

FACTFILE: GCE MUSIC

SECULAR VOCAL MUSIC – 1600 TO THE PRESENT DAY



Weelkes: Thule, The period of cosmography/The Andalusian Merchant

The rapid rise in the popularity of the English madrigal between 1580 and 1620 (around 50 volumes of madrigals by major and minor composers were published during this period) was followed by an equally sudden decline. The serious madrigal or madrigal proper represented the pinnacle of English secular vocal music in this period and one of its greatest exponents was Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623). He may have studied with William Byrd (c.1540-1623) and was influenced by Thomas Morley (1557/8-1602) and, especially in his more serious madrigals, by Marenzio (1553/4-1599). The characteristics of this particular genre are as follows:

- Usually written for between three and six solo voices though the more sophisticated examples tend to employ five or six singers.
- The texture is predominantly imitative, although there may be some homophonic passages.
- They tend to be through-composed (each section of the text is set to new music) rather than strophic (where the same music is used for each verse).
- Each line of text is treated separately using appropriate rhythmic and melodic motifs.
- Word painting (the illustration of particular words or images using music) is common, but tends to be more subtle in keeping with the more serious texts.
- The final section of the madrigal is often repeated with the two upper parts (soprano 1 & 2) exchanged.

Thule, The period of cosmography

Thule, The period of cosmography and *The Andalusian Merchant*, to which it is linked, draw on two intrinsically Elizabethan themes: (i) a fascination with all things foreign and (ii) unrequited love. Thule was the name given by the ancient Greek geographers to a remote northerly land (possibly Iceland or Norway) and this word came to denote a distant or mysterious place. The word *Thule* is set to repeated semibreves while the scalic motif in dotted rhythm of *the period of cosmography* is treated in a polyphonic style:

Bar	Voice	Opening pitches
2 ⁴	Tenor 2	Eb - Eb
3 ²	Alto	Eb - Bb
5 ²	Soprano 2	Bb - Eb
5 ⁴	Soprano 1	Eb - Bb
6 ²	Tenor 1	Eb - Bb

Following a modulation to the dominant (Bb) at b. 8 these imitative entries are transposed to the new key. The voices in parallel thirds and sixths continue to combine contrapuntally in Eb major at b. 11 and Bb major at b. 15. As in the case of *This is the record of John* by Orlando Gibbons (an AS set work), the significance of the tonic/dominant relationship marks a move away from Renaissance modality.

In keeping with the conventions of the madrigal form, the next segment of the text, *Doth vaunt of Hecla*, is introduced by a new musical idea consisting of two rising perfect fourths (soprano 2, b. 19). This is imitated by all the voices in turn passing through Bb major at b. 22 and returning to Eb major at b. 24. *Hecla* is the name of a volcano in Iceland whose eruption is depicted by an unexpected change in the music: (i) the texture is suddenly homophonic, (ii) the tonality shifts to C minor and Hecla's *sulphurous fire* is represented by busy scalic movement in quavers which is in both parallel thirds (soprano 1 & 2) and contrary motion (alto & tenor 1). A G major chord in b. 29 immediately becomes minor (note the false relation between the B \natural in soprano 2 and the Bb in soprano and tenor 2 within the same bar). Attention is drawn to *Doth melt the frozen clime* (bb. 34-36) by a progression of block chords in much longer note values:

Bar 33 ²	Bar 33 ³	Bar 34 ³	Bar 35 ¹	Bar 36 ¹
Eb major	C major	F minor	Db major	Ab major

The Ab chord in b. 36 overlaps with the next line of text, *and thaw the sky*, which is presented as a rising scale with the rhythm: crotchet - two quavers - minm. Weelkes exploits the contrasting timbres within the ensemble by using this idea in different imitative pairings:

B. 36 ³	Soprano 1 & 2
B. 37 ¹	Tenor 1 & 2
B. 37 ³	Soprano 1 & 2
B. 38 ¹	Alto & Tenor 1
B. 38 ¹	Soprano 2 & Alto
B. 39 ¹	Soprano 1 & 2

Many layers of visual and musical imagery are combined in the succeeding passage: *Trinacrian Aetna's flames ascend not higher*. Mount Aetna is another volcano (continuing the preoccupation with the extraordinary) located on the island of Sicily which is often identified with a three-legged or *Trinacrian* symbol. This is emphasised in musical terms by a brief use of dotted rhythm in triple metre on a single Bb chord (bb. 41-42).

