as Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti*
 - Double Bill: *Tale for a Deaf Ear* by Bucci and *Trouble in Tahiti* by Bernstein
 - Wolff debut, Atkinson debut, Bernstein conductor, Pollock director, Nomikos designer
- June 10, *Trouble in Tahiti*, Philadelphia, Faraway Farm, Haverford (AVA.)

¹³⁷ Skoval, Martin L. *The New York City Opera An American Adventure with the Complete Annals*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1981, 305.

- July 13, MGM recording of *Trouble in Tahiti* released featuring Beverly Wolff as Dinah.
-

1959

- March 19, 1959, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Vivaldi: *Gloria in D Major*, RV. 589
 - Summer, Brevard performance of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*
-

1960

- August 12, 1960, Brevard Performances of
 - in Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony No. 1, and Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*
 - December 12, 1960
 - "Her true Southern charm, warmth, generosity, graciousness, and appreciation never faltered the entire evening. Always in complete command of her person and her voice, this slender and attractive brunette proved that to be a fine musician it is not necessary to be as temperamental as Maria Callas or as tremendous as Eileen Farrell! Vocally she very obviously had everything and had it all under control—breath support was fantastic in the many pianissimo sections of the songs; breath control was ever present and with such ease; enunciation was clear and unlabored; pitch never wavered; and this brilliant voice was a true mezzo-soprano in both range and quality—not an easy order by any stretch of the imagination."¹³⁸
 - December 15, 1960, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Berlioz: *L'Enfance du Christ*, Opus 25
-

1961

¹³⁸ Mary Nic Shenk, "Beverly Wolff Stars in Delightful Concert." *The Evening Independent*, St. Petersburg, FL, Dec. 12, 1960.

- August 22, performed at White House with Brevard's Youth Orchestra.
 - "A musical program that ranged from Aaron Copland's 'Hoedown' to Brahms' 'Lullaby' entertained 345 physically handicapped children today of the south lawn of the White House. The children were crippled, blind, or heart patients. They sipped lemonade and ate cookies under a big Army tent as they listened to the youth symphony orchestra of the Brevard Music Camp in North Carolina. The main attraction however, was President Kennedy... Beverly Wolff, the mezzo-soprano, was the soloist. She introduced each of her numbers by giving the children such bits of information as that Brahms was 'a very simple gentleman whom they called 'Papa'.'"¹³⁹
- October 19, 1961, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Henry Sopkin conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Thomson: Songs of William Blake, Bellini: Duet from *Norma*, "Oh Rimembranza," Mozart: Duet from *Così fan tutte* in English, "I will choose the handsome one"

1962

- June 20, 1962, Wolff, a featured guest on the 1962, 25th Anniversary Program
 - Performed arias from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and Debussy's *L'Enfant Prodigue*.

1963

- Fall, October 3-November 10, New York City Opera Roster.¹⁴⁰
- World premiere of Menotti's *Labyrinth* (NBC TV.)
- May 1, San Francisco, Coast Opera, Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*, Vincent Porcaro stage director, Karl Kritz conductor, "Beverly Wolff of Sumter, Ga., a mezzo-soprano, who made her debut with the San Francisco Orchestra a few years ago and has sung with the New York City Opera Company, was *Giuletta*."¹⁴¹
- May 19, announcement, Philharmonic Hall will host a concert series, "A Midsummer Music Festival" will include operas, choral and orchestral works. It will begin in July with Mozart's opera, *La Clemenza di Tito*, featuring: Martina Arroyo, Betty Allen, Beverly Wolff, Margaret Kalil, David Lloyd, and David Clatworthy.

¹³⁹ Tome Wicker, "Youth Symphony Charms Kennedy." *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1961.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Lawrence Davies, "Season Begins for Coast Opera." *New York Times*, May 2, 1963.

- May 26, Spoleto Italy, Beverly Wolff will perform the alto solos in Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by Thomas Schippers.
 - "The annual outdoor concert, given in the town square will be Handel's *Messiah* in Italian. Thomas Schippers, the festival's artistic director, will conduct. Rounding out the Spoleto music will be daily noontime chamber concerts. Among the performers at these events will be the Beaux-Arts Quartet, Beverly Wolff and Judith Blegen, singers; Barbara Blegen, Mr. Schippers and Jean Claude Pennetier, pianists; a wind quartet of young Philadelphia musicians and Alberto Lysy and Ivry Gitlis, violinists."¹⁴²
- July 24, Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*, Wolff as Sesto, Paul Callaway conductor, part of concert series, "A Midsummer Music Festival."
- October 11, 20, NYCO's production of the *Marriage of Figaro*, Wolff as Cherubino, reviewed by Raymond Ericson, "Two members of the company, singing their roles at the City Center for the first time, fitted easily into the ensemble. Beverly Wolff was an entrancing Cherubino, handsome in her male uniform and a singer of taste and sensibility..."¹⁴³
- October 31, NYCO's production of the *Marriage of Figaro*, Philadelphia, Academy of Music, Kirk Browning director.
- November 8, The Opera Society of Washington's eighth season, Samuel Barber's *Vanessa*, Beverly Wolff was Erika, Menotti stage director.
 - "The audience reacted enthusiastically to the contemporary American work, especially to the emotional music of the last act. There were prolonged cheers for two of the principals, Beverly Wolff as Erika, the niece, and Francesca Roberto as Vanessa."¹⁴⁴
- December 21, 22, Wolff alto soloist, in six performances of Handel's *Messiah*, Thomas Dunn, conductor.
 - Saramae Endich, soprano
 - Charles Bressler, tenor,
 - Donald Gramm, bass-baritone
 - Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano

¹⁴² "Visconti to stage Opera at Spoleto: 'Traviata' Honoring Verdi, Opens Festival June 20." *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1963.

¹⁴³ Raymond Ericson, "Marriage of Figaro." *New York Times*, Oct. 12, 1963.

¹⁴⁴ "8th Opera Season Opens in Capital: Samuel Barber's 'Vanessa' Presented at Howard U." *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1963.

1964

- January 25, 1964, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, R. Mann conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Bernstein: Symphony No. 1, Berlioz: *La Mort de Cléopâtre*
- July 23 and 31, participates in Long Island Arts Center Festival, in a production of the *Marriage of Figaro*, with Norman Treigle, Phyllis Curtain, and Jeanette Scovotti, under the baton of Julius Rudel.
- September 15, New York Philharmonic picks Wolff as soloist in Rossini's *Stabat Mater*
- October 1- November 15, New York City Opera Roster, *Marriage of Figaro*, *Faust*, *Carmen*.¹⁴⁵
- October 2, 11, 24* NYCO's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* in English, reviewed by Howard Klein, "An early highpoint was Beverly Wolff's sensitive singing of what would normally be "Voi, che sapete." It drew sustained applause for both its lovely legato and intense characterization. Miss Wolff, consistently winning as Cherubino, was a main reason for the success of the evening."¹⁴⁶
- October 14 and 16, Festival Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Thomas Dunn, Carnegie Hall, Purcell's *The Indian Queen*, and Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*. "As usual, excellent soloists were on hand to provide stimulating vocal and instrumental music. Beverly Wolff was the mezzo-soprano who's Cherubino in the New York City Opera's "Marriage of Figaro" has been admired so often, and her singing in these two works showed her to be just as imaginative and musical but the favorable acoustics made her voice seem twice as large."¹⁴⁷
- October 18, 24* matinee, November 13, New York City Opera's production of Gounod's *Faust*, She sang the role of Siébel, reviewed by Raymond Ericson, "There was some beautiful singing by Beverly Wolff as Siébel; her one aria has seldom been sung so well hereabouts and she looked handsome, besides."¹⁴⁸
 - On October 24th- Beverly was in two productions, a matinee of *Faust* and an evening performance of *Marriage of Figaro*

¹⁴⁵ Skoval, 336.

¹⁴⁶ Howard Klein, "City Opera Presents 'Figaro' Donald Gramm in Title Role." *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1964.

¹⁴⁷ Klein, Howard." Festival Groups in Third Concert." *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1964.

¹⁴⁸ Raymond Ericson, "City Opera gives its Second 'Faust'." *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1964.

- 1964, November 14, Wolff sang title role in Bizet's *Carmen* with the NYCO.
 - "Of principal interest was the appearance of Beverly Wolff in the title role. The young mezzo-soprano had sung it with the company in an out-of-town engagement, and she seemed well acquainted with the stage business. She was a Carmen easy to look at, youthfully mobile and yet suggesting some of the toughness conventionally associated with the character. The toughness seemed more assumed than spontaneous at times, but this is a quality that Miss Wolff may learn to project with greater depth as she grows into the part. What was best about an admirable performance was the singing: strong, secure and vocally rich. She let her attempts to color the tone twist her French pronunciation at times and the lowest notes lacked steadiness, but these were small points in such fine, professional singing. This the City Opera has two fine American mezzo-sopranos to present in its *Carmen*, the other being Shirley Verrett, and the company can consider itself fortunate in such bounty."¹⁴⁹

1965

- January 15 and 17, Beverly Wolff's debut with the New York Philharmonic, performed Rossini's *Stabat Mater* with Martina Arroyo under the direction of guest conductor, Thomas Schippers
- Spring, March 4- April 4, New York City Opera Roster, *Saint of Bleeker Street* by Gian-Carlo Menotti.
- March 18, 28, New York City Opera's production of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, Wolff sang the role of Desideria and was reviewed, by Howard Klein, "Beverly Wolff was outstanding as Desideria."¹⁵⁰
- April 25, Wolff announced as a soloist in the Five Part Bach Festival with the Festival Orchestra of New York, Thomas Dunn conductor.
- May 26, The Festival Orchestra of New York announces soloists for 1965-66 season. "Four Sunday afternoon Bach programs will include nine seldom performed cantatas and the six motets...Soloists in the cantatas will be Saramae Endich, Betty Allen, Lili Chookasian, Beverly Wolff, Charles Bressler and Justino Diaz. The cantata programs are unified by a common theme. The ones scheduled for Nov. 7 are versions of a movement from the B Minor Mass. Those on Jan. 23, 1966 were written for the Feast of St. John the Baptist. The ones on

¹⁴⁹ Raymond Ericson, "Wolff Sings Title Role in Fourth City Opera 'Carmen'." *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1964.

¹⁵⁰ Howard Klein, "City Opera Gives Menotti's 'Saint': New Director and Singer Strengthen Production. *New York Times*, Mar. 19, 1965.

March 6, 1966 are unfamiliar versions of movements from the “Brandenburg” Concertos.”¹⁵¹

- July 6, Lenox Mass. Shed at Tanglewood, Boston Symphony Orchestra Berkshire Festival Concert, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor performed Act II, Scene 2 from Gluck’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* with soprano, Veronica Tyler.
- July 10 evening, Lenox, Mass, concert dedicated to C. D. Jackson, a senior vice president of Time, Inc., Wolff with Tyler performed “Scene Aux Champs-Elyssées from Gluck’s *Orphee et Eurydice*. Tanglewood Performance conducted by E. Leinsdorf:
 - Gluck: *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Act II, Scene 2; Bach: Cantata No. 140, “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme,” BWV 140;
 - Bach Cantata No. 146, “Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal, BWV 146
 - Bach Cantata No. 70, “Wachet! betet! Seid bereit allezeit,” BWV 70
 - “An evening of superb music superbly played, surely one of the high points of this or any Tanglewood season... The second scene of Act II of Gluck’s *Orpheus and Eurydice* the scene which takes place in the Elysian Fields, received a smooth and charming performance. Beverly Wolff and Veronica Tyler sang the title roles, echoed by the Harvard Glee Club and the Radcliffe Choral Society.”¹⁵²
- July 11, Lenox, Mass., Shed at Tanglewood, Boston Symphony Orchestra Berkshire Festival Concert, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, Wolff with Veronica Tyler, Charles Bressler, and Thomas Paul performed, “Wir müssen durch viel Trübsal,” BWV 146, Bach Cantata No. 70, “Wachet! betet! Seid bereit allezeit,” BWV 70.
 - “Beverly Wolff, the alto, was almost equally impressive in her long arias No. 146 and No. 70,”¹⁵³
 - “Four excellent vocal soloists sang on both programs: Veronica Tyler, soprano, Beverly Wolff, contralto, Charles Bressler, tenor, and Thomas Paul, bass. Each one had varying opportunities during the two concerts but all proved to be of exceptional vocal ability and experience... The two ladies, too, were consistently attention riveting. Miss Tyler has an opulent soprano, which she used with ease and musical insight. Miss Wolff had the advantage of being allotted arias in respective cantatas in which Joseph Silverstein had a violin obligato and in another where Jules Eskin had one for his cello. Both instrumentalists played with beautiful tone and Miss

¹⁵¹ “ Festival Orchestra Lists Its Programs.” *New York Times*, May 26, 1965.

¹⁵² “Tanglewood Saturday Evening.” *Journal Weekly* (Lakeville, Conn.) Jul. 15, 1965.

¹⁵³ Richard Freed. “Bach Works Unify Musical Weekend: Sacred Cantatas are Heard at Berkshire Festival.” *New York Times*, Jul. 12, 1965.

- Wolff's rich and ample contralto blended for the great pleasure of the audiences."¹⁵⁴
- "Beverly Wolff brought musicianship and a glowing voice to her famed aria, which was supported by Joseph Silverstein's gracefully articulated violin obligato."¹⁵⁵
 - "...contralto, Beverly Wolff, who sings with great power, vocal beauty and strong feeling,"¹⁵⁶
 - July 25 and 31, WQXR radiobroadcast of Boston Symphony Orchestra Berkshire Festival Concert, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, Wolff with Veronica Tyler performed Orfeo Act II, Scene 2 from Gluck.
 - August 30, "The Municipal Theater of Atlanta ended its summer season in the 6,000 seat Chastain Amphitheater on Saturday night with a performance of Bizet's *Carmen* starring Beverly Wolff, Richard Tucker, and Frank Guarerra."¹⁵⁷
 - September 24, October 21, 31, New York City Opera, *Carmen*.
 - Carmen- Wolff
 - Don Jose- Cassilly/ Domingo (replaced Cassilly on 10/31)
 - Escamillo- Treigle
 - Coppola/ Rudel- Conductor
 - October 21 and 31: Rudel conductor, Domingo
 - September 26, New York City Opera, *Faust*
 - Sills, Molese, Treigle, Cossa, Patane-conductor
 - Siebel-Wolff
 - September 29, October 9, New York City Opera, *The Saint of Bleeker Street*.
 - September 30, October 16, New York City Opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*.
 - November 14, Announcement in *NYT* that Wolff will take on the role of Carry Nation in Douglas Moore's opera set to debut in Kansas the following April.
 - "Scheduled to take part in the premiere are Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano, in the title role,"¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Jay Rosenfeld, "Bach Cantatas Highlight Tanglewood Concerts." *Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsfield, MA.), Jul. 12, 1965.

