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Sophie, A Music Drama for Solo Soprano and Chamber Orchestra

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Graduate Program in Music

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Music

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Sophie

A Music Drama in One Act
For Solo Soprano and Chamber Orchestra

By

Alondra Vega-Zaldivar

Graduate Program in Music Composition

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music in Composition

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

_Sophie_ is a music drama that follows a young retired theatre actress as she talks to reporters about her family and career. As the story unfolds Sophie’s life transforms from a cheerful illusion to a brutal reality where nothing is as it seems. The listener gets a first row seat to the innermost corners of the protagonist’s mind as she journeys through self awareness. The music transforms from the modal center of the Lydian scale to the more chromatic and diminished tones of the Octatonic scale. Each character’s theme undergoes alterations from the pitch center that portrays stability to the one that creates unsteadiness in the character. But this instability comes not from a fall to madness, but rather from the uncovering of the truth. As Sophie becomes saner she falls apart.

Keywords

Sophie, Music Drama, Opera, Madness, Instability, Transformation.
Instrumentation

Sophie - Soprano
1 Flute
1 Clarinet in B flat
1 Bassoon
1 Horn in F
1 Trumpet in B flat
1 Trombone

Timpani
Cymbals
Snare Drum

Strings

Scenes

1. The Theatre ........................................................................................................................................ 1
2. John ...................................................................................................................................................... 16
3. Lizzy ..................................................................................................................................................... 18
4. The Theatre Twisted ........................................................................................................................... 27
5. The Baby ............................................................................................................................................. 39
6. My Pretty Walls ................................................................................................................................... 50
7. Lizzy’s Ghost ..................................................................................................................................... 53
8. The End ................................................................................................................................................. 66
Program Notes

The set should be relatively simple: a mirror on stage right and maybe a couch or a chair. A blanket should be available for Scene 5 – The Baby. Sophie will be talking to the audience as if they are reporters until the reporters disappear on Scene 7 – Lizzy’s Ghost. At the end of Scene 8 – The End the lights should come off as soon as Sophie says “Welcome.”

The texts in boxes are spoken at any speed making sure that it falls within the bars indicated. When the box is in a bar with fermatas the Conductor must wait for the Soprano to finish her speech before the orchestra plays again.

The scenes are meant to be performed one after the other with no stop until the end.

Stage directions are indicated in italics and bold.

Accidentals carry through the bar.

Score is transposing.

Approximate Duration: 25 minutes.
Walk on stage
Welcome!
Welcome everyone!
I wasn't expecting you so early!
You must have so many questions!
Let me just get the bread out of the oven before it burns.


Walk off stage left

Soph.

Walk on stage as if carrying something
Well I must say I am no cook, but it is looking very well!

Listen to a question about the Theatre

Oh I have been acting ever since I remember.

The Theater has always been part of my life.

Oh, how I love the Theatre.

The actors, the costumes, the...
lights, the plays, and the Music! The everlasting Music.

Oh, how I love the The-a-tre. Ever-ry
day a new hero, every day a new villain, every day a new adventure!

Oh, how I love the tree, And Oh, how the tree loves
And the Queen of All, Lady Macbeth!
How the audience clapped,
Oh, how the audience clapped when she was me and I was her.

She used to talk to me at night, she used to talk to me at night, when
all was silent, when all was dead. Her scared and hurried voice, her scared and hurried voice.

Urging me, Urging me, Urging me! Oh, the
Oh, how I love the theater!

The actors, the audience, the theater!

pp

pizz.
scenes, the lights, and the Music! The ever-lasting Music.
Oh, how I loved the Theatre. And Oh, how...
Theatre Loved me.
Scene 2 - John

Oh it is almost five o’clock!

My husband John should be getting home soon.

Listens to questions and laughs lightly
You'll see the sparkle in his eye when he looks at me. You'll see the love in his smile when he says hello.
And you will see the tenderness of his embrace, as he says  I Love You.
Scene 3 - Lizzy

The phone is ringing!
I will just be a moment
Exit stage left

It was my sister Lizzy!
When I look into your eyes, I feel the strength that you give me. When you take me in your arms, I feel the strength that you give me. She will be coming this evening for dinner! You know, if there is anyone who has supported me the most in my life, it has been my sister Lizzy! I don't know what my life would be without her.
Spot! Out! Out! Out! Out,
damn'd spot! Out I say! Oh, Liz-zy, Liz-zy

yell

Liz zy, Liz zy
Never again will they take you from me.
I look into your eyes, all is well,

and I am Happy.

arco
Scene 4 - The Theatre Twisted

Sophie

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

[M] Vigoroso  \( \dot{=} 82 \)

Let me boil some water for tea

Exits stage right

Comes back to stage center
Oh, how I Love the Theatre, how my life feels so complete when
I am there, when I am there! Oh, how I Love the
“Here thee hith-er.
And chast ise with the val-or of my
All that impedes thee from the golden crown!
Oh, how I loved the tree.

Oh, how I loved, how I loved, how I loved.

I felt like it's time to go back, like it's time to go back.

I loved, loved the tree.

How I felt like it's time to go back, like it's time to go back.
time to go back, time to go back.

But, What's done can't be undone.
There are nights where I wake up in tears. My heart pounding loudly, my breath shallow, my throat dry, and in total darkness, a voice whispers in my ear, a
voice whispering in my ear: what's done can not be undone.

Agitato \( \text{\textit{q}} = 96 \)

Agitato \( \text{\textit{q}} = 96 \)

almost whispering

What's done can not be undone.

What's done can not be undone.

What's done can not be undone!!!
I want to go back,

I need to go back, I need to go back, when can I go back? When can I go back,
when? when can I go back? When can I? When? When can I?
Scene 5 - The Baby

Sophie

Misterioso \( \text{\textit{q.}} = 69 \)

Oh! What terrible nightmares I have sometimes!