Ascend not higher provides an obvious example of word painting as it not only consists of a rising scalic motif, but the imitative entries produce an ascending sequence (sopranos 1 & 2 in bb. 44-47). The tonic/dominant relationship is again evident as the music modulates from Eb major (b. 43) to Bb major (b. 48) before cadencing in Eb major at b. 49. The music from b. 50 to the end of the first of these two paired madrigals serves as the refrain which returns at the end of the second madrigal, *The Andalusian Merchant*. The premise of the text is that the author, *Whose heart with fear doth freeze*, is smitten with love (possibly unrequited) for an unnamed beloved. The key word *wondrous* is highlighted by the Eb - Db - Ab progression in bb. 50-52 and the C minor - G - F progression in bb. 53-57 with slower harmonic rhythm as the chords now change only once per bar. A suspension with a decorated resolution in soprano 1 at b. 58 is followed by a perfect cadence into Bb major.

Over the next few bars the crotchet movement of *Whose heart with fear doth freeze* (bb. 60-63) is contrasted with the minims of *with love doth fry* (bb. 63-67).

Weelkes achieves further variety by having the bass silent for nine bars while juxtaposing three-part and five-part groupings. Another interesting feature of this section is the modulation through a circle of fifths which lends an underlying sense of momentum:

Bar 63 ³	Bar 64	Bar 65	Bar 67	Bar 69	Bar 71
G (minor)	C	F	Bb	Eb	Ab

The final *with love doth fry* moves towards Bb minor at b. 74 before coming to a perfect cadence in Bb major prefaced by the customary 4/3 suspension.

The Andalusian Merchant

The second part of this extended madrigal continues to conjure up images of the unfamiliar and exotic (Andalusia itself being a province of Spain). Weelkes employs a similar technique to b. 43 in *Thule, The period of cosmography*, namely, the pairing of various voices within the ensemble resulting in a constantly changing canvas of vocal colour. The dotted rhythm and scalic contours are also reminiscent of this earlier passage. A new rhythmic feature is the syncopation associated with *that returns* (b. 5) and *laden with* (b. 7). The desirable items brought by the Andalusian Merchant include *cochineal* (a dye made from a certain cactus bug) and china dishes continuing the series of associations with distant lands (the Elizabethan era was, after all, a great period of exploration). The texture at this point (b. 7) becomes polyphonic as the principal motif consisting of three repeated pitches, a rising fourth and a descending scale passes through the voices in circle of fifths order:

Bar	Voice	Opening pitches
7-8	Soprano 1	C - F
8-9	Tenor 1	F - Bb
8-9	Bass	Bb - Eb

This becomes a stretto in bb. 9-10 as the entries of this material occur at the same pitch and only one beat apart. This is transposed up a fourth in the succeeding bar and then the music reaches a perfect cadence in Bb at b. 15 and again in bb. 17-18.

Reports in Spain is set to a simple auxiliary note figure in parallel thirds which begins in Eb major, modulates to Bb major and then suddenly turns to Bb minor on *how strangely Fogo burns*. The strangeness of yet another volcano (this one is situated on the Cape Verde Islands in the Atlantic Ocean) is illustrated in a passage of remarkable chromatic part writing resulting in frequent major/minor alterations, dominant sevenths, unrelated chord progressions, false relations and frequent diminished triads and even an anachronistic augmented triad. The harmony of this extraordinary passage can be analysed as follows:

Bar	Beat	Chord
25	1	F minor (no 3 rd)
25	2-3	B diminished first inversion
25	4	Bb minor first inversion
26	1	C7 root position
26	2-3	A diminished first inversion
26	4	Ab major first inversion
27	1	C minor root position
27	2-3	C major root position
27	4	C minor root position
28	1	F7 root position
28	2	D diminished first inversion
28	3	Bb major root position
28	4	Bb minor root position
29	1	F major first inversion
29	2	F major root position
29	3	F major second inversion (no 3 rd)
29	4	Ab major first inversion
30	1	Eb minor second inversion
30	2	Augmented triad on Bb
30	3	Bb major root position
30	4	Bb minor root position
31	1	F major root position
31	2	F minor root position
31	3	C major root position
31	4	C minor root position
32	1	G major root position
32	2	G minor root position
32	3	A minor first inversion
32	4	F minor second inversion

The tonal uncertainty is finally resolved in a perfect cadence in F major at b. 33.

Another very literal example of word painting appears at *Amidst an ocean full of flying fishes* where the descending scales in quavers (inverted in bb. 38-40) clearly represent this phenomenon. At b. 42 the refrain from b. 50 of *Thule, The period of cosmography* returns with the two soprano parts changed around (a typical madrigalian trait) in an conscious attempt to structure what is one of the longest examples of this genre. The only other significant change occurs near the end (b. 63) where the final *with love doth fry* leads to a perfect cadence in the tonic (Eb) as opposed to the dominant (Bb).



Handel: I Rage and O Ruddier than the Cherry from *Acis and Galatea*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) probably composed *Acis and Galatea* in 1718 during his time as Chapel Master to the Duke of Chandos. He had previously used this story (a Sicilian myth from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) as the basis of an earlier work, the *Serenata - Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*, which he composed in 1708 during his time in Italy. This later version is in effect a short opera in which Handel (a thoroughly cosmopolitan composer) fuses elements of the following styles:

- (i) The English masque - a stage work (usually with a comical plot) incorporating pastoral themes and frequent examples of word painting.
- (ii) Elements of Italian opera such as vocal virtuosity, recitative, ritornello and aria da capo forms.
- (iii) Germanic counterpoint and the principle of thematic unity.

I Rage

In the second act the happiness of Acis (a shepherd) and his beloved Galatea (a nymph) is threatened by the appearance of the Cyclops, Polyphemus, who is also in love with Galatea. The monster first appears in the second number of Act 2, a *recitativo stromentato* in which the bass soloist (an immediate contrast in tessitura to the tenor and soprano voices of Acis and Galatea) assumes the role of the angry giant.

NB *recitativo stromentato* differs from *recitativo secco* in the following ways:

- (i) as the name suggests, it is accompanied by orchestral forces (in this case strings and harpsichord continuo) rather than simply keyboard,
- (ii) it is notated within a strict time signature as opposed to the generally non-metrical *recitativo secco* and
- (iii) the vocal line tends to be slightly more melodic than *recitativo secco* which is dominated by the text.

The brief introduction captures the listener's attention but also portrays the monster's displeasure with repeated semiquavers, rising and falling scales (also in semiquavers) and its *furioso* tempo marking. Although there are two

flats in the key signature, the music begins in Eb major. Polyphemus makes his feelings clear and delivers the word "rage" as an impressive melisma which, in an obvious example of word painting, takes up the semiquavers of the introduction. His outburst continues with an ascending Eb triad interspersed with terse string chords but suddenly changes mood on "I melt" where the tempo shifts momentarily to *Adagio* and the harmony consists of an Eb7 chord in third inversion. The *furioso* tempo and busy semiquavers return on "I burn" and the giant's increasing agitation is conveyed by means such as the falling tritone (Bb - E \natural), unpredictable rests and tonal instability caused by chords such as the diminished seventh on the first beat of b. 8. By "Thou trusty pine" the music has modulated to F major by virtue of a perfect cadence (bb. 9-10) but the F7 chord at the end of the bar implies a move to Bb major which is in turn contradicted by another diminished seventh chord on the third beat of b. 12 before a perfect cadence in G minor occurs at the beginning of b. 13. Gradually, Polyphemus calms down (bb. 13-14), the chords change less rapidly and tonal stability is regained by way of the perfect cadence (complete with suspension) in F major in b. 16. More word painting occurs at this point as the bass descends to low F representing the giant's "capacious mouth". As Polyphemus thinks of Galatea's beauty the tempo changes to *Adagio*, the dynamic is *piano* and the harmonic rhythm slows - modulating to D minor (b. 18) and G minor (b. 19) - before the section ends in typical recitative fashion with a perfect cadence in D minor:

Bar 17 ¹	A major first inversion
Bar 18 ¹	Diminished seventh
Bar 18 ³	D minor root position
Bar 19 ¹	D7 third inversion
Bar 19 ³	G minor root position
Bar 20 ¹	A major root position
Bar 20 ²	D minor root position

O Ruddier than the Cherry

The sound of the reed pipe, which Polyphemus made for his “capacious mouth” in the preceding recitative is replicated by the bright tone of the sopranino recorder which doubles the first violin part in this aria. There is immediately a greater emphasis on the melodic content of the vocal and instrumental parts and there is frequent repetition of the text as a much happier Polyphemus proceeds to extol Galatea’s beauty. Evidence of Handel’s Germanic training is found in his consistent use of two main motifs which are combined contrapuntally:

- (i) the descending semiquaver scale in the violins and recorder and
- (ii) the triadic quaver figure in the vocal line doubled throughout by the lower strings.

Ex. 1: Piano reduction (bb. 1-2)

The development of the semiquaver scale in various keys may be traced throughout the opening bars as follows:

bb. 1-3	Descending sequence (falling by a third)	G minor → C minor
bb. 3-4	Ascending sequence	C minor → D major
b. 5	Scale doubled in thirds	D major
bb. 5-6	Ascending sequence	G minor

The quavers which comprise the vocal part and basso continuo naturally conform to the same structure. A brief orchestral interlude (bb. 7-8) consisting of a descending sequence modulates to Bb (the relative major). Another descending sequence passes through C minor in b. 11 but finishes in Bb at b. 12 after which the three opening bars, transposed up a third and beginning a half bar earlier, are restated. This joins up with a repeat of earlier material at its original pitch so that the music of bb. 16¹ to 20³ is identical to bb. 3³ to 7¹ apart from the fact that it is displaced by two beats. At b. 20 Polyphemus launches into a virtuosic sequential melisma on the word “merry” which is a clear example of word painting but also demonstrates the influence of Italian operatic *coloratura*. This passage, by virtue of its descending semiquaver scales, is linked to bb. 7-8 which is in turn a development of the material presented at the start of the aria. Having reached an imperfect cadence in G minor at b. 24, Handel then repeats bb. 5-7. The first section of the aria finishes with a

six-bar orchestral ritornello in which the semiquaver scales are used in a descending sequence over a bass line made up of running quavers. These scales then appear in parallel sixths (b. 28) before the melody of the last two bars which Polyphemus sang - “O nymph more bright than moonshine night, Like kidlings bright and merry” - is repeated in octaves.

The new text of the aria’s central section - “Ripe as the melting cluster” - is set to a triadic theme which is doubled by the orchestra in unison. The key is initially Bb major but an ascending sequence in bb. 32-33 leads to C minor. The descending fourths in the voice at bb. 33-34 are perhaps an inversion of the rising fourths of b. 9 while the semiquavers in the vocal score at this point seem to be merely an editorial addition to the original unison accompaniment. These bars are then treated as an ascending sequence bringing the music to a perfect cadence in D minor at b. 37. The soloist then embarks on an extended melisma on “bluster” (word painting again) in which octave leaps, scalic and triadic movement play an integral part:

Ex. 2: Polyphemus (b. 38)

Handel extends this idea to form a descending sequence based on the circle of fifths progression into which suspensions have been introduced:

b. 37 ¹	D minor
b. 37 ³	G minor + F
b. 38 ¹	C7
b. 38 ³	F major + E
b. 39 ¹	Bb major + A
b. 39 ³	E diminished + D

The imperfect cadence in D minor at the beginning of b. 40 is followed by a variation of bb. 35-36 in which the original fourths are decorated with lower auxiliary notes in semiquavers.