¹⁵⁵ George Stowe, "Bach Cantatas Heard at Lenox." *Hartford Times* (Hartford, CT), Jul 12, 1965.

¹⁵⁶ William C. Glackin, "Boston Symphony's Great Summer Festival Has Big Second Week." *The Sacramento Bee* (Norwich, CT), Jul. 15, 1965.

¹⁵⁷ Allen Hughes, "Atlanta Builds to Match Rise in Demand for Drama and Music" *New York Times*, Aug 31, 1965.

- November/December Central Opera Service Bulletin, announcement of new opera/ premiere, Douglas Moore's *Carry Nation*.
 - Douglas Moore has again chosen an American subject for his next work. Set in the days before prohibition it is the story of Carry Nation, her marriage and subsequent fight for temperance. William North Jayme is responsible for the libretto. The two-act, evening-filling work will be premiered in April at the University of Kansas in Lawrence as part of the University's centennial celebration. Lewis Goff, director of the school's theatre, will assemble a professional cast including Beverly Wolff, Patricia Brooks, John Reardon, and Kenneth Smith, faculty member Robert Baustian will be in charge of musical matters. The opera will be published by Galaxy Music.¹⁵⁹

- December 10, New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein conductor, Mahler's *Eighth Symphony* or *Symphony of a Thousand*, Saramae Endich, Ella Lee, Jennie Tourel, Beverly Wolff, George Shirley, John Boyden, Ezio Flagello, Westminster Choir and St. Kilian Boy choir.
 - "The seven soloists worked energetically, Mr. Bernstein worked even more so, the chorus was well trained, and the little brass ensemble in the rear of Philharmonic Hall came in at the end of each part with the most satisfactory racket. The vocal solos, incidentally, are very difficult."¹⁶⁰

1966

- Fall, September 27-November 13, New York City Opera, Roster.

- February 24, 25, 26, and 28, New York Philharmonic, Philharmonic Hall, Schippers conductor, Donald McIntyre, Gene Bullard, Beverly Wolff, Carol Bauer, Jane Marsh, Teresa Montes, soloists in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.

- April 29, Created title role of Douglas Moore's *Carry Nation* at Kansas University, Lawrence,

¹⁵⁸ Raymond Ericson. "More Americana From Moore." *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1965.

¹⁵⁹ "New Operas and Premieres." *Central Opera Service Bulletin*, 11, no. 12 (November 1965): 12.

¹⁶⁰ Harold Schonberg. "Music: Philharmonic in Mahler's 8th: 401 Performers Play and Sing Symphony." *New York Times*, Dec. 10, 1965.

- “The legend of Carry Nation is only slightly dimmed by the fact that Miss Wolff, in the title role, is winsome and properly rounded and sings like an angel. Mrs. Nation was burly and cantankerous.”¹⁶¹
- May, Wolff then sang the title role in San Francisco (the first professional performance)
- July 16, 17, Boston Symphony Orchestra Berkshire Festival Concert, Erich Leinsdorf, conductor, Phyllis Curtain, Ernst Haefliger, Walter Carringer, Thomas Paul, Norman Treigle, and Beverly Wolff soloists in Bach’s *St. John Passion*
- Bach: *St John Passion*, BWV 245 and Bach: *Magnificat*, BWV 243
 - “All of the soloists were well cast...Beverly Wolff sang her contralto solo ‘Chains of bondage that I wrought’ with anguish and torment”¹⁶²
 - Beverly Wolff was most impressive in the alto solo—‘It is Fulfilled.’”¹⁶³
 - “Miss Wolff sang her second aria, ‘Es ist vollbracht,’ with a lovely tonal quality far more in focus than her work in ‘Von den Stricken.’”¹⁶⁴
 - “Phyllis Curtain, soprano, and Beverly Wolff, contralto, were of like stature both vocally and interpretively. Such an ensemble, it may be said, is somewhat unusual to behold.”¹⁶⁵
- September 27, October 2, November 8, 13, NYCO’s ground breaking production of Handel’s *Giulio Cesare*, cast included: Sills, Treigle, and Forrester, Rudel conducted.
 - Schonberg review, “For the first time in many years—if ever—a large scale baroque opera received a large-scale treatment in this city... Beverly Wolff, William Beck, Spiro Malas, Domenic Cossa and Michael Devlin handled themselves superbly.”¹⁶⁶
- September 29, October 4, NYCO’s production of *Carmen* at the State Theater, Wolff sang the role of Carmen, was reviewed by Howard Klein, “Beverly Wolff’s Carmen was again secure vocally and dramatically.”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Theodore Strongin, “Opera by Moore Bows in Kansas: ‘Carry Nation’ Intertwines Love Story and Legend.” *New York Times*, Apr. 30, 1966.

¹⁶² R.C. Hammerich, “Tanglewood Shed Filled With Sound of Worship,” *Sunday Republican*, (Springfield, MA). Jul. 17, 1966.

¹⁶³ George W. Stowe, “St. John Is Heard At Lenox,” *Hartford Times*, Jul. 18, 1966.

¹⁶⁴ Peter M. Knapp, “Bach Staged In The Berkshire,” *Patriot Ledger* (Quincy, MA.), July 19, 1966.

¹⁶⁵ McLaren Harris, “An All-Bach Weekend,” *Herald* (Boston, MA), Jul. 18, 1966.

¹⁶⁶ Harold Schonberg, “Music: ‘Giulio Cesare’ Opens Season by New York City Opera.” *New York Times*, Sep.28, 1966.

¹⁶⁷ Howard Klein, “City Opera ‘Carmen’ at State Theater.” *New York Times*, Sep. 30, 1966.

- October 31, Wolff was scheduled to sing Idamantes in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, in Brooklyn with Academy Troupe, and had to cancel six days before performance due to illness, Nancy Williams took her place.
- November 2, Carnegie Hall, International Festival of Visiting Orchestras, Pittsburgh Symphony, William Steinberg conducting, Mahler's *Songs of a Wayfarer*, Beverly Wolff soloist.
 - "Mahler's 'Songs of a Wayfarer' cycle was the novelty, and it was well sung by Beverly Wolff, the City Opera mezzo-soprano. Miss Wolff's voice sounded best in the breathlessly operatic 'Ich hab' ein glühend Messer' but the low register in soft passages was a little rough. Miss Wolff and Mr. Steinberg were loudly applauded by the appreciative audience, however."¹⁶⁸
- November 13, Handel's *Messiah*, presented by the American Bible Society, Philharmonic Hall, conducted by Sir Malcolm Sargent, soloists: Saramae Endlich, Beverly Wolff, John McCollum, Simon Estes, and the Westminster Choir.
 - "Miss Endlich, Miss Wolff, and Mr. McCollum are young veterans of the oratorio field. They showed it in their poise, sense of style, clear enunciation of the text."¹⁶⁹
- February 25, Boston, Boston Symphony, Haydn's *Mass No. 13 in B flat*, same as March 4th
- March 2 and 4, Carnegie Hall, Boston Symphony Orchestra and Rutgers University Choir, Erich Leinsdorf, musical director, Wolff, Sills, Domingo, and Ara Berberian soloists in Haydn's *Creation Mass*
- "...there was a superb quartet of vocal soloists for the Mass—Beverly Sills, Beverly Wolff, Placido Domingo, and Ara Berberian...the writing for the solo quartet is fragmented, but it is effective, especially as sung in this performance. The voices were clear, well-matched, and blended beautifully when necessary."¹⁷⁰
- March 8, Featured Recitalist, Chapel Hill Concert Series, 8:00pm
 - Program featured: Vivaldi, Gluck, Mozart, Wolf, Tchaikovsky, Offenbach, Barber, Nordoff, Dello-Joio, Bantock
- March 23, 24, 25, BSO, Leinsdorf, Symphony Hall

¹⁶⁸ Howard Klein, "Steinberg Conducts His Ensemble Here." *New York Times*, Nov.3, 1966,

¹⁶⁹ Raymond Ericson, "Sargent Directs 'Messiah' Here." *New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1966.

¹⁷⁰ Allen Hughes, "Haydn Mass Sung at Carnegie Hall." *New York Times*, Mar. 6, 1967.

- Bach St. John Passion, BWV 245
- April 30, Radio Broadcast, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf conductor, Curtain, Wolff, Haefliger, Paul, Treigle, *The Passion According to St. John*, Bach.
- May 6- June 11, Festival de Puebla, Mexico, Concerts will be held in the Cathedral, Santo Domingo Church, Auditorio Reforma, Palafox Library, and Salon Cabildos; Wolff one of the soloists.
- October 12, 14, 22, 27, November 8, NYCO's production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, Beverly Wolff reprised her role of Sesto.
- November 16,17, 18, and 20, New York Philharmonic, Philharmonic Hall, William Steinberg conductor, Wolff, Haefliger, Michaelski, Souzay, Westminster Choir, Berlioz' *The Damnation of Faust*.
 - "Miss Wolff used her big, colorful voice to good advantage, and turned in some sensitive singing in the "Amour" aria."¹⁷¹
- December 22, NYT announcement of *Carry Nation* debut at NYCO set to take place March 28th.
- December 29, 30, BSO, Leinsdorf, Symphony Hall, Bach: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirret," BWV 35
 - "I have no intent to pass over Miss Wolff; her voice has the pleasant lightness of a mezzo, and the complete loss of tonal warmth which occurs when she reaches for the lowest notes convinces me that a mezzo is what she really is. Yet in passages involving no such reaching she proved strong, accurate in pitch and rhythm, clear in diction."¹⁷²
 - "Mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff is an uncommonly gifted singer; her voice has a beautiful quality and a center of steel; she has a keen sense of the dramatic, and sang the two recitatives with much style. She also, perhaps unfortunately, sings each aria as if it's to be her last one. Things get quickly to a pretty keyed-up pitch, and a bit of relaxation, as we got in the concluding aria, would be welcome more often."¹⁷³

1967

¹⁷¹ Harold Schonberg, "Music: *Damnation of Faust* in Concert." *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1967.

¹⁷² McLaren Harris, "Symphony in Fine Performance While Half Its Cast Vacations." *Herald Traveler* (Boston, MA), Dec. 30, 1967.

¹⁷³ George Gelles, "Beverly Wolff Impresses at Symphony." *Morning Globe* (Boston, MA), Dec. 30, 1967.

- October 19, 1967, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, R. Shaw conducted
 - Mezzo-soprano soloist, Beethoven: Symphony No. 9 in D Minor, Op. 125
- December 29, Featured Article in *Boston Globe*, “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist.”¹⁷⁴

I had heard somewhere that mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff, soloist with the Boston Symphony the weekend and next Tuesday in Bach’s Cantata No. 35, once played trumpet with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. That proved only to be someone’s inventive marriage of two facts: she comes from Atlanta, which one hears in her speech, and she used to play the trumpet, which she says at least half seriously can be heard in her singing. “Sometimes I think I’m still trying to sound like a trumpet, and I have to tell myself to relax.”

She was born in Atlanta the 10th of 11 children. “My mother was a nut on the piano, and she had the idea that we should all do something musical and have family music together. A trumpet was bought for an older sister, who rejected it, and the instrument fell to the at least then more malleable Beverly. She sees much of her childhood determined by the educational tendencies of her older brothers and sisters—“let’s see what we can teach Beverly today”—and she does not regret the varied and somewhat unstructured form her education took, especially the reading of good books they got her into at a very early age. The trumpet, at any rate, is a thing of the past; she said farewell to it at 17 when she and some brass-playing friends were to play Bach chorales, discovering, after vigorous rehearsal, that no one had the lip to manage the top line, so that Bach was left all accompaniment and no tune.

She attended the University of Georgia at its Atlanta campus, majoring in literature. Then, feeling the need for better voice teaching than was available at home, she went on to the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia. Almost as soon as her career had begun, she retired from singing, devoting her energies to her marriage and to her two sons. She recalls during those years singing an incredible number of performances of the Brahms “Alto Rhapsody around the South, wherever there was some sort of an orchestra and somebody had a few boys to sing the choral part.” Fortunately, there were friends, among whom she remembers the Washington conductor and organist Paul Callaway with special gratitude that would let her not stagnate, insisting that she continue studying and learning new repertory.

The new career, which involves operatic and orchestral arrangements all over the country, dates to the early 60’s. To combine professional and home life is always difficult, and Miss Wolff feels that even beyond that being sufficiently aggressive to have a successful career and retaining an essential femininity is a nearly impossible combination. She herself is radiantly and delightfully feminine, and

¹⁷⁴ Michael Steinberg, “Ex-Trumpet Player Symphony Vocalist.” *Boston Globe*, Dec. 29, 1967.

the operatic roles that she feels particularly close to include some of the most intensely womanly ones, Judith in Bartok's *Bluebeards Castle* for example, and Charlotte in Massenet's *Werther*. She notes, though, that there are more and more good singers all the time, and that the atmosphere daily becomes more dog-eat-dog.

A great aid to her survival is having her private life take on an atmosphere removed from the mainstream of musical careerism. She, her husband, who is treasurer of a manufacturing company, and her two boys now 13 and 11, live in Lakeland, Fla., where they recently moved from Sumter, S.C. "It even makes it possible for me to like other mezzos."

