



PROJECT MUSE®

Bookshelf

Debra Greschner

Journal of Singing, Volume 81, Number 2, November/December 2024,
pp. 231-234 (Review)

Published by National Association of Teachers of Singing

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53830/sing.00088>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/939775>



Debra Greschner

Debra Greschner reviews four recent publications. In *The Songs of Clara Schumann*, Stephen Rodgers presents analysis of this oeuvre of art songs. *Exploring English Lyrics: Selection and Pronunciation of English Art Song Repertoire* by Cherie Montgomery and Allen Henderson offers phonetic transcriptions of selected art songs in English. *Recorded Solo Concert Spirituals, 1916–1922*, compiled by Randy Jones, catalogues commercially recorded spirituals for solo voice. Joanie Brittingham, in *Practicing for Singers: A Guide to Solid Practice Habits*, provides advice in creating successful practice routines.

Rodgers, Stephen. *The Songs of Clara Schumann*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Cloth, x, 193 pp., \$110.00 ISBN 978-1-108-83425-4. www.cambridge.org

Clara Schumann (1819–1896) achieved musical fame in her own right, separate from the renown of her husband Robert. However, much of the research about Clara Schumann has been focused upon her life and career as a pianist, while her compositional

Journal of Singing, November/December 2024
Volume 81, No. 2, pp. 231–234
<https://doi.org/10.53830/sing.00088>
Copyright © 2024
National Association of Teachers of Singing

output has not received extensive analysis. Stephen Rodgers, professor of music theory and musicianship at the University of Oregon, presents a detailed study of her songs in this volume, as well as illuminating other issues relevant to her music, the music of her contemporaries, and Romantic song in general.

Rodgers postulates there are three reasons why the songs of Clara Schumann have not been the subject of more analysis. First, because she was primarily a performer, her career as a concert pianist has received the preponderance of attention by researchers. Second, her output of compositions is relatively small; she wrote fewer than thirty songs, and her total oeuvre consists of only sixty works. Finally, as evidenced by self-deprecating remarks in her writings, she doubted her prowess as a composer. All these factors, explains Rodgers, are consistent with the societal norms of the nineteenth century, including the expectation that women display modesty, humility, and deference.

The author asserts that Clara Schumann's songs are meritorious and deserving of expanded research and although the volume is focused on her songs, Rodgers also broaches questions about the analysis of music by other women composers, and of nineteenth century song in general. The author maintains that Clara's music must be studied independently from that of her husband, and that it, as well as works by other women composers, merits the same level of analysis afforded to works by male composers. Additionally, Rodgers states that Romantic song in general deserves detailed analysis of formal structure. To this end, he employs the principles of *New Formenlehre*, a sub-

discipline of music theory that focuses on form. While other theorists have applied these tools to instrumental music, Rodgers avers that he is breaking new ground by using it exclusively on music with text.

The volume consists of two sections. The first discusses the context and style of Schumann's music while the second explores each song with particular attention to the influence of the poetry on the formal structure. In addition to expounding upon the three postulates listed above, Rodgers identifies broad characteristics of her vocal works: the use of expansive phrases, the propensity to minimize cadences, and creative employment of piano texture. The second section begins with a discussion of her twelve songs without opus numbers. Because these works span her compositional output, they serve to illustrate the development of her style. The fifteen songs with opus numbers (contained in opuses 12, 13, and 23) are discussed in the ensuing chapter. These songs reflect Schumann's preference for strophic form; the analysis identifies the varied and unique ways in which she used this straightforward structure.

In the epilogue, the Rodgers encourages scholars to explore unknown songs by obscure composers. An example of such research is the author's contribution to *The Lied at the Crossroads of Performance and Musicology* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2024; reviewed in *Journal of Singing* 81, no. 1 (September/October 2024), in which he discusses the songs of Marie Franz (1828–1891). Franz, who was married to Robert Franz (1815–1892) wrote only a few pieces for voice, but her work should not be overlooked.

This volume is an important contribution to the study of song literature.

Rodgers reiterates that the music of Clara Schumann, which is representative of many overlooked and understudied composers of nineteenth century lied, deserves the same in-depth study that is afforded her male contemporaries. Readers interested in the songs of Clara Schumann, and in Romantic Lieder writ large, will find it invaluable. It is highly recommended.