Ex. 3: Polyphemus (bb. 35-36 & bb. 40-41)

This in turn is used in imitation between upper and lower strings in the brief orchestral passage (bb. 42-44) which leads back to G minor for the reprise of “O ruddier than the cherry”. The overall structure of the aria is therefore ternary or *aria da capo* form (common in Handel’s Italian operas) in which it was customary to ornament the melody when the A section was repeated.



Schumann: Widmung and Ich grolle nicht

These two songs are examples of a specific genre, the *Lied*, which is an exclusively German language art song originating in the late Classical period (Beethoven and Schubert) and continuing throughout the nineteenth century (Schumann, Brahms, Wolf and Mahler). The solo singer is nearly always accompanied by the piano but there are examples with orchestral accompaniment too.

Robert Schumann (1810-1856) made many important contributions to this form largely inspired by his love for Clara Wieck who, despite her father's objections, was eventually to become his wife.

Widmung

This *Lied*, which forms part of the *Myrthen* song cycle (Op. 25), demonstrates a basic principle of Schumann's compositional method in this genre namely the concentration on a particular emotion within a limited time span. This is achieved in no small measure through the piano's consistent use of a distinctive rhythmic or melodic motif. In this case the accompaniment is unified by the following: (i) the rising and falling arpeggios, (ii) dotted rhythm and (iii) the tonic/dominant/tonic chords at the end of each bar.

Ex. 1: Piano (b. 1)

The two opening bars of the vocal melody are also constructed around the notes of the tonic triad and then the rising major sixth from b. 3 into b. 4 emphasises the key word *Wonn'* (bliss). Another example of Schumann's sensitivity to Rückert's lyrics is the use of the minor subdominant chord (Db minor) on the word *Schmerz* (pain) at the beginning of b. 5. The melody and harmony of bb. 5-7 (note the use of the feminine cadence in b. 7) is immediately transposed up a perfect fourth in bb. 7-9:

b. 5 ³	Eb7 3 rd inversion	b. 7 ³	Ab7 3 rd inversion
b. 6 ¹	Ab 1 st inversion	b. 8 ¹	Db 1 st inversion
b. 6 ³	Eb7 2 nd inversion	b. 8 ³	Ab7 2 nd inversion
b. 7 ¹	Eb7/Ab	b. 9 ¹	Ab7/Db
b. 7 ²	Ab root position	b. 9 ²	Db root position

The falling scale in b. 9 is a melodic link back to b. 4 and the seriousness of the word *Grab* (grave) on the first beat of b. 10 is accentuated by the use of a diminished seventh chord. This unity of this first section, which finishes with a perfect cadence in Ab major, is ensured by the presence of the dotted quaver/semiquaver motif in all but two of its thirteen bars.

A change of mood appropriate to the words *Du bist die Ruh* (You are repose) is effected at b. 14 by the following means: (i) the use of longer note values such as semibreves in the vocal line, (ii) the lower tessitura of this melody, (iii) the change of key to E major with Ab/G# acting as an enharmonic pivot note and (iv) the introduction of repeated chords in triplet crotchets in the accompaniment.

The harmonies change on the first and third beats of the bar over a four-bar tonic pedal point:

b. 14 ¹	b. 14 ³	b. 15 ¹	b. 15 ³
E major	E7	A major	E major

b. 16 ¹	b. 16 ³	b. 17 ¹
F# minor(+ 7 th)	B7 (+G#)	E major

The expressiveness of the music, which modulates to F# minor at b. 19 is heightened by the 9/8 suspension at the start of this bar, the inner countermelody featuring chromatic movement in the piano's left hand and the use of the turn to decorate the vocal melody in b. 20. Although the text *Dass du mich liebst* (That you love me) is different, the music of bb. 21-25 is an exact transposition of the melodic and harmonic material heard earlier at bb. 5-9:

b. 21 ³	B7 3 rd inversion	b. 23 ³	E7 3 rd inversion
b. 22 ¹	E 1 st inversion	b. 24 ¹	A 1 st inversion
b. 22 ³	B7 2 nd inversion	b. 24 ³	E7 2 nd inversion
b. 23 ¹	E4-3 suspension	b. 25 ¹	A4-3 suspension