Generosity toward colleagues come easily to Beverly Wolff, and during our conversation she expressed admiration for many other singers, including soprano Beverly Sills, a New York City Opera colleague for whom she feels deep personal affection as well; mezzos Jennie Tourel ("she doesn't know it, but she's my teacher really"); Giulietta Simionato ("the voice that never gets out of control"); Marilyn Horne ("she's really half a soprano, though"); tenor Ernst Haefliger ("I am amazed, and he has the greatest rhythm of any singer I know"); and bass Ezio Flagello, both of whom were soloists with her in the *Damnation of Faust* with the New York Philharmonic recently. The conductor was William Steinberg, one of the musicians she most admires.

What she looks for in the conductor is a colleague who both stimulates and restrains—"I get carried away and I do need restraining"—and someone who listens to and responds to the soloist. "We singers aren't the dumb clucks any more we're made out to be, and there's nothing worse than the conductors who treat us without respect, who just lay down the law, who don't listen to what we're doing." Erich Leinsdorf and Leonard Bernstein are also among the conductors it is a special joy for singers to work with, "and some of the younger ones have it too, Donald Johanos in Dallas, Thomas Dunn in New York and Seymour Lipkin: what it should be is, you tell me what you know, and I'll tell you what I know."

1968

- **1968-1983 CAMI Roster**
- January 2, BSO, Leinsdorf, Symphony Hall
 - Bach: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirret," BWV 35; for contralto, orchestra, and organ
 - "Contralto Beverly Wolff was the vocal soloist for the Bach cantata, Charles Wilson the organist and Newton Wayland the harpsichordist, thankfully audible...But the performance as a whole lacked much emotional punch, even though Moss Wolff sang capably in her rich-hued contralto. She was at her best in the recitatives and in the florid aria, 'Gott hat Alles wohl gemacht!' Otherwise, the reading was pleasant but routine without much inner illumination."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Peter M. Knapp, "Symphonic Festivity," *Patriot Ledger* (Quincy, MA.), Jan. 3, 1968.

- Spring, February 22- April 21, New York City Roster
- February 11, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Musica Aeterna Orchestra and Chorus, Frederic Waldman conductor, Benita Valente, Beverly Wolff, John McCollum, and Chester Watson, soloists, Bach *Cantata No. 50*, Monteverdi *Magnificat*, Mozart *Requiem*
- February 11, Radio Broadcast, Boston Symphony Orchestra Concert, Leinsdorf, Haefliger, Curtain, Treigle, Wolff, *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1*, *Cantata No. 55*, *Magnificat*, Bach
- March 14, Carnegie Hall, Pittsburg Symphony Orchestra and Rutgers University Choir, William Steinberg conductor, Mahler's *Symphony No.2 in C minor*, with Veronica Tyler, and Beverly Wolff
 - "Veronica Tyler, soprano, and Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano were excellent soloists;"
- March 28, April 2, 7, New York City Opera premiere of Douglas Moore's *Carry Nation*, Frank Corsaro stage director, Samuel Krachmalnick conductor.
 - "*Carry Nation* was composed two years ago and had its world premiere at the University of Kansas. Last night was the New York premiere, as presented by the City Opera at the State Theater....*Carry Nation* received a well-sung, superbly acted performance. The big-voiced Beverly Wolff was in the title role, and she sang and acted with intensity. This is one girl who knows how to move, to make every gesture and expression count, without overdoing it. Big league stuff, in short."¹⁷⁶
- April 21, Brooklyn Philharmonic, Siegfried Landau conductor, The Verdi *Requiem*, soloists: Saramae Endich, Beverly Wolff, Seth McCoy, Ara Berberian
- July 13, Tanglewood, Berkshire Festival, Lenox, Mass., Leinsdorf conductor, Haydn *Lord Nelson Mass*, Saramae Endich, Beverly Wolff, Enrico Di Giuseppe, Paul Plishka, Tanglewood Choir.
- Bach: Cantata No. 35, "Geist und Seele wird verwirret," BWV 35
- Haydn: Mass in D minor, H.XXII:11, "Lord Nelson Mass"
 - "But the real treat of the sultry afternoon's program conducted by Erich Leinsdorf and attended by 6, 156 turned out to be contralto Beverly Wolff's singing of the Bach cantata 35, 'Geist und Seele wird verwirret.' Her warm, sumptuous tones have been a frequent Tanglewood treat. Since our last hearing, Miss Wolff seems to have acquired greater security, more power, and technical proficiency. Her singing of the cantata not only had vocal warmth, with real depth in the lower range, but also a good sense of

¹⁷⁶ Harold Schonberg, "Opera: The Folk Heritage of a Young Carry Nation in Missouri." *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1968.

style and emotional communication. Her florid work, too, went smoothly in the aria, ‘Gott hat Alles wohl gemacht!’ which gained her unscheduled applause. The bulk of Haydn’s ‘Nelson’ mass is for chorus, with only the soprano having much to do in the solo line, though Plishka demonstrated a gruff, booming bass, and Miss Wolff her contralto art in the few opportunities given them.”¹⁷⁷

- “Next came Bach’s Cantata No. 35, ‘Geist und Seele wird verwirret,’ scored for orchestra, contralto solo, and organ. Beverly Wolff was a paragon of achievement in the vocal part. Her diction was flawless and her voice a delight. She has a bigger sound than most altos, and for a minute there, I thought she could drown the orchestra if she wanted to. She didn’t, of course, being more an artist than a showoff.”¹⁷⁸
- “Beverly Wolff, who was programmed as a contralto but who in reality, is a mezzo-soprano. Beverly Wolff, who is no stranger to Tanglewood audiences, has a beautiful mezzo voice with a rich creamy quality which she used with the greatest skill and musicianship. Beverly Wolff, who sang in the Haydn mass the night before was the soloist in the Bach Cantata No. 35, ‘Geist und Seele wird verwirret,’ and confirmed the excellent impression she had made. Her unusual facility in rapid passages enabled her to sing the long florid sections of the cantata with the greatest ease and assurance.”¹⁷⁹
- “Miss Wolff has a voice of ringing authority and a technique to match, although Sunday it took on a touch of harshness in the lower register, and during the early measures of the cantata seemed to be bigger than life...as if it were boosted by electronic amplification. She sang the pleading, supplicating cantata with an impressive depth of emotion and, after the aria, ‘Gott Hat Alles Wohl Gemacht!’ was rewarded, with Wilson for his lively partnership on the organ, by an interruption of applause.”¹⁸⁰
- “Beverly Wolff was contralto soloist in Bach Cantata No. 35, ‘Spirit and Soul are put in Turmoil.’ Charles Wilson assisted at the organ...Miss Wolff sang the difficult contralto score with aplomb. Her voice was full-bodied, richly hued, and strong. She projected the two arias and recitatives with penetration and perception. To these qualities she added coloratura facility to the aria, ‘God Has Created All Things.’”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ Peter M. Knapp, “Traditional Summertime Baroque-shire Festival,” *Patriot Ledger*, Jul. 15, 1968.

¹⁷⁸ Milton Zapolski, “Tanglewood Continues Survey Of Baroque, Classical Music,” *Schenectady Gazette* (Schenectady, N.Y.), Jul. 15, 1968.

¹⁷⁹ Edward French, “‘Lord Nelson Mass’ Is Highlight at Tanglewood,” *The Knickerbocker News* (Albany, N.Y.), Jul. 15, 1968.

¹⁸⁰ R.C. Hammerich, “Symphony’s ‘Water Music’ Precise, Practical Version: Performance Rewarded.” *Union* (Springfield, MA.), Jul. 15, 1968.

¹⁸¹ Raymond Morin, “Baroque Weekend at Tanglewood,” *Telegram* (Worcester, MA.) Jul. 15, 1968.

- “Soloist Beverly Wolff fulfilled the many demands Bach imposes with ease and delightful, technical execution. Her first aria was sung with the special compassion which, for me, a genuine contralto can induce. The second aria, ‘God has created all things well,’ is a coloratura example to match the opportunities soprano Saramae Endich conquered so well on the preceding evening in another Bach cantata, ‘Praise God in all lands,’ and which, in effect, Beverly Sills had encountered in the Mozart ‘Exultate’ the previous weekend. Miss Wolff benefited by a little better accommodation from the orchestra than Miss Endich had, for she had to contend with musical currents which didn’t always flow in the same direction she evidently preferred to go. Miss Wolff’s second aria, ‘Would that I might live with God,’ was also florid in nature and has its own special intricacies when Bach’s orchestra appears to be not totally concerned with the vocalist.”¹⁸²
- July 14, Tanglewood, Berkshire Festival, Lenox, Mass., Leinsdorf conductor, Bach *Cantata No. 35*, Beverly Wolff soloist.
- July 21, Radio Broadcast WQXR, Boston Symphony Orchestra Concert, Leinsdorf, Tyler, Wolff, Bressler, Paul, soloists. *Cantata No. 146*, *Brandenburg Concerto No.4*, and *Cantata No. 70* Bach.
- October 31, November 1, 2, and 4, New York Philharmonic, Colin Davis conducting, Beverly Wolff soloist, Berlioz *Cleopatre*.
 - “In England, Colin Davis and Berlioz have become all but synonymous. Thus it was no surprise, when on Mr. Davis’s first appearance with the New York Philharmonic, he devoted his entire program to music by the French romanticist. Beverly Wolff was the mezzo-soprano last night, and she was happiest when she could let her big voice ride over the orchestra. In quieter moments her voice did not consistently come into focus.”¹⁸³
- November 23, Radio Broadcast, WQXR-FM: The Opera House, radio premiere of Douglas Moore’s *Carry Nation*, with Beverly Wolff, interview with Douglas Moore and William North Jayme.
- November 24, American Opera Society, Carnegie Hall, Meyerbeer’s *Les Huguenots* in concert form, conducted by Richard Bonyngue, starring Arroyo, Sills, Wolff, Justino Diaz, Thomas Jamerson, Spiro Malas, and Anastasios Vrenios.

¹⁸² Jay C. Rosenfeld, “Vocal Works Highlight Tanglewood Weekend.” *Berkshire Eagle*, (Pittsfield, MA.) Jul. 16, 1968.

¹⁸³ Harold Schonberg, “Music: Philharmonic Offers Evening of Berlioz.” *New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1968.

- December 12, Ned Rorem Songs, composer at the piano, featuring Phyllis Curtain, Beverly Wolff, and Donald Gramm
 - “Ned Rorem has to be a happy man today. Last night a program of nothing but his songs were given at Town Hall, a capacity audience of ‘in’ people attended and the singers were of a caliber that most composers wait a lifetime for and never get. Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano, then gave Mr. Rorem’s extended cycle ‘Poems of Love and Rain.’ To top it all, the three singers formed a trio to give the first performance of *Some Trees* a setting of three poems by John Ashbery.”¹⁸⁴

1969

- February 4, 7, 9, 1969, Houston Grand Opera, *Don Carlo*
 - Filippo - Andrzej Saciuk
 - Don Carl- Placido Domingo
 - Rodrigo- Carlo Meliciani
 - Eboli- Beverly Wolff
 - Tebaldo- Sylvia Froman
- August 24. Ned Rorem recordings released.
 - “Before and audience of ‘in’ people, a recital of Ned Rorem’s songs was given last December 12 at Town Hall...Rorem himself accompanied, unobtrusively but just right. His singers, though spectacular, never outshone Rorem’s music. They were just right too. All was in balance, composer, performers and audience...A portion of that even has been released on one side of a disk by Composers Recordings Inc., Ned Rorem: *Some Trees* and other songs (CRI 238 USD, stereo) with the same cast except the audience...”¹⁸⁵
- September 28, Douglas Moore’s *Carry Nation*, released on record featuring NYCO’s production.
- June 26, Spoleto Festival, Spoleto, Italy, Mercadante’s *Il Giuramento*, Wolff in the role of Bianca, Thomas Schippers conducted
 - “Beverly Wolff, unfamiliar to Italian audiences, made a profound impression as Bianca. Though she tended to abuse her chest register in some scenes, she did sing for the most part with artistry and sheer vocal beauty.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Theodore Strongin, “3 Stellar Singers, at Town Hall, Present a Ned Rorem Program.” *New York Times*, Dec. 13, 1968.

¹⁸⁵ Strongin, Theodore. “No Fur Coats But Lots of Music.” *New York Times*, Aug. 24, 1969.

¹⁸⁶ William Weaver, “Reports: Spoleto,” *Opera News*, September 19, 1970.

1970

- March 20, 1970 Performance with Charleston Symphony Orchestra of Mahler's *Lieder eines farenden gesellen*
 - "Listening to Beverly Wolff singing Mahler and Brahms last night with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra under Lucian De Groote's baton, was sheer joy. She is a beautiful and sensitive artist, and her lush opulent voice seemed to mesmerize her audience. As she sang the 'Songs of a Wayfarer' by Mahler, with De Groote and the orchestra giving superb support, there was hardly a movement in the audience. Rarely have I seen a finer tribute given to an artist—both during the presentation, and at the conclusion of her performance."¹⁸⁷

- Fall, September 9- November 15, New York City Opera Roster.

- October 15, 18, 21, Sills, Wolff, Domingo, Quilico, conductor Rudel. Wolff sang the role Sara, Duchess of Nottingham, in Capobianco's production of *Roberto Devereux* by Donizetti. Reviewed by Harold Schonberg,
 - "There are spots in Roberto Devereux where Donizetti almost hits it off. The 'Ah! quest'addio fatale' duet between Roberto and Sara has moments of extreme beauty... Miss Wolff used her big, bold voice with confidence. She produces a very big sound of good quality—more a Verdian than a bel canto sound, perhaps—and she acts with conviction."¹⁸⁸

- November 20, NYCO in Los Angeles, *Roberto Devereux*

- November 24, *Aida*, Academy of Music, Philadelphia Lyric Opera Company
 - Wolff- Amneris
 - Aida-Ljiljana Molnar-Talajic
 - Rademes- Ludovic Spiess
 - Amonasro-Sherrill Milnes

1971

- February 16, 19, 21, 1971, Houston Grand Opera, Verdi: *Aida*
 - Ramfis- Herbert Enns
 - Radames- Pedro Lavirgen
 - Amneris- Beverly Wolff

¹⁸⁷ Claire McPhail, "Beverly Wolff Draws Praise for Concert," *The News and Courier*, March 22, 1970

¹⁸⁸ Harold Schonberg, "A Striking Production of Roberto Devereux." *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1970.