Montgomery, Cheri and Allen Henderson. *Exploring English Lyrics: Selection and Pronunciation of English Art Song Repertoire.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024. Cloth, xvii, 288 pp., \$99.00 ISBN 978-1-5381-9268-9, \$125.00; Paper ISBN 978-1-5381-9269-6, \$49.00; eBook 978-1-5381-9270-2, \$46.50 www.rowman.com

In 2004, Cheri Montgomery published the *Lyric Diction Workbook Series* (Nashville, TN: S.T.M. Publishers, 2004; reviewed in *Journal of Singing* 62, no. 1 (September/October 2005): 104). The set provided International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) exercises for Italian, German, French, and English corresponding to the commonly used diction textbooks for each language. In the intervening twenty years, Montgomery has continued to make important contributions to instructional materials for lyric diction. In addition to the resources for the languages mentioned above, she has written guidebooks to singing in Russian, Spanish, Latin, and Ukrainian, as well as practice journals, textbooks for diction study, and collections of song transcriptions and translations, including *Exploring Art Song Lyrics: Translation and Pronunciation of the Italian, German, and French Repertoire*

(New York: Oxford University Press, 2012; reviewed in *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 2 (November/December 2012): 235).

Montgomery's most recent publication, in collaboration with Allen Henderson, is a guide to the pronunciation of selected art songs in English. The volume begins with foundational diction material that has appeared in other books by Montgomery, including an overview of rules for transcription and a guide to English pronunciation. The bulk of the book, however, consists of phonetic transcriptions of lyrics. *Exploring English Lyrics* encompasses nearly 800 texts by 125 composers spanning five centuries. Most of the texts are settings by composers from the United States and Britain; however, there are more than a dozen from other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and South African. The authors characterize the scope of the repertoire ranging from beginning literature to that of professional singers.

The challenge in creating any anthology (unless it is comprehensive) is the selection process. In the introduction to the volume, Montgomery and Henderson explain that they chose frequently performed songs from the Royal Conservatory of Music Development Program and the First Book of Solo series edited by Joan Boytim, as well as works by new composers. The latter consideration is illustrated through the number of songs in this new volume that were written by contemporary composers, many of whom belong to groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. A cursory glance at the bibliography, which begins with African American composer Leslie Adams (1932–2024) and ends with the English woman Judith Weir (b. 1954), affirms an emphasis on inclusion and diversity.

The collection is replete with folk songs (including those arranged by Benjamin Britten) and spirituals (including those composed by H. T. Burleigh and Hall Johnson). Close readings of the entries and an overview of the catalogue, however, suggests that copyright considerations played a role in choosing songs for inclusion. There is an abundance of texts by writers whose works are in the public domain (such as William Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson). However, some of the most frequently performed art songs in English, such as "Sure on this Shining Night" by Samuel Barber (on text by James Agee) and "Early in the Morning" by Ned Rorem (on text by Robert Hillier), are noticeably absent.

The omissions, however, do not undermine the usefulness of this compendium. For singers whose native language is English, the transcriptions are a useful tool in avoiding regional dialects and mispronunciations, and for singers whose native language is not English, this collection is a valuable resource. It is a useful addition to the studio library.

Jones, Randy, compiler. *Recorded Solo Concert Spirituals, 1916–1922.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2023. Paper, viii, 599 pp., \$75.00 ISBN 9781476684710 www.mcfarlandpub.com

Randy Jones has conducted extensive research into the genre of spirituals. She is the author of *So You Want to Sing Spirituals* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019) which was reviewed in *Journal of Singing* 77, no. 2 (November/December 2020): 283–284) and the creator of

the online sites “Spirituals Database” and “Afrocentric Voices in Classical Music.” Her latest publication is a catalog of commercially produced recordings of spirituals that were composed for solo concert performers. Jones is a passionate advocate for the study and performance of spirituals by all singers, and she proffers this guide as a resource to the repertoire and its performance practice.

The volume contains more than 5,600 individual entries. Each item lists the title of the track, the composer, the name of the singer, voice type, publisher, publication number, release date, format, names and types of accompanying musicians, plus a description of the use of dialect. In the introduction, Jones illuminates the challenges inherent in creating the entries; for example, some recordings did not identify the singer’s voice type, while others did not acknowledge the composer or arranger. She also lists the ten spirituals that were recorded most frequently (“Deep River”), the ten performers who appear the most often in the catalog (Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson), and the composer with the most entries (H.T. Burleigh). The entries for the most frequently recorded spirituals (twenty-nine songs that account for 58% of the entries) are prefaced with the Biblical source, as well as the art song collections in which they are found. Jones also addresses the use of dialect, both in an explanation in the prefatory section, and within each entry, where she uses a descriptor scale ranging from “no use” to “heavy use” of dialect.

There is an extensive bibliography, and the author also provides three indexes organized by general subject, song title, and musician. The research underpinning this catalog is impressive. The volume is an excel-

lent resource for learning about the repertoire and performance practice of this important body of literature. It is highly recommended.

Brittingham, Joanie. *Practicing for Singers: A Guide to Solid Practice Habits*. Columbia, SC: CS Music, 2024. Paper, ix, 166 pp., \$25.00 ISBN 979-8-324-66371-1.