Another enharmonic pivot note - in this case C#/Db - initiates the transition to the 'A' material in which the dotted quaver/semiquaver motif is reintroduced (bb. 26-29) over a dominant pedal point. Bars 30-35 are musically and textually the same as bb. 2-7 until a change of harmony (F7) on the third beat of b. 35 leads towards Bb minor. The phrase which

comprises bb. 33-35 is treated as an ascending sequence in bb. 35-37 before a diminished seventh chord on the last crotchet of b. 37 returns the music to Ab major at b. 39 via a 4/3 suspension and perfect cadence. The piano's coda combines a phrase (bb. 40-41) derived from bb. 14-16 with a bass line which descends mainly in semitones. A slightly rewritten version of this in b. 42 leads to the final Ab major chord.

Ich grolle nicht

Ich grolle nicht is the seventh song in the *Dichterliebe* cycle dating from 1840 (Op. 48) in which Schumann sets words by the poet Heine. The unifying factor in this *Lied* is the repeated quaver chords in the piano's right hand together with the stately octaves in the left hand whose minims delineate the steady harmonic rhythm. The vocal melody meanwhile is characterised by

Bar 1	C major root position
Bar 2 ¹	F major first inversion
Bar 2 ³	F major root position
Bar 3 ¹	D diminished + 7 th
Bar 3 ³	G7
Bar 4	C major

a three-quaver anacrusis, dotted rhythms and the interval of a rising perfect fifth. These features create a dignified and restrained response to the text *Ich grolle nicht* (I bear no grudge) with the Ab in the melody coinciding with a diminished triad on *Herz* (heart) to highlight this significant word. The economical use of the motivic material allied to the repetition of the text results in a tightly organised musical fabric:

Bars	Text	Motif
5-6	<i>ewig verlornes Lieb,</i>	Rising 5th
7-8	<i>ewig verlornes Lieb!</i>	bb. 5-6 transposed up a 4th
9-10	<i>ich grolle nicht,</i>	Descending scale
11-12	<i>ich grolle nicht.</i>	bb. 9-10 transposed down a 5th
12-13	<i>Wie du auch strahlst</i>	3 quavers and rising 4th
13-14	<i>In Diamantenpracht</i>	bb. 12-13 dotted
14-16	<i>Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht</i>	bb. 12-14 transposed up a tone (i.e. ascending sequence)

Throughout this passage the feeling of loss and pain is intensified by way of frequent modulations, unresolved dissonances and effective use of harmony:

Modulations	bb. 4-5 bb. 9-10 bb. 14-16	A minor G major B minor
Dissonances	b. 5 ³ b. 6 ¹ b. 6 ³	C+7 F+7 C+6
Harmony	b. 11	Diminished 7 th

The resolution of the dominant seventh chord at the end of b. 16 is delayed (mainly by the introduction of the diminished seventh chord in b. 18) until after the singer's *das weiss ich längst* (I've known it long) representing an example of word painting.

Once C major has been regained at b. 19, most of the second stanza is set to the same music as the first (strophic form) so that bb. 19-27 are the equivalent of bb. 1-9. The sudden change of dynamic to *piano* at b. 23 draws attention to the text *Ich sah dich ja im Traume* (I have seen you in dreams) before the climax of the song in bb. 27-28. Here the baritone soars to a high A on *Herzen frisst* (eats into the heart) before descending towards the cadence in at b. 30. The poignancy of the text is reflected in the harmonic tension created by diminished triads (bb. 27³, 28¹ and 29¹) and the augmented triad which occurs half-way through b. 28. The uncertainty created by the interrupted cadence in A minor (bb. 30-31) is dispelled by the perfect cadence in the tonic into b. 32. The short coda consists of three plagal cadences in the tonic key followed by one last perfect cadence.