- Aida- Marina Krilovici
- Spring, February 17- April 25, New York City Opera Roster.
- March 2, Roberto Devereux, NYCO, Sills, Wolff, Herman Malamood, Richard Fredericks, Rudel.
- March 7, 14, 18, 21 sang the role of Leona, in the world premiere of Menotti's opera *The Most Important Man*. Reviewed by Harold Schonberg,
 - "It would be hard to think of a superior cast of singing actors, including minor roles. Eugene Holmes as Ukamba was a sturdy, forceful baritone capable of producing a big sound—but no bigger than that produced by Beverly Wolff as Leona...Miss Wolff is one of the admired City Opera regular."¹⁸⁹
- March 9, *Roberto Devereux*, NYCO.
- June 11, 13, Boston, *Norma*, Wolff performs the role of Adalgisa with Sills as Norma, stage directed by Miss Caldwell, reviewed by Raymond Ericson,
 - "Beverly Wolff sang quite brilliantly as Adalgisa except when she forced her high notes and consequently lost them."¹⁹⁰
- August 7, 8, Tanglewood, Colin Davis, Mozart: Requiem in d K626
 - "The soloists, Benita Valente, Beverly Wolff, Kenneth Riegel, and Robert Hale, blended beautifully in quartet passages and ranged from adequacy to brilliance in solo assignments. Miss Valente had the best opportunities to shine. Miss Wolff's timbre was also highly satisfying. Riegel, heard in the Worcester 1970 'Messiah,' produced perhaps too exposed a brilliance in his big solo. Hale was a dependable bass."¹⁹¹
 - "The four distinguished soloists, Benita Valenta, soprano, Beverly Wolff, contralto, Kenneth Riegel, tenor, and Robert Hale, bass, complemented the performance both singly and in their ensembles."¹⁹²
 - "The quartet of soloists that were gathered for this performance were absolutely first-rate in every respect. Benite Valente, soprano; Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano; Kenneth Riegel, tenor; and Robert Hale, bass baritone, were persuaded to keep their considerable voices and talent completely under the benign but firm control of Maestro Davis. The results were outstanding. It is very rare that four fine solo voices can be

¹⁸⁹ Harold Schonberg, "The Opera: Menotti's 'Important Man.'" *New York Times*, Mar. 14, 1971

¹⁹⁰ Raymond Ericson, "The Opera: Beverly Sills Dares the Lead in 'Norma.'" *New York Times*, Jun. 13, 1971.

¹⁹¹ John F. Kyes, "All-Mozart at Tanglewood Draws 8, 661 Music Lovers," *Gazette* (Worcester, MA.), Aug. 9, 1971.

¹⁹² Jay C. Rosenfeld, "All-Mozart at Tanglewood," *The Eagle*, Aug. 9, 1971.

induced to perform properly and subtly as part of a greater whole, as was the case this afternoon.”¹⁹³

- “Of the soloists, the most impressive were Benita Valente, a soprano with a superb voice, and Beverly Wolff, a contralto with a full round warm resonance...equally superb.”¹⁹⁴
- October 9, 1971, Performance with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, R. Shaw conducted
 - Ravel: *Shéhérazade*
 - Massenet: “Va! Laisse-les couler mes larmes!” From *Werther*
 - Gounod: Siebel’s arias from *Faust*
 - Saint-Saëns: “Mon Coeur s’ouvre à ta voix” from *Samson et Dalila*

1972

- December/ January Brangäne in Rome and Dalila in Florence with Jon Vickers
- March 27, Carnegie Hall, The Handel Society of New York, Stephen Simon, *Rinaldo*
 - “The Handel Society of New York, which is working its way through the mountain of Handel opera (he wrote more than 40 of them), brought *Rinaldo* to Carnegie Hall in concert form Monday night with a prevailingly strong cast under the baton of Stephen Simon. Beverly Wolff, as Rinaldo, the part that made a London hero of the castrato Nicolini, had her work cut out, but her dusky and sizable mezzo stood up quite respectably to the coloratura demands of the marital arias, and she made an affecting episode of the tearful Largo, ‘Cara sposa.’”¹⁹⁵
- April 09, *Aida* (in concert), Trenton, War Memorial, Greater Trenton Symphony, Westminster Choir
 - Elinor Ross
 - Beverly Wolff
 - Robert Nagy
 - Robert Mosley
 - Harry Dworchak
 - William R. Smith, conductor
- September 28, 29, 30, BSO, J. Silverstein, W. Steinberg, Symphony Hall, Mahler: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, “Resurrection” (TWA)

¹⁹³ Richard Vincent, “Colin Davis Masterful As Chorus Director,” *Times Union* (Albany, N.Y.), August 9, 1971.

¹⁹⁴ R.C. Hammerich, “Maderna Scores Triumph With Bruckner Symphony: Valente Impressive,” *Union* (Springfield, MA), Aug. 9, 1971.

¹⁹⁵ Dohnal Henahan, “Rinaldo Has Everything a Baroque Opera Needs,” *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1972.

- “Mezzo-soprano Beverly Wolff and soprano Benita Valente, both in splendid voice, which otherwise means impeccable.”¹⁹⁶
- “Beverly Wolff sang with passion, intelligence, and exciting, highly individual vocal quality.”¹⁹⁷
- October 3, BSO, J. Silverstein, W. Steinberg, Symphony Hall Mahler: Symphony No. 2 in C minor, “Resurrection”(TWA)
 - “From F. John Adams’s Harvard Radcliffe Collegium Musicum and especially from the soloists, Beverly Wolff and Benita Valente, again flowed a level of artistry that made these performances in their verbal portions, by some considerable margin, the most beautiful I have heard of the Mahler Second.”¹⁹⁸
 - “Beverly Wolff, the contralto, sang the plaintive ‘Urlicht’ which forms the fourth movement with deep dark solemnity. Her voice is ample, and she used it with great intelligence to achieve a level of performance that was at once insightful, eloquent and revelatory of the music’s quiet beauty.”¹⁹⁹
- November 2, Alice Tully Hall, Rossini’s *La Pietra del Paragone* given in concert form, with minimal staging, by Clarion Concerts with Newell Jenkins conducting, New York premiere.
 - “Beverly Wolff, though not the coloratura mezzo Rossini evidently had in mind, managed her ample voice flexibly enough to be a pleasing Marchesina Clarice.”²⁰⁰
- November 29, December 1, BSO, W. Steinberg, Philharmonic Hall, Mahler: Symphony, No. 2 in C minor, “Resurrection” (TWA)
 - “Miss Wolff’s voice, although pleasing, lacked some of the power range and clarity that could have been in her first solo.”²⁰¹

1973

- February 27th, Carnegie Hall, William Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast*, conducted by Stephen Simon, Handel Society of New York, Beverly Wolff as Daniel.
- November 25 and 26, Ned Rorem Recital

¹⁹⁶ Louis Snyder, “BSO: Mahler revisited,” *The Christian Science Monitor* (Boston, MA), Sep. 30, 1972.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Steinberg, “Steinberg at Symphony Hall,” *Boston Globe*, Sep. 29, 1972.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Steinberg, “Silverstein conducts BSO repeat program,” *Boston Globe*, Oct. 12, 1972.

¹⁹⁹ “BSO Opens Season,” *The Jewish Advocate* (Boston, MA), Oct. 12, 1972.

²⁰⁰ Henahan, Donald. “Opera: A Happy Revival.” *New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1972.

²⁰¹ Steven Matthews, “Mahler in the Hands Of Another Master.” *Daily News*, Dec. 2, 1972.

- “Premiere: Ned Rorem is only 50 years old, too young to be called a grand old man of American music, but he’s a prolific and noted composer whatever you call him. The composer is midway in a two-night stand of his music at Alice Tully Hall, 65th Street and Broadway. Last night, they did a program of his music, and tonight at 8, they will offer the first performance of *Bertha* a 25-minute opera in 10 scenes, for which Mr. Rorem wrote the music based on a Kenneth Koch original play, about a mad queen of Norway. It has, according to the creator, political parallels for today. Mr. Rorem will play the opera on the piano, Mr. Koch will narrate, and Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano will sing the title role, while nine soloists handle other parts.”²⁰²
- Donal Henahan review of *Bertha* premiere:
 - “Ned Rorem is 50 years old and in a celebratory mood, obviously. It is necessary to say at once, too, that the performances, on both Sunday and Monday nights sounded polished and dedicated...and Beverly Wolff’s crazily portrayal of the mad queen in *Bertha* a 1968 chamber opera. *Bertha* consisting of 10 blackout scenes depicting the rise and decline and eventual triumph of a completely looney ruler whose chief talent is ‘toughing it out there’ while the kingdom disintegrates around her, was narrated with dry, deadpan wit by the author of the play, Kenneth Koch. This was the opera’s first performance, and its 10 singers were excellent in every way. *Gloria* (1970), in which Mr. Rorem accompanied Miss Curtain and Miss Wolff, had some lighthearted liturgical moments in a Poulenc vein, but like his *Trio* (1959) and *Last Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1972), lacked individuality and character.”²⁰³

1974

- June 27th, Appeared in Ravinia Festival, Beverly Wolff, soloist, in Mahler’s Symphony No. 8.
- July 12-August 4, Festival in Greek Island Corfu, Michael Sisk, general director; John Corigliano, Jr., music director; and Thomas Schippers, artistic adviser. Berlioz’s *Beatrice and Benedict*, stage director Maurice Peress; Cast: Beverly Wolff, John Mitchinson, Carole Bongard, and Betty Allen.

1975

- April 20, “Some Notes (Mostly Sour) On Singing Songs” by Ned Rorem
- Rant attacking singers who do not perform American music on their recitals and think modern music is harmful to the voice, i.e. Evelyn Lear.

²⁰² Richard Shepard, “Going Out Guide, Premiere.” *New York Times*, Nov. 26, 1973.

²⁰³ Donal Henahan, “2 Nights with Later-Day Rorem,” *New York Times*, Nov. 28, 1973.

- “But Callas and Tebaldi ruined their voices on standard stuff. Meanwhile, that tiny handful of specialists—Bethany Beardslee, Phyliss Curtain, Donald Gramm, Beverly Wolff, Jan de Gaetani—sound better than ever after decades of doing contemporary music along with their “grateful” programs.” “Singers, like music, fall into two categories—“smart” and “dumb.” Sutherland is a dumb singer of dumb music. Sills is a smart singer of dumb music. Curtain is a smart singer or smart music. This is not to denigrate but to identify categories, use dumb in the sense of *bête*: appealing to the body—as opposed to the intellect—through beat and tune, avoiding byways of harmonic density and contrapuntal nuance. Thus the simple tunes and rhythms of rock and *bel canto* are dumb, while the complexities of serial dodecaphony are smart. In that sense the best of Poulenc—himself the songwriter of his age—is dumb, and Stravinsky is dumber than he’s given credit...”²⁰⁴
- July 13, Appeared in Ravinia Festival, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Conducted by James Levine, Mahler’s Symphony No. 3, Beverly Wolff- concert soloist.

1976

- 1976, June 24, Appeared in Ravinia Festival, Gala Opening Concert, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, James Levine, Conductor, Schoenberg’s *Gurrelieder*
 - Carol Neblett (Tove), Soprano
 - Beverly Wolff (Voice of the Wood-Dove), Mezzo-soprano
 - Robert Nagy (Waldemar), Tenor
 - Ragnar Ulfung (Klaus, the Fool), Tenor
 - Nico Castel (Speaker), Tenor
 - Arnold Voketaitis (Peasant), Bass
- July 10, Appeared in Ravinia Festival, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, James Levine, Conductor, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, D Minor, Op. 125
 - Johanna Meier, Soprano
 - Beverly Wolff, Mezzo-soprano
 - Seth McCoy, Tenor
 - James Morris, Bass

1977

- March 2, Washington D.C., Handel Festival with Stephen Simon, Hadel’s Rinaldo, with Benita Valente and Martin Isepp played harpsichord.
 - “To Beverly Wolff in the title role, though she was singing music originally written for a celebrated castrate, equal amounts of gold leaf for

²⁰⁴ Ned Rorem, “Some Notes (Mostly Sour) On Singing Songs.” *New York Times*, Apr. 20, 1975.

the nobility of her “Cara sposa,” one of Handel’s supreme inspirations. And to Wolff, as to Valente, further praise for their sense of style.”²⁰⁵

- July 2, 16, Appeared in **Ravinia Festival**
- September 29, San Francisco Opera, Leos Janacek, Katya Kabanova, War Memorial Opera House
- “Beverly Wolff sang and acted strongly as Katya’s nemesis,”²⁰⁶
- Elizabeth Soderstrom’s first American operatic performance after a thirteen year absence sang the role of Katya.
-
- December 11, Beverly Wolff with pianist Donald Hazzard presented a recital of songs by Brahms, Richard Strauss, and Wolf and Rorem, in Town Hall, New York City.
- One of the longest most insightful reviews directly about Beverly as an artist.
 - “Although Beverly Wolff has been singing in concerts and operas in New York for many years, the recital she gave at Town Hall on Tuesday night was apparently her first in the city. Not surprisingly, it revealed the mezzo-soprano to be the very epitome of conscientiousness in her work and a performer whose intensity could scarcely be surpassed. With the excellent Donald Hazzard at the piano, Miss Wolff offered groups of songs by Brahms, Richard Strauss and Wolf in the pre-intermission portion of the recital, and devoted the post-intermission part to songs by Ned Rorem. In everything she did, her voice sounded best at the top of its range, where it took on a brilliance that worked to splendid effect in climactic passages. By contrast, the middle and lower areas of the voice sometimes seemed less solidly supported, and were occasionally slightly under pitch. But the strongest impression left on this listener was the amount of effort and intensity put into the singing and interpretations. So much of the time it seemed as though Miss Wolff was trying to make every phrase a monumental statement. It is admirable, in a way, that a performer should care so much, but it can be self-defeating, because monumentality and lyricism are ultimately antithetical. In any case, the old Bauhaus slogan, “Less is more” is one Miss Wolff might think about in terms of art-song singing. As it was, this listener was most taken by her delivery of Version II of Rorem’s “The Apparition,” which started quietly and built gradually in a finely controlled line. In a program sung as intelligently and, generally, as expertly as this one, there were obviously other fine moments, but on the whole, things might have been far more compelling if the drive to make everything overwhelming had been reduced by about half.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Paul Hume, “Rinaldo: Superb but Splotchy,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 1977.