Of course I shall return!

I can't stay away for too long

Tea is ready!

Exits Stage right
Come back to center stage and look at the clock

Oh goodness! Look at the time!
It's almost 7 and John still has not come!

Or did he come while I was doing something else?

I hear the baby crying!
Rushes out to the right and comes back rocking something in her arms

Lit-tle ba-by why are you cry-ing, lit-tle ba-by?

Hush, hush, hush, hush.
Lit-tle ba-by close your eyes and dream of the stars in the sky. Lit-tle ba-by don’t cry.
Più mosso $= 84$

Where is my baby, where is he hiding?
Where is my baby? Where is my baby?
Scene 6 - My Pretty Walls

Nervous - fake smile

And they will be back in no time.
This room seems so cold and empty.

I never noticed how the walls are so closed in.

And so white...

Soph.

I could have sworn they were painted pale pink.

What happened to my pretty walls?

Was the

W

Grave \( j = 60 \)

What happened to my pretty walls?

I never noticed how the walls are so closed in.

Was the

W

Grave \( j = 60 \)

What happened to my pretty walls?

I never noticed how the walls are so closed in.

Was the

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Soph.

Vc.

Cb.
The pungent smell of drugs seeps in the empty room, the hollow sound of busy steps rings just outside my door, when did my house shrink down to four by four? What happened to my pretty walls? And when did I lose it all?
Scene 7 - Lizzy's Ghost

**Misterioso et Agitato**  \( \frac{3}{4} \)  \( \begin{array}{c} \text{Cymbals} \\ \text{Sophie} \\ \text{Violin I} \\ \text{Violin II} \\ \text{Contrabass} \end{array} \)

\( q = 78 \)

Someone's coming...

They always come at this time... But I always forget...

Why do I always forget?! What is happening?

Someone's coming... Someone bad.
Fl.
Cl.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla.
Vc.
Cb.

p
mp
mf

6
p
mp
mf

5
5
5
5

Repeat this over and over in a frantic way until the 3 beats of the cymbal
Hang the question in the air.
(The reporters are gone)
Where did they all go?
Is the interview over?
Did I say goodbye?
Did they take a picture of me?!

Look in the mirror
[Oh I hope not]  My hair  My hair is all wrong?  And my face? Whose face is that?

Staring at me so frightened? Is that MY face? When did my eyes become so dull and scared? When did my lips become so cracked and faded?
My cheeks so sunk? My skin so pale? How long have I been alone?

Oh Lizzy I am so glad you've come!
Something is not right.
My baby...

Kneel down
(Like talking to a child)

My baby....

How long have you been like this? How long have I been without you? Oh, Lizzy.

It was a bright summer afternoon.
I remember laughing.

S. Solo
accel. ........................................ Vivace $q = 96$

57

Fl.

Cl.

Bsn.

S. Solo

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

$p\quad mf$

$mf$

$f$

$\text{Vivace } q = 96$

But then, the noise, the fear, unable to

$accel.$

$pp\quad mp\quad mf$

$mp\quad f$

$p$
move. But then, A push
ff
There was blood,
there were tears,

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

There was blood mixed with tears!

pizz
And a limp hand, by the tracks.

pizz

pizz

pizz
Take me away. Take me far away.
Far from all of this.
Scene 8 - The end

Lento e melancolico \( \frac{j}{=} 60 \)

Sit down defeated. The weight of realization heavy
Slowly come out of the reverie. Change expression to that of ease and shake off all that happened.
Look at the audience as if they are reporters

Welcome!

Lights off
Alondra Vega-Zaldivar
Curriculum Vitae

Education:

- 2009-2013 – Bachelor of Music with Honors in Theory and Composition at the University of Western Ontario
- 2013-2015 – Masters in Composition at the University of Western Ontario

Instructors:
Composition:
Dr. Kevin Morse, Dr. David Myska, Dr. Paul Frehner, Dr. Peter Paul Koprowsky, Dr. Omar Daniel

Theory:
Kim Lundberg, Dr. Troy Ducharme, Dr. Peter Frank

Composition Experience:

- 2011 – Won UWO Peer Guides Composition Competition
- 2011-2012 – Composed for a Piano Trio of the UWO Chamber Music Group. Piece premiered at the Chamber Music Concert in March 2012
- 2012-2013 – Composed for a Piano Trio of the UWO Chamber Music Group. Piece premiered at the Chamber Music Concert in March 2013
- 2013 – Organized and participated in the Student Composition Concert at the University of Western Ontario, on October 28th, 2013.
- 2013-2014 – Composed for a Wind Quintet of the UWO Chamber Music Group
- 2014 – Participated at the Creation Workshop at the Orford Arts Programs. Piece for String Quartet performed by the students of the Creation Workshop in the Concert on July 16, 2014.
- 2014 – Participated in the UpBeat Composition Music Festival in Milna, Croatia. Piece for Soprano Cello and Piano was performed by the students of the Workshop in the Concert in Milna, Croatia, on August 7th, 2014.
- 2014 – The ensemble Arpa Tambora premiered a piece for Harp and Percussion in Toronto as part of the Canadian Contemporary Music Workshop, on September 26th, 2014.
- 2014 – Organized and participated in the Student Composition Concert at the University of Western Ontario, on October 28th, 2014.

Honors and Awards:

- 2010 – Dean’s Honors List
- 2011 – Dean’s Honors List
- 2012 – Dean’s Honors List
• 2013 – Dean’s Honors List
• 2013 – The University of Western Ontario Gold Medal
• 2013 – Dean’s Honors List, The University of Western Ontario Gold Medal, recipient of the Paul Akira Ohashi Summit Award