Like *Widmung*, *Ich grolle nicht* compresses the maximum amount of emotion into a short time span in much the same way that Schumann's character pieces for piano are a concentration of his musical thoughts.



Copland: Simple Gifts and I Bought me a Cat from Old American Songs (Set 1)

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was a central figure in the creation of a uniquely American musical identity not only in his own compositions but also through his encouragement of younger composers (among them Leonard Bernstein). This distinctive musical language, derived from sources such as jazz, Latin American music and folk songs, came to fruition in works such as *Billy the Kid* (1938), *Rodeo* (1942) and *Appalachian Spring* (1944).

Simple Gifts

Simple Gifts was probably composed by Joseph Brackett Jr.- a member of the Shaker sect in Maine - around 1848. The original song expounds some of the core values of the Shaker communities such as shared resources and simple values. The melody was used by Copland as the basis of a set of variations in his ballet *Appalachian Spring* which describes the life of the early settlers in rural Pennsylvania. In 1950 Copland included the song in his first set of *Old American Songs* for low voice and piano which was then orchestrated in 1954.

The introduction quotes the first two bars of *Simple Gifts* - in octaves and without accompaniment - played by flute, oboe and two clarinets in octaves but using the first clarinet in its high register which is a sonority often exploited by Copland. The key of Ab major is firmly established by the perfect cadence from b. 2 into b. 3 which becomes a recurring motif in its own right. The baritone soloist presents the melody without any modification (Copland often manipulates the rhythm or pitch outline of the material which he borrows) while the strings (without double basses) and wind provide an accompaniment consisting of sustained chords. Although these chords are all major and minor triads within the key of Ab (nearly all of them in root position), they do not always coincide with the melody or the main beats of the bar thereby producing dissonances which are marked*:

Bar	Melody	Harmony
2 ²	Eb	Eb major
3 ¹	Ab	Ab major
4 (2 nd quaver)	Eb	F minor *
5 (2 nd quaver)	Bb	Db major *
6 (2 nd quaver)	Bb	Eb major
6 (4 th quaver)	Eb	Ab major
7 (4 th quaver)	Bb	Db major *
8 ²	Eb	C minor
9 (2 nd quaver)	Bb	Bb minor (1 st inversion)
10 ¹	Bb	Eb major
10 ²	Ab	Ab major

The restraint with which Copland deploys his instrumental forces is evident at the perfect cadence in b. 10 where the cellos are doubled by the bassoon and the strings are supported by harp chords. In bb. 11-12 the woodwind (again in octaves) prefigure the first two bars of the chorus which follows. When this is taken up by the soloist at b. 13 the first two chords form the same perfect cadence which came at the start of the verse (bb. 2-3). The harmonisation of the chorus then follows the same pattern as the preceding verse i.e. with the chords generally changing on the off beats of the bar and sometimes clashing with the notes of the melody:

Bar	Melody	Harmony
13 ¹	Eb C	Eb major
13 ²		Eb major*
13 (4 th quaver)		Ab major
14 (4 th quaver)	Ab	F minor
15 ²	Eb	Db major*
16 (2 nd quaver)	Bb	Eb major

The remainder of the chorus (bb. 17-22) is underpinned by an Ab major chord which is wonderfully orchestrated in order to provide both aural colour and clarity. The most significant features are as follows:

Flute	High Eb crotchets
Oboe & clarinets	Ab triad
Bassoon	High Ab in tenor clef
Horn, trumpet, trombone	Sustained Ab triad with mutes
Harp	Ab & Eb harmonics
Violins 1&2	Imitate each other in a quaver ostinato
Violas	Eb artificial harmonic
Cello & double bass	Tonic pedal point

At the end of this passage (b. 22) unison violas and clarinets anticipate the first two bars of the verse followed by the now familiar perfect cadence (bb. 23-24) which overlaps with the singer's entry. The verse (with the same text) is now repeated but without the chorus so that the overall structure is ternary. The harmonisation of this reprise is the same as before so it is only details of orchestration which are different: (i) the double basses are included and (ii) flute and oboe are added to the wind chords. In the brief coda the repeated pattern in the violins, the sustained muted brass chord and the use of upper string and harp harmonics, recall the delicate orchestration of bb. 17-22. There is a reference to the 'Tis the gift to be simple melody in cello and bassoon (bb. 33-34) before the song closes with a final statement of the perfect cadence.