²⁰⁶ John Rockwell, “Opera: Quaint ‘Katya’,” *New York Times*, Sep. 29, 1977.

²⁰⁷ Allen Hughes, “Wolff’s Singing Marked by Intensity.” *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1977.

1978

- January 9, The J.F.K.C for P.A. second annual Handel Festival, Handel's opera, "Poro", American premiere, reviewed by John Rockwell, "Beverly Wolff nearly made up in dignity and intelligence what she lacked in agility and sheen."
- "Wolff, in the title role of Porus, a king who fought Alexander the Great both on the battlefield and in a love triangle, gave a particularly brilliant performance of uncommonly challenging music. A few of the low notes originally written for a brilliant castrato were beyond her most comfortable range, but the only sign of that was a slight loss of power, not of accuracy... Both she (Balente) and Wolff should be specially complimented for the excellent ornamentation of their vocal lines."²⁰⁸
- April 13 and 15, The New Orleans Opera Association, Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, with Lynne Strow, Beverly Wolff, Ermanno Mauro, Pablo Elvira, and James Johnson.
- May 9, Washington D.C., Washington Cathedral Choral Society, Bach's *B Minor Mass*, Paul Callaway conductor, soloists: Carole Bogard, Beverly Wolff, Gene Tucker and John Stephens, Albert Fuller harpsichordist.
- May 27, Carnegie Hall, Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bernard Haitink, conductor, Beethoven Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op. 125
 - Faye Robinson, soprano
 - Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano
 - Jacques Trussel, tenor
 - Samuel Ramey, bass-baritone
- July 9, 15-18, Appeared in Ravinia Festival.

1979

- January 21, Beverly performs the role of Cornelia in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, in Washington D.C. at the Kennedy Center, Stephen Simon music director of Kennedy's Handel Festival (3rd year of festival.)

1980

- February 18 in New York, 20 in Washington D.C., concert performance of *Radamisto*, first in Carnegie Hall, then at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C., reviewed by Peter G. Davis,
 - "The principal drawback of the evening was the unacceptably raw, clumsy and unstylish singing of the soloists. Miss Wolff blustered and scooped her way through Radamisto's music in the crudest fashion imaginable."

²⁰⁸ Joseph McLellan, "A Masterful U.S. Debut For Handel's Poro," *Washington Post*, Jan. 9, 1978.

- “Beverly Wolff made a strong Radamisto despite tendencies to inject 19th century heaviness of style into her performance and to force the upper tones.”²⁰⁹
- June 21-August 2, Beverly participates in Eastern Music Festival as a vocal coach and teacher

1981

- May 5, Washington, D.C., Handel Festival in the Kennedy Center, Stephen Simon conductor, *Belshazzar*. Soloists: Henry Price in the title role, Patricia Craig as Nitocris, Beverly Wolff as Cyrus, and Sondra Stowe, Richard Crist and Alburtt Rhodes.
- *Wolff retired from operatic performance and began her long teaching career.*

1982

- December 9, Washington D.C., Handel’s *Messiah*, National Symphony, Gerard Schwarz, Kennedy Center Concert Hall,
- “Soprano Phyllis Bryn-Julson and mezzo Beverly Wolff were in fine form, and never more so than in that stunning melody that comes near the end of the first part, “He shall feed His flock,” which the mezzo sings first and which is then picked up by the soprano. It occurred to one that if only Bryn-Julson’s strong ringing highs and Wolff’s rich lows could be combined in one voice, it would really be something.”²¹⁰

1983

- Last year managed by CAMI.

1985

- March 30th, Philadelphia’s Academy of Vocal Arts celebrates the school’s 50th anniversary and launches the AVA’s Hall of Fame for Great American Opera Singers, in which Beverly Wolff was among the first inducted.

1986

- January 5 Joins the Atlanta Music Club, Board of Directors, with Anna Mofu, Roberta Peters, and pianist Leonard Pennario, also on the board Thomas Thompson, vice president of Columbia Artist Management.
- 1986- 1988 Taught at AVA.²¹¹

²⁰⁹ Hoover, Joanne Sheeby. ‘Radamisto,’ *Washington Post*, Feb. 18, 1980.

²¹⁰ Lon Tuck, “NSO’s Messiah Is Grace and Light,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 9, 1982.

²¹¹ Fact verified by *Musical America*.

- April 14, Philadelphia, AVA, Attended the second induction into AVA'S Hall of Fame for Great American Opera Singers with Anna Moffo.
- July 7-11, Westminster Summer Session, Master Teachers of Voice: Margaret Harshaw, Beverly Wolff, Dale Moore, Jo Estill, and Leslie Gunn, Marvin Keenze coordinator.

1988

- April 28, Atlanta, attended and made remarks at a memorial concert for Thomas M. Brumby, who served for 25 years as the chairman of Georgia State University, and longtime organist and choirmaster of the Cathedral of Saint Philip.
-

1993

- Lakeland Ledger Article

“Every New Year’s Beverly Wolff, an Atlanta housewife and mother of two, got the telegram from her friend. Simple. Direct. Just a three-word sentence, tinged with the cool melancholy of the holidays. But its sentiment was one that could have driven hundreds of others into fits, sent egos in New York ballooning above the Met. ‘Music misses you,’ it read. The author signed with a nickname: ‘Lenny.’ ...illustrates aptly the hit that the world of opera took when Wolff put her career on hold to attend to her family. When the eminent conductor Bernstein noticed, the void must be significant.”

“The illustrious career of Beverly Wolff is the story of an opera diva loved by composers and conductors but dedicated foremost to her family, shuttling between the glamor of the international stage and the more ordinary world of Sumter, S.C.”

“Though not as widely recognized as Luciano Pavarotti or Lena Horne, she was respected within the community of musicians, becoming one of the first inductees into the Hall of Fame for Great Opera Singers at her alma mater in Philadelphia, joining such singers as Roberta Peters and Martina Arroyo.”

“The 10th of 11 children, Wolff grew up in an Atlanta household where someone was always playing the piano. Her father was a baker. Her mother, a passionate and energetic woman, was raised by nuns until she married at 14.

Her mother “She would yell at you and pop you on the head one minute and be laughing with you the next. She never held a grudge.” Sisters “I felt so rich. I have these remarkable sisters. To this day, they inspire me”

“I can’t remember when I didn’t sing, I sang for my mother’s Sunday school class when I was 5 years old. That’s when I got hooked on it.”

Attitude “I was not allowed to think that God favored me over all people. I know people who have that attitude, and they kill me.”

The Christmas before she graduated HS, Wolff was part of a production with the Atlanta Symphony. After the conductor heard her voice, he had her sing "O Holy Night." The organist from the Episcopal Church heard her and offered her a job as a soprano soloist. She was 17. The job launched her on a musical education that she fashioned out of job opportunities. With her mother bedridden with rheumatoid arthritis, Wolff felt that she, as the sole remaining daughter, couldn't leave home. So she enrolled in the Atlanta division of the University of Georgia, but the only sequence available was business education.

Wolff made religious recordings at night. She sang at weddings and funerals. She sang on Sunday morning radio hour, a program that was always changing. One week, the Episcopal hour; the next week, the Baptist hour. Every month with the church, she performed a major oratorio. "I look back on it now, Good Lord, I was fearless,"

"When she was 20, she realized that she would have to leave Atlanta to get the proper education to develop her talent. She won a full scholarship to the exclusive Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia and moved there. She stayed 3 ½ years, sharing an apartment with two other students.

"She was a very good student," says Bixler, the assistant director of the Academy of Vocal Arts. "Everybody on the faculty liked her."

As her musical career was blossoming, Wolff had to make a choice in her personal life. She was certain that John Dwiggin, a man she met when she was 19, was the man she should marry. And she felt his patience was wearing thin. Like so many other aspects of her life, this one also began in the church. Dwiggin heard her sing in the choir. "She was just beautiful," he remembers, "just like angel." Wolff looked hard at other people who had put their personal lives on hold so they could establish a career. She decided she didn't want to do that. So after a five-year courtship, she and Dwiggin were married. They moved to Atlanta and had two sons, David and Donald. Two days a week she taught. Like her days at Florida Southern, Wolff discovered that she wasn't taking to the classroom immediately. The trouble was that Wolff picked up her musical education so naturally that she assumed all of her students would be able to do the same thing. "I couldn't understand why they couldn't learn a song in a week," she says.

After six years, Wolff decided she wanted to get back on stage. She talked with her husband, and they agreed: She needed to be judged on a professional level. Wolff called Columbia Artists about a new contract, and the company signed her on. "The talent was at a certain level that I could re-enter," she says "If you don't know that, you are practicing false humility." The family moved to Sumter, and Wolff began touring the country and the world to perform. But she had an agreement with her manager: Two weeks working; at least three weeks at home.

By that time, her children were 6 and 4. Dwiggin's parents would come and stay with the family when Wolff was gone. And people in the community would pitch in. "A career is more than one person's doing,"

Wolff says. “And if you think that, you’re a damn fool. You could not be doing it, without people’s support and caring.” Wolff continued this way for 20 years, working with the biggest names, the biggest venues. She appeared on the NBC Opera presentation of Bernstein’s ‘Trouble in Tahiti.’ She appeared in the world premiere of Gian Carlo Menotti’s ‘Labyrinth.’ She debuted at the New York City Opera in 1958 and was a regular there until 1971. Four years later, she performed Verdi’s ‘Requiem’ at the Vatican.

In 1981, she quit, when she heard something new, something unsettling in her voice and, without shedding a tear moved into a new phase in her career at the age of 52. She taught. She has not sung since. Not even around the house. “I didn’t want people to say, ‘That was all right, but you should have hear her...’” Wolf says, “I didn’t want anyone to listen to me out of affection. You have to hang it up. You have to hang up the vocal chords sometime.” But switching to teaching was not easy. She says she taught badly. “You have to understand, to be a good teacher, you have to learn your craft. I don’t think I was too hot when I started, you discover that you can learn, and you do get better.”

“Florida Southern gave me the opportunity to be bad a couple of years.”

“Her students adore her,” MacDonald says. “It’s almost like a guru walking around with her disciples.” Wolff and her family moved to Lakeland in 1967, when Dwiggin got a job with Florida Tile. Florida Southern had floated the teaching possibility to Wolff before, and MacDonald was thrilled that the college didn’t lose her to the bigger institutions that had courted her.

“What she’s famous for is the way she is just a hands-on instructor,” MacDonald says. Wolff remains happy with the new phase of her career, and she says she doesn’t miss the limelight. “I always thought about when I reached the top point and realized there wasn’t another peg,” Wolff says. “I hoped I would have the intelligence and the courage to quit. I don’t know about the intelligence. But I do think I was brave enough.”

Quote: “My ego—who I am is not my singing. Who I am is something else. The mind, your character, all of the things that go into making a human being.”²¹²

1994

- February 25, New Orleans, Metropolitan Opera National Council’s Gulf Coast Final Regional Auditions, Wolff, Andrea Velis, and Christopher Macatsoris judges.

²¹² Arthur McCane, “Former opera diva always put family before limelight,” *Lakeland Ledger*, Nov 29, 1993.

- October 23, Judge of Regional Met competition in Milwaukee, other judges includes George Shirley and Paul Kilmer.
 - “Beverly Wolff, a mezzo noted especially for creating leading roles in new operas by such composers as Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti and Douglass Moore. Wolff will give a master class for selected competitors...”²¹³
-

1995

- October 1, Orlando Opera, Wolff brought in as a consultant for Orlando Opera’s production of Bernstein’s *Trouble in Tahiti*.²¹⁴
-

1999

- March 7, Atlanta, Met district auditions, judge with Paul Kilmer, Gail Robinson.
 - No one advanced.
-

2000

- Named Honorary Chancellor at Florida Southern College
 - Awarded Honorary Doctorate of Music from Florida Southern College
-

2004

- Officially retired from Florida Southern College
-

2005

- August 14, died in Lakeland, Florida.

²¹³ Tom Strini, “3 win Metropolitan Auditions, Will Represent Area in Regionals.” *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct. 23, 1994.

²¹⁴ Steven Brown, “Nuptial Woes Fuel 2 Opera Contemporary Themes Lend Air of Immediacy to Orlando Opera Company’s Double Bill of Vintage Operas.” *Orlando Sentinel* (Orlando, FL), Oct. 1, 1995.

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PART TWO

The Doctorate of Musical Arts requires the candidate to perform three recitals and a lecture recital; one recital may be substituted with a principal operatic role. I had the opportunity to perform in several productions with the University of Kentucky's Opera Theatre program. The role of Mercedes in Georges Bizet's *Carmen* is a role that fulfills one recital requirement. Part B of this document includes program notes and translations for each given recital.

The first doctoral recital was performed on December 5, 2006 with Tedrin Blair Lindsay. This recital represented four different composers, languages, and countries at the fin de siècle. The second doctoral recital was a themed recital entitled "A Gypsy's Life;" and was performed on April 13, 2008 with Professor Cliff Jackson. Lastly, the lecture recital on the Life and Performances of Mezzo-Soprano, Beverly Wolff was given on March 27, 2009.