In the preface to this volume, author Joanie Brittingham acknowledges that there are traces of truth in the old saw that singers do not practice. While she does not elucidate the reasons (perhaps because singers are learning to play an instrument they cannot see, or because they begin formal studies later than many instrumentalists), Brittingham sets out to offer guidance in building effective practice habits for singers. She offers both rationale and structure for establishing practice routines.

Brittingham is an active singer and voice teacher, and she draws upon these roles to create this handbook about practicing. The author discusses the importance of intentional practice and cultivating a growth mindset. Several of the chapters are devoted to time management; in other chapters, the author offers specific advice about how to learn a piece (including musical, formal, and character analysis) and how to polish it. There is tutelage about how to start a practice session and knowing when to end it. Brittingham explains why and how to keep a practice journal, and provides useful tips about avoiding distractions, such as turning off cell phones.

Brittingham, who is the Associate Editor for *Classical Singer Magazine*, balances the philosophical with the

practical throughout the volume. The text is replete with quotations from numerous and various expert sources, such as researchers John A. Sloboda and Carol Dweck, ranging from magazines and newspapers to podcasts and pedagogy texts, all of which are cited in the end notes. Many of the chapters offer recommended reading and resources, as well as downloadable charts and handouts. The volume is a brief, but bountiful introduction to effective practice. Students of singing will find this book a useful guide.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Note: Listing here does not preclude review in future issues.

Pittman, Menzie. *The New Musician: The Art of Entrepreneurship in Today’s Music Business*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2024. Cloth, xiv, 388 pp., \$99.00 ISBN 978-1-5381-9486-7; Paper ISBN 9781-5381-9487-4 \$38.00; eBook 978-1-5381-9488-1 \$36.00 www.rowman.com

Debra Greschner, soprano, is a member of the voice faculty at Lamar University and founding member of its Vocology Certificate program. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Performance and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, and a Master of Music from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV).

Before joining the faculty at Lamar, Greschner taught at UNLV, and was a member of the Nevada Arts Council’s Artist in Residence roster. She is a member of the Pan-American Vocology Association (PAVA) and served as president of the Greater Houston and Las Vegas Chapters of NATS. Greschner has appeared as soloist with the Nevada Symphony, Symphony of Southeast Texas, Nevada Opera Theatre, Las Vegas Lyric Opera Company, Las Vegas Symphony and at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall.

In addition to serving as Associate Editor (Book Reviews) for *Journal of Singing*, she has written book reviews for *The Opera Journal* and *Italica*.

Her article "The *Mémoires* of Félix Fourdrain" was published in *Journal of Singing* Volume 73, No. 5 (May/June 2017), and she authored the entry

for Fourdrain in the *Grove Music Online*. She was a presenter at the International Congress of Voice Teachers in Vienna in 2022.

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

1. Publication Title: JOURNAL OF SINGING

2. Publication Number: 10867732

3. Filing Date: 9/10/24

4. Issue Frequency: BI-MONTHLY (EXCEPT JULY/AUG)

5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 5

6. Annual Subscription Price: \$60 US/\$90 INTL

7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®): National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc., 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416

8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer): National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc., 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416

9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank):
 Publisher (Name and complete mailing address): Allen Henderson, 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416
 Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Lynn Holding, 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416
 Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address): Lynn Holding, 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416

10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.):
 Full Name: National Association of Teachers of Singing, Inc.
 Complete Mailing Address: 9957 Moorings Drive, Suite 401, Jacksonville, FL 32257-2416

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box None

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one):
 The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
 Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

PS Form 3526, July 2014 [Page 1 of 4 (see instructions page 4)] PSN: 7530-01-000-9931 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com

13. Publication Title: JOURNAL OF SINGING

14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September/October 2024; Volume 81, no. 1

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Members and Subscribers for Universities, Schools and Individuals

| | | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
|--|--|--|---|
| a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run) | | 2906 | 2830 |
| b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail) | (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies) | 2567 | 2524 |
| | (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies) | 0 | 0 |
| | (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS® (e.g., First-Class Mail®) | 0 | 0 |
| | (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS | 266 | 249 |
| c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)) | | 2833 | 2773 |
| d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) | (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| | (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541 | 0 | 0 |
| | (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail) | 12 | 12 |
| | (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) | 2 | 2 |
| e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4)) | | 14 | 14 |
| f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e) | | 2847 | 2787 |
| g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3)) | | 59 | 43 |
| h. Total (Sum of 15f and g) | | 2906 | 2830 |
| i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100) | | 100% | 100% |

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE® (All Periodicals Publications Except Requester Publications)

Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

16. Electronic Copy Circulation

| | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
|---|--|---|
| a. Paid Electronic Copies | | |
| b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) | | |
| c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) | | |
| d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100) | | |

I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership:
 If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the November/December 2024 Vol. #1 no. 2 issue of this publication. Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Tina Hooks, Office Manager Date: 9/10/24

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 3 of 4) PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com