I Bought me a Cat

I Bought me a Cat comes last in the first set of Old American Songs. It is a cumulative children's song - along the lines of Old MacDonald - in which a different animal is added in each verse and then the list of animals is reprised in reverse order always finishing with "My cat says fiddle eye fee". Humour is established from the outset by the trombone acciaccatura (glissando), the use of unpredictable rests, changing metre, sudden accents and extreme contrasts of dynamics. The main melody (bb. 2-7) is

pentatonic and its harmonisation, like that of Simple Gifts is typical of Copland in so far as the melody and the underlying chords sometimes clash. While the F major and D minor chords in b. 2 are perfectly ordinary, the Bb in the cello at the beginning of b. 3 against the C in the voice and the ninth chord on the second quaver of the same bar add dissonance. This is also true of b. 5 where an imperfect cadence is formed by an F major chord over a Bb and a C major chord including D.

The sound of each new animal (not to mention the wife!) is imitated by a combination of vocal onomatopoeia, musical features and instrumental effects as follows:

Animal	Vocal sound	Musical feature	Orchestration
Duck	<i>Quaa, quaa</i>	Dissonance (Ab, E, A \sharp) and <i>sforzando</i>	Muted brass, <i>sul ponticello</i> violas and double basses
Goose	<i>Quaw, quaw</i>	Increased dissonance (D, Eb, F, Ab)	Muted trumpet and trombone, hand-stopped horn
Hen	<i>Shimmy shack</i>	Alternating D minor and A minor chords, oboe has same rhythm as voice	<i>Secco</i> upper strings and woodwind, off beat quavers in piccolo
Pig	<i>Grifey, grifey</i>	Alternating fourths (A-E) and fifths (F-C)	<i>Glissandi</i> in divided violas, slurred <i>pizzicato</i> in double bass, <i>glissando</i> from hand stopped to open note in horn
Cow	<i>Baw, baw</i>	Db major chord in first inversion	Lower brass, bassoon and lower strings
Horse	<i>Neigh, neigh</i>	Dissonance (E,F)	High register woodwind, <i>pizzicato</i> violins
Wife	<i>Honey, honey</i>	Alternating D minor and A minor chords	<i>Legato</i> strings

Equally imaginative is the way in which Copland varies the recurring “I bought me a ...” material so that predictability is avoided:

Bars	Musical feature	Orchestration
1-7 (Cat)	Staccato bass line and chords	Trombone <i>glissando</i> , no double basses, clarinet chords and bassoon doubles cello
8-11 (Duck)		Muted trombone doubles bassoon at cadences
16-19 (Goose)		Hand stopped horn doubles bassoon, upper string <i>glissandi</i>
25-28 (Hen)	<i>Acciaccaturas</i> added in bassoon	Double stopped <i>pizzicato</i> chords in violins, oboe joins clarinet chords
35-38 (Pig)	<i>Staccato</i> countermelody added by oboe and clarinet	Muted horn doubles cello
46-49 (Cow)	<i>Staccato</i> countermelody now in violins	Staccato chords in muted brass, double basses join cellos
58-61 (Horse)	Semiquaver version of countermelody in oboe and clarinets	<i>Pizzicato</i> double basses double arco cellos
71-74 (Wife)	Countermelody featuring arpeggios in violins and piccolo	Full orchestra <i>marcato</i> and forte

By contrast the refrain “My cat says fiddle eye fee” remains practically unchanged (apart from a few minor details) until the riotous final roll call. Here it combines with an inverted version of the semiquaver arpeggios from b. 71 in a *fff* full orchestra ending.