I. Recital I Sarah Downs , Mezzo-Soprano
DMA Recital
December 5, 2006

“Trois Jours de Vendange”
“D’Une Prison”
“Fumée”
“À Chloris”

Reynaldo Hahn
(1874-1947)

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen

Gustav Mahler
(1860-1911)

- I. Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht,
- II. Ging heut Morgen übers Feld,
- III. Ich hab ein glühend Messer,
- IV. Die zwei blauen augen von meinem Schatz,

*The House of Life:
A Cycle of Six Sonnets*

Ralph Vaughan Williams
(1872-1958)

- I. Love-sight
- II. Silent Noon
- III. Love’s Minstrels
- IV. Death in Love
- V. Love’s Last Gift

“La mi sola, Laureola...”
“Con amores, la mi madre”
“Del cabello màs sutil”
“El Vito”

Fernando Obradors
(1897-1945)

Reynaldo Hahn (1875-1947)

“Hahn’s music evokes a Paris, indeed a way of life, forever gone and, like Proust’s world, retrievable only at special moments where taste, sight, or sound of a musical phrase provoke the memory, or even perhaps the collective unconscious.”—Graham Johnson

Hahn’s song compositions are elegant masterpieces that capture the essence of Paris during the early 1900’s, otherwise known as the *Belle Époque*. His accompaniments serve as the undulating background of the aural landscape, providing color, mood, and ambiance. In the foreground is the vocal line, which intimately follows the natural inflection of spoken French. The *mélodies* are incredibly lyrical and often contain unexpected leaps and cadences. The moods vary from work to work, and yet in general embody the quintessential idea of French ideology.

For this recital, I wanted to present *mélodie* that embody the brilliant range of Hahn’s compositional style. The final song of the set, *À Chloris*, is one of Hahn’s loveliest compositions, in which he hearkens back to an older era. This is specifically represented by the *chaconne*-like figure found in the piano line. The melody is simple, elegant, and speech-like.

Translations by Richard Haney-Jardine

Trois Jours de vendange
Alphonse Daudet
Three days of Harvesting
(1891)

I met her one day as we gathered in
the grapes,
Skirt pinned up, sweet little feet,

No yellow veil, hair loosened from its knot,
Looking like a bacchant with eyes of an
angel.

Her arms were hooked in a dear friend’s
arms.

I met her in the fields of Avignon,
One day as we gathered the grapes.

I met her one day as we gathered in the
grapes,
The fields were drab, the sky was burning.
She walked alone and with trembling gait,
Eyes shining with a strange fire...

I still shiver when I remember
How I saw her—beloved white
ghost—
One day as we gathered in the
grapes.

I met her one day as we gathered in
the grapes,
And I dream about it still most every
day:
The coffin was draped in velvet,
The black shroud had a double
fringe.
All around the nuns of Avignon
wept.
The vines had too many grapes...
And it was Love who did the
harvesting.

D'une Prison Paul Verlaine
From a Prison
(1891)

The sky is up above the roof,
So blue, so calm!
A tree, up above the roof,
Sways its boughs.

The belfry you can make out in the
sky
Rings softly
A bird you can make out in the tree
Sings her lament.
My God, My God! Life is all there,
Simple, tranquil.
That peaceful murmur there,
Comes from the town.

What have you done, oh you,
Crying ceaselessly
Tell me! What have you done,
With your youth?

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Fumée Jean Moréas
Smoke
(1921)

Ether's companion
Indolent smoke,
We are alike, you and I, just a bit...

Your life lasts but one instant,
Mine is all but consumed;
Yet we rise from the fire.

To subsist, the man
Who gathers ashes
Must get down on his knees,

So with nary a worry
Without ever stooping,
Let us just vanish!

À Chloris Théophile de Viau
To Chloris
(1916)

If it be true, Chloris, that you love me—
And I have heard, you love me well—
Then kings themselves I do believe
Could hardly match my wealth.
Death would be most inopportune
To come and alter my good fortune
Just to please the heavens!
Say what you will about the ambrosia—
It can hardly compare to the magic
Of your eyes bestowing their gaze on
me.

“It is a funny thing, but when I am making music, all the answers I seek for in life seem to be there, in the music. Or rather, I should say, when I am making music, there are no questions and no need for answers.”—Gustav Mahler

Mahler worked diligently to carve out his path in music; his large symphonic works, which contain political overtones, were considered eccentric, bold, and caused much controversy. He was a gifted conductor and brought this perspective to his musical compositions. Many of Mahler’s songs feature a tight relationship between the voice and the orchestra or piano accompaniment. His songs are challenging and incredibly rewarding. He wrote the texts for *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* after his relationship with soprano, Johanna Emma Richter, ended; Mahler was left in a depressed state.

He used his composition as a medium for transforming personal pain into an incredible composition. The text for the first movement brilliantly captures the feeling of loss and pain felt by the young “journeyman” the day of his beloved’s wedding. In the second movement, the beauty of nature temporarily releases him from pain and heartbreak. He sees a bird, and bluebells, and the sun shines on him and for a brief moment he forgets. However, it is short lived, he snaps back to reality with the knowledge that he will never feel happiness again. The third movement is fast and incredibly tortured; he envisions a dagger striking him in the heart. He then realizes that the only way he will be able to escape her haunting memory will be through death. The final movement is a funeral dirge. The man’s soul is heavy; he is exhausted by the weight of his pain and grief. He sets off into the unknown with the intention of wandering until his death. He stops and rests under a Linden tree, whose blossoms cover his body, washing away his sin and grief.

Translations by George Bird and
Richard Stokes

Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen
Songs of a Journeying Apprentice

Gustav Mahler, 1883-1884

I.

When my darling has her wedding
day,
has her happy wedding day
My day of sorrow it will be!
I go into my room, my dark room,
and weep, weep for my darling,
my dear darling,

Blue flower! Do not fade!
Sweet bird! On the green heath you
sing!
Ah! How beautiful the world is,
Chirrup!

Sing not, bloom not,
For spring is over!
All singing now is done.
This evening, when I go to sleep,
I think of my sorrow, on my sorrow!

II.

I walked the fields this morning;
dew still hung upon the grass;
the merry finch said to me:
“Why, you! Good morning
don’t you agree?
Does not the world grow fair?
Tweet! Tweet! Bright and fair!
How pleasing to me the world is!”

And the bluebell at the field’s edge,
merrily, in good spirits,
ding-dong with its tiny bell,
rang out its morning greeting:
“Does not the world grow fair?
Ding-dong! Beautiful thing!

How pleasing the world is!”

And then, in the sun,
the world at once begins to sparkle;
all, all gained tone and color
in the sunshine!
Flower and bird, great and small!
Good day, good day!
Is the world not fair?

Will my happiness now begin?
Will my happiness now begin!
No! No! The happiness that I know,
will never, never bloom!

III.

I have a burning knife,
a knife in my breast.
Alas! Alas!
That cuts so deep into each delight and
every joy, so deep!
Ah, what an evil guest!
Never at peace, never at rest,
Neither by day, nor by night when I sleep!
Alas! Alas!

When I look skywards,
two blue eyes I see,
Alas! Alas!
When I go walking in the golden field,
I see from afar her blond hair in the wind!
Alas! Alas!

When from my dream I awake,
I hear her silvery laughter,
Alas! Alas!
I want to lay on the black bier,
and never, never open my eyes again!

IV.

The two blue eyes of my darling,
sent me into the wide world.
From the place I most loved I had to part!

O blue eyes, why did you look on
me?
Grief and sorrow are now mine
forever!

In the still night I went out,
In the still night, over the dark heath.
No one bade me farewell, farewell!
Love and sorrow were my company!

By my way stood a linden tree,
where first I found peace in sleep!
Under the linden tree
which snowed on me its blossoms,
I knew not how life went on,
and all, oh all was well again!
All! All! Love and sorrow!
and world and dream!

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

“Words when sung are sometimes only the framework for sound.—Ralph Vaughan Williams

Vaughan Williams was a tremendously important English composer. He studied composition with Hubert Parry, Max Bunch, Maurice Ravel, and Charles Villiers Stanford. One of the most important contributions Vaughan Williams made posterity was the research and collection of British folk songs. He spent so much time working and listening to these tunes that they were naturally absorbed into his musical language. The song cycle, *The House of Life*, was debuted December 2, 1904 with *Songs of Travel*. The cycle consists of six sonnets by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The most popular selection is “Silent Noon,” which was composed in 1902 and published prior to the complete cycle. In *House of Life*, we find Vaughan Williams early in his compositional career. The melodies are sweet, simple, and serve to highlight the text and accompaniment; the subject of the set of songs is love in its many forms.

***House of Life* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti**

Lovesight

When do I see thee most, beloved
one?
When in the light the spirits of mine
eyes
Before thy face, their altar,
solemnize
The worship of that Love through
thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours (we two
alone)

Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's
darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of
Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh
grass,--
The finger-points look through like
rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture
gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter
and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can
pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver
edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the
hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-
glass.
Deep in the sun-searched growths
the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened
from the sky:--
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us
from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for
deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate
hour
When twofold silence was the song
of love.

Love's Minstrels: Passion and Worship

One flame-winged brought a white-
winged harp-player
Even where my lady and I lay all
alone;
Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is
unknown;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel
here:
Only my strains are to Love's dear
ones dear."
Then said I: "Through thine
hautboy's rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes
moan,

And still she deems the cadence deep and
clear."

Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of
Love,
And this Love's Worship: both he plights to
me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:
But where wan water trembles in the grove
And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its
voluntary."

Heart's Haven

Sometimes she is a child within mine arms,
Cowering beneath dark wing that love must
chase,--
With still tears showering and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms:
And oft from mine own spirit's hurtling
harms
I crave the refuge of her deep embrace,--
Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sovereign counter-
charms.
And Love, our light at night and shade at
noon,
Lulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
All shafts of shelterless tumultuous day.
Like the moon's growth, his face gleams
through his tune;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
Our answering spirits chime one roundelay.

Death-in-Love

There came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his
gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought
thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens
to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart its
power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour

When birth's dark portal groaned and
 all was new.
 But a veiled woman followed, and
 she caught
 The banner round its staff, to furl and
 cling,--
 Then plucked a feather from the
 bearer's wing,
 And held it to his lips that stirred it
 not,
 And said to me, "Behold, there is no
 breath:
 I and this Love are one, and I am
 Death."

Love's Last Gift

Love to his singer held a glistening
 leaf,
 And said: "The rose-tree and the
 apple-tree

Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the
 bee;
 And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
 Of the great harvest-marshal, the year's
 chief, Victorious Summer; aye, and 'neath
 warm sea
 Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
 Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.
 All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of
 love To thee I gave while Spring and
 Summer sang;
 But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
 from those worse things the wind is
 moaning of.
 Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
 Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my
 pra

Translations by Graham Johnson

Fernando Obradors (1897-1945)

To conclude my recital, I will perform four pieces from Obradors' *Canciones clásicas españolas*: "La mi sola, Laureola," "Con amores, la mi madre," "Del cabello más sutil," and "El Vito." Obradors' music is often sung on recitals in the United States and Europe and have fallen into the modern song repertoire, if not the overly done category of repertoire. However well known the pieces, much remains unknown about the composer. Fernando Obradors was born in 1897 and lived in Barcelona his entire life. His mother, Julia, was his greatest musical influence, she taught him piano lessons at the nearby Municipal Music School. It has been said that he was largely self-taught in harmony, counterpoint, and composition; although it has also been noted that he did take formal music lessons with Lamote de Grigon and Antonio Nicolau. Obradors also conducted the Liceo and Radio Barcelona Orchestra. He wrote several *zarzuelas* and a number of symphonic works including a piece based around the melodies of Georges

Bizet's *Carmen*. The only compositions that remain in the modern repertoire are his art songs, *Canciones Clásicas Españolas*.

“El Vito,” is perhaps the most powerful from the set. To understand the piece you must first understand that a *vito* is a famous dance that was popular in Spain around 1800; young women dance atop tavern tables for an audience of bullfighters. The piece begins with a flashy piano prelude that introduces the rhythms of the dance, just before the voice enters the piano strikes three loud chords that create a new sense of rhythmic intensity. As soon as the voice enters the accompaniment falls into a subservient position. All attention is on the dancing girl, who elegantly dances for her soon to be suitors. The poem is written from two perspectives that of the bullfighter watching the dance, and that of the young girl who is dancing. In between the stanzas, the piano seems to steal the attention, almost as if during the dance an instrumentalist was to go into a virtuosic solo. Yet, the piano solo lasts only for a brief moment, the dance continues and this time ends with a coy retort to all of the bullfighters. Obradors had the ability to capture vivid images of Spain in his art songs. Overdone or not, his songs belong in the modern art song repertoire.

Translations by Graham Johnson

La mi sola, Laureola

My only, Laureola,
my only, only, only one,
I, the captive Leriano,
am so proud
to be wounded by the hand.
The only hand in the world.
My only Laureola,
my only, only, only one.

Con amores, la mi madre

With love in my heart, mother,

with love in my heart, I fell asleep.
While sleeping I dreamed

of what my heart was hiding,
and love consoled me
more than I deserved.
I was lulled to sleep by the token
Love bestowed on me:

my pain was soothed
by the faith with which I served her.

Del cabello más sutil

From the finest hair
in your tresses
I wish to make a chain
to draw you to my side.

In your house, young girl,
I'd fain be a pitcher,
to kiss your lips
whenever you went to drink. Ah!

El Vito

An old woman is worth a real
and a young girl two cuartos,
but as I am so poor
I go for the cheapest.

On with the dancing,
on with the dancing, olé!
Stop your teasing, sir,
else I'll blush! Ay!

II. Recital II Sarah Downs , Mezzo-Soprano
DMA Recital
April 13, 2008

PROGRAM

Zigunerlieder

- I. He, Zieguener, greife in die Saiten ein!
- II. Hochgetürmte Rimaflut,
- III. Wisst ihr, wann mein Kindchen
- IV. Lieber Gott, du weisst,
- V. Brauner Bursche
- VI. Röslein dreie in der Reihe
- VII. Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn,
- VIII. Rote Abendwolken

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

Zigeuner Lied, Op. 25, no. 5

Louis Spohr
(1784-1859)

Zigeunerliedchen I
Zigeunerliedchen II

Robert Schumann
(1810-1856)

Die Ziguenerin

Hugo Wolf
(1860-1903)

-Intermission-

Zigeunermelodien, Op. 25

- I. Mein Lied ertönt,
- II. Ei! Ei wie mein Triangel
- III. Rings ist der Wald so stumm und still,
- IV. Als die alte Mutter
- V. Reingestimmt die Saiten!
- VI. In dem weiten, breiten, luft'gen
- VII. Darf des Falken Schwinge

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Tres Ciudades
I. Malagueña

Julián Bautista
(1901-1961)

II. Barrio de Córdoba

III. Baile

A note about the program:

Could there ever be a more fitting program for a Mezzo-soprano than a night entirely comprised of Gypsy music? Alas, you will not find the most famous of gypsies dancing across the pages of music tonight...Or at least not Georges Bizet's version. Tonight's program is comprised of lesser-known works and two major song cycles that remain in the standard repertoire.

Tonight we will explore different composer's ideas of what Gypsy music would sound like. We will also explore the different sides of Gypsy life and culture, some accurate and some invented. We will hear the proud echoes of a free people, beautiful love songs, dancing music, quiet sentiments expressed between mother and child, and the dark and foreboding mysteries that surround the Roma people.

Zigeunerlieder Johannes Brahms
Gypsy Songs
German translation from Hungarian by
Hugo Conrat

I.
Hey, strike up Gypsy!
Play the song of the faithless maid!
Make the strings cry, complain— sad,
fearful,
till a hot tear wets this cheek.

II.
Mountainous Rima waters, how you are
muddy!
On the bank I stand, cry loud for you,
my love!
Waves flee, waves pour, roar at me on
the shore,
let me forever on Rima's bank weep for
her!

III.
Do you know when my love is loveliest?

When her sweet lips jest, laugh and kiss.
for me alone sweet heaven made you!

Do you know when I like my lover best?
When he holds me with his arms about
me.
Mine you are, maiden, tenderly I kiss
you,
for me alone sweet heaven made you!

IV.
Dear God, you know how often I have
rued
that once I gave my love a tiny kiss.
My heart decreed that I must kiss him.

All my life I'll think of that first kiss.

V.
A bronzed lad leads to dance his fair,
blue-eyed lass, boldly clashes his spurs,
the csardas begins,
he kisses and caresses his sweet dove,
whirls her, guides her, shouts for joy,
leaps;
throws three shining silver florins
on the cymbalom, making it resound.

VI.
Three little roses in the row bloom so
red,
no law against boy going to girl!

If, dear God, there were,
the fair wide world were long since door.
Staying single is what would be sin!

The fairest lowland town is Kecskemet,
there many a maid is neat and nice!
Find yourselves a bride there, friends,
woo her, set up your home,
drain cups of joy.

VII.

Do you sometimes recall, my sweet,
what once you vowed to me with sacred
oath?

Do not deceive me, do not forsake me,
you do not now how much I love you;
love me as I love you.
Then down on you God's grace will
pour!
Mine you are, my love, tenderly I kiss.

VIII.

Red clouds of evening sail the sky
longingly to you;
my love, my heart burns,
heaven shines in glowing splendor,
of none but my sweet love.

“Ziguenerlied” Louis Spohr

(Gypsy Song)

Poem by Johann Wolfgang Goethe

In misty drizzle, in deep snow,
in the wild wood, of a winter's night,
I heard the ravening howl of wolves,
I heard the shrieking of the owl.

Wahooa, wow, wow, wow
Wahooa, whoo, whoo, whoo
Tuwhit tuwhoo!

I shot a cat once, at the fence,
Annie the witch's, her dear black cat.
By night seven werewolves came to me,
seven, seven she-wolves from the
village,

Wahooa, wow, wow, wow
Wahooa, whoo, whoo, whoo
Tuwhit tuwhoo!

I knew them all, I knew them well,
Annie, Ursie, Cath,
Lizzie, Barby, Eva, and Beth,
howling at me in a ring.

Wahooa, wow, wow, wow
Wahooa, whoo, whoo, whoo
Tuwhit tuwhoo!

Loud I named them all:
What would you do Annie?
What would you, Beth?
They gave a jerk, they gave a shake,
and howling, made away.

Wahooa, wow, wow, wow
Wahooa, whoo, whoo, whoo
Tuwhit tuwhoo!

“Ziguenerliedchen I” Robert Schumann
(Little Gypsy Song I)

Poem translated from Spanish by
Emanuel Geibel

A gypsy boy signed up with the soldiers,
then bolted with his bounty money,
and tomorrow has to hang.

They took me from my jail cell,
set me upon a donkey,
and whipped my shoulders so that blood
flowed down onto the road.

They fetched me from my dungeon
and shoved me out into the distance
forth,
I swiftly went for my gun,
and fired the first shot at them.

“Ziguenerliedchen II” Robert Schumann
(Little Gypsy Song II)

Poem translated from Spanish by
Emanuel Geibel

Early every morning
when the daylight wakes me,
I wash my face with the tears
that flow from my eyes.

There where the mountains are,
towering so high,
at the very hem of heaven,
they carried me away by night,
from the house,
from the beautiful garden.

Early every morning
when the daylight wakes me,
I wash my face with the tears
that flow from my eyes.

“Die Zigeunerin” Hugo Wolf
(The Gypsy Woman)

Poem by Joseph von Eichendorff

At the crossroad I listen,
when the stars have died out,
and the fires in the wood,
and where, afar, the first dog barks,
from there my Bridegroom will come.

“At dawn, through the copse,
I saw a cat slinking,

and at her nut-brown coat I fired,
and how she went leaping!”

The coat’s a pity, you shan’t have me!
My loved one must be like the others!
Brown, with a beard of Hungarian trim,
and a happy heart for wandering.

Zieguenermelodien, Op.55 Antonín
Dvořák
Czech translated to German by
Adolph Heyduk

I.
My song sounds with love to me again
when the old day is dying, and when
poor moss on its vesture secretly gathers
pearls of dew.

My song so longingly sounds into the
land,
when my feet wander through the world;
Only over the distance of my native
plain does my singing flow freely from
my breast.

My song sounds loudly with love, when
the storm runs over the plain; when I
take comfort that with my brother’s last
breath,
he dies free from want.

II.
Ah! How my triangle marvelously rings!
One walks easily into death
accompanied by such sounds!

Into death one walks accompanied by
triangle sounds!

Songs, dances, love, farewell to them
all!

III.
The forest is quiet all around, only my
heart disturbs the peace, and the black
smoke which rushes into the dale dries
the tears on my cheeks.

However it need not dry them, let it beat
on other faces. He who is able to sing in
grief, will not be cursed by death.

IV.
When my old mother taught me to sing,
tears so often hung in her eyelashes.

Now that I to have little ones,
I sing to them, and often tears fall from
my eyes and stream down my brown
cheeks.

V.
The strings are tuned lad, dance in the
circle,
Today, perhaps, you are quite high in
spirit, tomorrow you may be down
again.

The day after tomorrow you may be at
the most holy table by the Nile; (you
might be dead)the strings are already
tuned, lad, dance about.

VI.
In the wide, broad, airy linen clothes
freer is the gypsy than in gold or silk!

A Dolman, even one of gold, holds tight
the full breast; a free song dies violently
beneath it.

And you who rejoice when your song is
in bloom, lets loathsome gold go to hell.

VII.

If the winged falcon may soar above
Tatra's heights, would it exchange its
rocky nest for a cage?

If a wild foal can race through the
moorland would it on bridle and rein
find its happiness?

Has nature, gypsy, given something to
you?
it has bound him by an eternal bond to
freedom!

Tres Ciudades Julián Bautista
Poetry by Federico García Lorca
I. Malagueña

Death
goes in and out
of the tavern.

Black horses
and sinister people
pass along the sunken paths
of the guitar.

There's an odor of salt
and of female blood,
in the fevered tuberoses
along the shore.

Death
goes in and out,
out and in
of the tavern goes
death.

II. Barrio de Córdoba (Tópico nocturno)
Neighborhood of Córdoba (Nocturnal
theme)

Inside the house they take shelter
from the stars.

Night collapses.
Within, a dead girl
a crimson rose
hidden in her hair.

Six nightingales on the railing weep for
her. The people keep sighing with
gaping guitars.

III. Baile
Dance
Carmen is dancing
through the streets of Seville.
She has white hair
and brilliant eyes.

Girls,
pull the curtains!

In her head there twists
a yellow serpent,
and she goes by dreaming of dances
with gallant men of other times.

Girls,
pull the curtains!

The streets are deserted.
In the deep recesses, hints of
Andalusian hearts
searching for old thorns.

Carmen is dancing
in the streets of Seville.

Girls, pull the curtains!
¡Ah! ¡Ah! ¡Ah!

III. Lecture Recital Sarah Downs , Mezzo-Soprano
DMA Lecture Recital
March 27, 2009

IV. Biography

Beverly Anne Wolff was born in Atlanta, Georgia on November 6th, in 1928. Beverly began her musical studies when she was eight years old. She did not begin with voice as her principle instrument; in fact, she began her career as a trumpet player. She became so proficient that while she was in high school, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra hired her as a professional trumpet player. It was her experience as a trumpet player that developed/sharpened her abilities as a musician. Later in her career, Beverly became well regarded for her innate musicianship. She always insisted that this was a direct result of years of study, hard work, and playing the trumpet. When Beverly was 13 she began voice lessons.

In Atlanta, Beverly studied under the tutelage of the renowned voice teacher, Gertrude Blanchard McFarland. Beverly attended and sang in the junior choir where Mrs. McFarland served as organist and choir director. Mrs. McFarland taught Beverly the fundamentals of singing and artistry. The two remained in close contact throughout Beverly's professional career. In fact in 1985, Beverly invited Mrs. McFarland to Philadelphia for her induction into AVA's American Opera Singer Hall of Fame.

In 1950 Beverly received a full scholarship to study voice at the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia. While at AVA, Beverly performed with the famous conductor Eugene Ormandy. In 1952, Beverly had the fortunate experience to work with Leonard Bernstein on his latest opera, Trouble in Tahiti. The work had its world premiere at

Brandis University. However, shortly thereafter, Bernstein cast Beverly as his Dinah in the production that was to be aired on national television with NBC opera. She was only 23 and from that moment on, she became closely associated with the interpretation of this role.

She graduated AVA in 1953. Shortly thereafter she married Henry Dwiggins and decided to leave music in order to start a family. She had two sons, David and Donald and loved every minute of being a wife and a mother, ... However, the music world missed her. Every New Year's Eve, Leonard Bernstein sent Beverly a telegram with the simple text, "Music misses you"---Lenny" Finally, in 1958 Beverly decided that she would return to the opera. However strictly under her terms, for every two weeks that she worked, she spent three weeks at home with her family.

For the next 20 years, Beverly managed to have a major operatic career singing in America's finest opera houses as well as abroad. She performed at the White House for John F. Kennedy and even the Vatican for Pope Paul the VI. However, her true operatic home was on the stage of the New York City Opera under the direction of Julius Rudel. **(Slide Carmen, Aida)** She appeared in countless productions at City Opera, singing everything from Cherubino and Sibel to Carry Nation and Carmen. She was also involved with the famous *Guilio Cesare* **(Slide Sesto)** in 1966 with Beverly Sills, Maureen Forrester, and Norman Treigle, which is said to have been one of the first productions in New York that led to the rise of Handelian opera in the standard repertoire. She also performed as a soloist with several fine orchestras including the New York Philharmonic **(Slide New York Phil)**, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Boston Symphony Orchestra among others. She took part in renowned festivals such as Tanglewood and

Spoletto. She also became known as a well-regarded recitalist; specifically as an interpreter of American art song, her recital work with Phyliss Curtain, Donald Gramm, and Ned Rorem where perhaps the most influential. She took part in many world premieres including Douglass Moore's *Carry Nation*, Menotti's *Saint of Bleecker Street*, *Labyrinth*, and *The Most Important Man*, Rorem's one act opera: *Bertha*, and song compositions: *Some Trees*, and *Gloria*.

Mrs. Wolff was also a well-known interpreter of oratorio. She sang countless *Messiah*'s, Bach cantata's and requiem masses. She was highly praised for interpretation of Handel, Rossini, and J.S. Bach. In 1981, Beverly officially retired from singing and began her long career as a voice teacher. She taught briefly at AVA for a few years and then settled in Lakeland, Florida at Florida Southern College. Where she was artist in residence for 24 years.

II. Leonard Bernstein and his opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*

Leonard Bernstein began work on his first operatic composition in the summer of 1951 while vacationing in Mexico. However, his trip was cut short by the devastating news that his long-time mentor, Koussevitzky was gravely ill. Bernstein went directly to the airport and twenty hours later sat at his mentor's bedside recounting memories of past triumphs and failures. The next day Koussevitzky died; Bernstein was devastated by the loss.

However, the opening of Tanglewood was less than a month away and Bernstein was thrown head first into the new position as Principal Conductor in residence. He set further work on *Trouble in Tahiti* aside, and did not get a chance to revisit the

composition until his honeymoon in August 1951²¹⁵. (**Wedding Slide and Honeymoon slide**). However, odd it might have seemed to have written an opera about the disintegration of a marriage during the literal honeymoon portion of his personal life, Bernstein had no problem drawing a clear line between fact and fiction. (**Video Clip 1**)

In June 1952, Bernstein's career took on a new dimension when he took up residency at Brandeis (**Brandice**) University. His first major project at Brandeis was planning the First Festival of Creative Arts, where he served as organizer, brainchild, moderator, composer, and conductor. It was at this Festival, that Bernstein out of time restrictions and necessity presented his one-act opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*. Shortly before the world premiere of *Trouble in Tahiti* on June 12, 1952, Leonard Bernstein had this to say about his work: "It's a lightweight piece. The whole thing is popular-song inspired and the roots are in musical comedy, or, even better, the American musical theatre."

The night of the premiere was an auspicious occasion, only slightly marred by the fact that the procession of speakers who preceded it delayed the curtain until 11 P.M.:

Trouble in Tahiti did not please all listeners at its first hearing (what opera does?) Some felt that it sounded hastily written—which, of course, it was. It was certainly heard under unfavorable conditions at its premiere. Conceived as an intimate opera, it was wholly unsuited to performance in a large outdoor amphitheater. But Bernstein, line so many harassed artists before him, needed a new work in a hurry and this was the only one at hand.²¹⁶

November 16, 1952, Bernstein finally had a chance to perform his work in an ideal setting, on NBC's newly created opera series. It was here that Bernstein began his work with the young American Mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff. Beverly joined forces with

²¹⁵ On August 12, 1951, Leonard Bernstein married Felicia Montealegre; the couple then spent their honeymoon in Mexico.

²¹⁶ pg.148 Bernstein Biography

David Atkinson²¹⁷ and Bernstein and set out to create a new American opera. The performance was immensely successful and brought the new sound of jazz inspiring idioms into the homes of the American public. **(Video Clip 2)**

After the NBC production, *Trouble in Tahiti* was performed at Tanglewood, and in 1955, on Broadway, as a part of *All in One*, that also featured a one-act play by Tennessee Williams and dances by Paul Draper. The Broadway production ran for 48 performances and was hugely successful. So successful in fact, that it caught the attention of Julius Rudel, the general director of the New York City Opera. Rudel invited Bernstein to present *Trouble in Tahiti* in the spring of 1958. Bernstein once again recalled his close connection with David Atkinson and Beverly Wolff and had no other singers in mind for the New York City Opera debut.

However, Wolff had semi-retired from the music business and was now happily married with two children. Bernstein was persistent in his plea, he sent telegrams, wrote letters, and made telephone calls. Wolff, not one to cave easily was charmed by the composer's attention. Wolff returned to the stage and on April 6, 1958, Beverly Wolff, David Atkinson, and Leonard Bernstein were reunited in the New York City Opera's debut of *Trouble in Tahiti*. *Tahiti* was double billed with the one-act opera, *A Tale for a Deaf Ear* by Marc Bucci. The double bill was a perfect pairing, both operas centered on marriages that were quickly unraveling before the audiences eyes. From this moment on, Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* remained in the standard American operatic repertoire. In 1958, Beverly Wolff and David Atkinson also came together to record *Trouble in Tahiti* on MGM's label, and conducted by Arthur Winograd. The recording was reviewed

²¹⁷ David Atkinson was in the original cast of the Brandis performance in 1952

by the New York Times, “As a short opera about the emptiness of two people’s lives. The music is trite, perhaps purposely so. A jazz idiom predominates, and everything is slick, slick, slick.”²¹⁸”

Beverly remained regarded as the main interpreter of this role and even after her professional retirement was frequently interviewed and consulted by opera companies in the United States and in Europe. For example in 1990, Orlando Opera brought Mrs. Wolff in as a principal consultant. During an interview she offered this incite into the relationship between Dinah and Sam, “Anybody who has any experience with married life understands the point people get to where communication is zip.”²¹⁹ Sam is preoccupied with work and his hobbies, and Dinah needs more attention from her husband but cannot seem to find a way to connect, Wolff added, “Neither of them are trying hard enough, and they realize it... You know that they’re capable of changing something in the relationship... I think everybody can identify with the truth in it”²²⁰.” Wolff maintained that although the couple was not able to settle their differences by the end of the opera, that in the famous “Rain Coat Scene” the two come together by recalling the things they share in common, and for a brief moment there is a glimmer of hope, that the two will one day make it back, “to a quiet place.”(**Audio Clip Rain coat duet**)

III. Douglas Moore and his opera, *Carry Nation*

(**Moore Slide**)

²¹⁸ New York Times, July 13, 1958.

²¹⁹ Orlando Sentinel, 1990

²²⁰ Orlando Sentinel, 1990

The University of Kansas for its centennial celebration held in 1966 commissioned *Carry Nation*, an American opera composed by Douglas Moore. The premiere performance took place on April 28, 1966 in Lawrence, Kansas, with additional performances on April 29 and 30 and May 1. **(Carry Nation Kansas Slide)** It was widely acclaimed and reviewed as being, “100% American Opera on a homespun subject, with dramatic music, haunting love duets, spirited and comic small ensembles, rollicking catchy choruses and a book that fits the music hand-in-glove, small wonder that its premiere received ovation after ovation. Carry and her hatchet made a smash hit.”²²¹ However, the New York Times reviewed, “The legend of Carry Nation is only slightly dimmed by the fact that Miss Wolff, in the title role, is winsome and properly rounded and sings like an angel. Mrs. Nation was burly and cantankerous.”²²²

Soon thereafter, *Carry Nation* was given its first professional premiere in San Francisco by the San Francisco Opera Company on June 14, and 17. Again the opera was well received and was granted numerous ovations by the supportive audience. *Carry Nation* received its East Coast premiere on March 28, 1968 with additional performances given on April 2 and 7, with Frank Corsaro (**Korsaro**) serving as the stage director and Samuel Krachmalnick as conductor. **(Carry NYCO Slide)**

Times reviewer, Harold Schonberg, stated:

Carry Nation was composed two years ago and had its world premiere at the University of Kansas. Last night was the New York premiere, as presented by the City Opera at the State Theater.... *Carry Nation* received a well-sung, superbly acted performance. The big-voiced Beverly Wolff was in the title role, and she sang and acted with intensity. This

²²¹ Wilkins, Joseph. “Carry Nation” in Topeka Daily Capital, 1966

²²² “Carry Nation” in the New York Times, 1966.

is one girl who knows how to move, to make every gesture and expression count, without overdoing it. Big league stuff, in short.²²³”

However, *Carry Nation*, soon fell out of the American opera repertory. Problems with pacing, plot, libretto, and musical language seem to be the culprits behind the opera’s obscurity. Perhaps, Ned Rorem²²⁴ puts it most succinctly,

Premiere last night of Douglas Moore’s *Carry Nation* with the extraordinary Beverly Wolff. She is not exactly a silk purse, nor is Douglas’ opera a sow’s ear, but Wolff made something big out of something medium-sized, and I’m trilled at the prospect that we’ll be collaborating next December. I’m 100 percent sympathetic with the language Douglas speaks through song, though he sometimes uses an awfully corny accent.²²⁵

IV. Beverly Wolff as a recitalist with Ned Rorem

Beverly was always attracted to modern American compositions; she found them to extremely rewarding artistically and technically. She also loved presenting works that did not have a strong performance history, so that she had the chance to create a fresh interpretation that was undaunted by previous performance history. Finally, on December 12, 1968, Beverly Wolff had the opportunity to collaborate with American composer, Ned Rorem. Beverly and Mr. Rorem presented the *Poems of Love and Rain* in their entirety with other selections performed by Phyllis Curtain and Donald Gramm. **(Rorem Slide)** New York Times Reviewer, Theodore Strongin reviewed the performance and had this to say:

Ned Rorem has to be a happy man today. Last night a program of nothing but his songs were given at Town Hall, a capacity audience of ‘in’ people attended and the singers were of a caliber that most composers wait a lifetime for and never get.” Beverly Wolff, mezzo-soprano, then gave Mr. Rorem’s extended cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*. To top

²²³ Schonberg, Harold C. “Opera: The Folk Heritage of a Young Carry Nation in Missouri” in the New York Times, March 29, 1968.

²²⁴ Ned Rorem attended the NYC premiere of *Carry Nation* and wrote about it in his diary

²²⁵ Rorem, Ned. *The Later Diaries, 1961-1972*. pg. 253

it all, the three singers formed a trio to give the first performance of *Some Trees* a setting of three poems by John Ashbery.²²⁶

Rorem reflects a day later on the evening in his personal diary,

Can a composer imagine a more satisfying experience than mine last night in Town Hall? A capacity crowd listened carefully as I accompanied three friends in a whole program of my songs. Donald Gramm in white tie sang a group of Theodore Roethke and Paul Goodman poems, Beverly Wolff in green satin sang *Poems of Love and the Rain* and Phyllis Curtain in black velvet sang a miscellany. Then together we performed the premiere of *Some Tress* (John Ashbery) for three voices and piano, and everyone clapped long and loud, after which we all went to Virgil's at the Chelsea for cold salmon, cheese, white wine and chocolate cakes (paid for by Boosey & Hawkes.) This morning The Times is approving, while Beverly on the phone apologizes for not having come to the party because she had performed with a temperature of 103°²²⁷

Another notable performance between Rorem and Wolff took place on November 26, 1973. Beverly among others joined together for a two-night celebration in honor of Ned Rorem's 50th birthday. Beverly and Mr. Rorem collaborated on his recently composed one-act opera, *Bertha*. Beverly took on the title role with the author serving as the narrator and the composer at the piano.

Donal Henahan reviewed the premiere of *Bertha*:

Ned Rorem is 50 years old and in a celebratory mood, obviously. It is necessary to say at once, too, that the performances, on both Sunday and Monday nights sounded polished and dedicated...and Beverly Wolff's crazily portrayal of the mad queen in *Bertha* a 1968 chamber opera. *Bertha* consisting of 10 blackout scenes depicting the rise and decline and eventual triumph of a completely loony ruler whose chief talent is 'toughing it out there' while the kingdom disintegrates around her, was narrated with dry, deadpan wit by the author of the play, Kenneth Koch. This was the opera's first performance, and its 10 singers were excellent in every way. *Gloria* (1970), in which Mr. Rorem accompanied Miss Curtain and Miss Wolff, had some lighthearted liturgical moments in a Poulenc vein, but like his *Trio* (1959) and *Last Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1972), lacked individuality and character.²²⁸

²²⁶ Strongin, Theodore. "3 Stellar Singers, at Town Hall, Present a Ned Rorem Program" in the New York Times, December 13, 1968.

²²⁷ Rorem, Ned. *The Later Diaries, 1961-1972*. pg. 257

²²⁸ Henahan, Donal. *The New York Times*

Finally, her first major solo recital took place on December 10, 1977 in Town Hall with Donald Hazzard serving as pianist. They presented a recital of songs by Brahms, Richard Strauss, Wolf and once again Rorem's cycle *Poems of Love and Rain*. The following day the New York Times published one of the longest and most insightful reviews about Beverly's performance:

"Although Beverly Wolff has been singing in concerts and operas in New York for many years, the recital she gave at Town Hall on Tuesday night was apparently her first in the city. Not surprisingly, it revealed the mezzo-soprano to be the very epitome of conscientiousness in her work and a performer whose intensity could scarcely be surpassed. In everything she did, her voice sounded best at the top of its range, where it took on a brilliance that worked to splendid effect in climactic passages. But the strongest impression left on this listener was the amount of effort and intensity put into the singing and interpretations. So much of the time it seemed as though Miss Wolff was trying to make every phrase a monumental statement. As it was, this listener was most taken by her delivery of Version II of Rorem's "The Apparition," which started quietly and built gradually in a finely controlled line. In a program sung as intelligently and, generally, as expertly as this one, there were obviously other fine moments, but on the whole, things might have been far more compelling if the drive to make everything overwhelming had been reduced by about half."²²⁹

Although the *Poems of Love and Rain* were not written for Beverly, after their initial performance by Regina Safarty, Ms. Wolff became widely celebrated for her interpretation of this work. She performed the composition several times throughout her career often with the composer at the piano. **(Poems of Love and Rain Slide)** In 1989, nine years after her "official" performance retirement, Rorem called on Mrs. Wolff to take place in the recording of this work. It is this recording that is perhaps the most widely available recording of Beverly Wolff.

(Bev slide)

²²⁹ Hughes, Allen. "Beverly Wolff's Singing Marked by Intensity" in the New York Times, Dec. 11, 1977.

In conclusion, American mezzo-soprano, Beverly Wolff has been brushed over, over looked, and not been given the credit or respect that she deserves in operatic history. Her career began in 1952 and flourished until her retirement from the stage in 1981. Her intense characterizations, innate musicianship, and intelligence made her one of the most sought after performers of the 50's, 60's and 70's. For thirty years she worked with some of the operatic world's finest musicians, including: Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti, Samuel Barber, Ned Rorem, Beverly Sills, Norman Triegle, Placido Domingo, among others.

She was represented by Columbia Artist Management Incorporated, one of New York's oldest and most prestigious management companies, and maintained an active performance schedule that often-included operatic, concert, and recital performances in the same week. She trained at the American Vocal Academy in Philadelphia and was inducted into their Hall of Fame. She performed in New York, Boston, Washington D.C., San Francisco, New Orleans, and Atlanta. She was an active member of the New York City Opera, Handel Society of New York, Tanglewood, Brevard, and the Handel Society of Washington D.C.

Mrs. Wolff is credited with over 60 recordings. She appeared on several of NBC's live operatic programs, which brought opera to the masses; and perhaps most importantly, she created and debuted several important roles in American opera. However, most people have never heard of her; it is my goal to change this. The purpose of my dissertation is to fill in this gap in operatic history, and to clarify and correct misinformation that is present about this important performer. In my work I hope to answer the following questions: What determines are performers worth? What secures a

performers place in history? And specifically, what imprints did Beverly Wolff leave for posterity?

I would like to leave you with a portion of the final scene from Douglas Moore's opera, *Carry Nation* **(Play clip) Thank you!**

VITA

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Master of Music Degree, University of Tennessee, Vocal Performance

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Professional Positions:

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Zerlina, *Don Giovanni*, Mozart, Imperial Symphony Orchestra, 2009

Sandman, *Hansel and Gretel*, Humperdinck, University of Kentucky, 2008

Mercedes, *Carmen*, Bizet, University of Kentucky, 2007

Mezzo-Soprano Soloist, *Requiem*, Mozart, Lincoln Memorial University, 2007

Gianetta, *L'Eliser D'Amore*, Donizetti, Imperial Symphony Orchestra, 2007

Annina, *La Traviata*, Verdi, University of Kentucky, 2006

Mercedes, *Carmen*, Bizet, Imperial Symphony Orchestra, 2006

La Maestra delle Novizie, *Suor Angelica*, Puccini, University of Kentucky, 2005

Mezzo-Soprano soloist, *Alexander Nefsky*, Prokofiev, Oak Ridge Symphony, 2005

Mercedes, *Carmen*, Bizet, Kingsport Symphony Orchestra, 2005

Pitti Sing (cover), *The Mikado*, Gilbert and Sullivan, Knoxville Opera, 2005

Cherubino (cover), *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mozart, Knoxville Opera 2004

Prince Orlofsky (cover), *Die Fledermaus*, J. Strauss, Knoxville Opera, 2004

Third Lady (cover), *Die Zauberflöte*, Mozart, Knoxville Opera 2004

Hansel (scenes), *Hansel and Gretel*, Humperdinck, Knoxville Symphony, 2003