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Julia Raine: The Forgotten Rose of Memphis

**Isabel Wittman
2015 Rhodes Institute for Regional Studies**

Julia Raine was born June 2, 1857 in Memphis, Tennessee to Mr. A. Woodward and Julia Hawley. The eldest of four children, there is little known of Raine's childhood. Born during a time of great civil unrest, she turned to music as an expression of self from an early age. Julia studied piano at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and then returned home to Memphis to live with her family.

In 1877, Julia married Gilbert Dixon Raine, who later founded the Commercial Publishing Co. and published the News-Scimitar. The couple had two children, Kate, who was born in 1878, and Gilbert Dixon Jr., who was born in 1881. During the 1890s, Gilbert moved the family to Brooklyn for business, but it was rumored that he and Julia were separated during most of their time there. After they moved back to Memphis in the early 1900s, Gilbert lost a court case for slander against the Commercial Publishing Co., which caused great distress and strain in the family. In 1909, Julia and Gilbert divorced for undisclosed reasons, yet in 1908 Julia wrote and published a pamphlet entitled "A Reign of Crime in Tennessee" in which she lamented the state of divorce laws in Tennessee and their unjust favor of men. She articulated her frustration of the church and state siding with men in marital distress cases and the lack of justice for women in troubled marriages. The year after her divorce was finalized, she wrote and published another pamphlet "In Nineteen-Ten; A Protest Against Conditions in Tennessee" detailing her opinion and the suffrage group's, "The Memphis Press and Authors' Club" opinion of marriage. In the pamphlet[s], Julia details how marriage strips women of any rights they may have and though men may not be faithful, women are still expected to stand by them.

Though it is unclear when Julia began composing, the bulk of her published compositions were written near the turn of the century. While she identified herself as a pianist first, she often wrote her own lyrics for her music, drawing on her spirituality, love life, and her own home state of Tennessee for inspiration. She often wrote to other composers to talk about music and enjoyed sending letters frequently to the editor of the music magazine "Melody" to comment on their articles and her thoughts on the caliber of the magazine's content. Though many of her compositions were not published, Julia wrote melodies and accompaniments on sheet music and scrap paper in her spare time, sometimes starting and then abandoning melodies before developing them. The songs that were published premiered all throughout Memphis at the famous Lyceum Theatre and at private concerts.

Though Julia had strong opinions about the rights of women in marriage, it wasn't long before she married a second time to Joseph H. Hawley in 1912. Her marriage to Hawley began hopeful, yet over time they grew estranged. She spent time with him in Galveston, Texas from 1918-1919 and briefly in 1928, yet lived primarily in Memphis for the rest of her life. At age 73, Julia started her own radio show through the Peabody

Hotel called “Grandmother’s Hour,” a weekly program where she would share her love of music with her listeners. Her love of radio is summed up in a letter she wrote to a friend where Julia articulated “And so it is with the radio. We may be in the midst of poverty, sickness, personal loneliness, yet in a moment by turning a tiny lever, we can find entrance into other environments, we can have company, we can hear entrancing music, which gives us wings to fly almost into heaven; in fact right into an earthly heaven.”

Julia died on September 13, 1937 from causes unknown in Memphis. She is buried in the Elmwood Cemetery, but remarkably little is known of the family she left behind. What is known is the music she wrote in her lifetime and the joy it brought to her and to her audience, and that is the legacy we must remember.

***O mio Fernando* from *La favorita* (Gaetano Donizetti; libretto by Alphonse Royer and Gustave Vaëz)**

Gaetano Donizetti's (1797-1848) French grand opera, *La favorite*, premiered at the Paris Opéra on December 2, 1840. Donizetti's *La favorite* is better known in the opera's Italian translation (not supervised by the composer), *La favorita*. The story of *La favorite* takes place in Castile, Spain, in 1340. Fernand, a young novice, leaves the Monastery of St. James of Compostela, to pursue a mysterious woman with whom he has fallen in love. The woman, Léonor de Guzman, is actually the mistress of King Alphonse of Castile. When Fernand discovers the truth, he denounces Léonor. In the opera's final scene, Fernand and Léonor are reunited at the Monastery. Léonor begs for forgiveness, and dies in the arms of the heartbroken Fernand. In the third act, Léonor expresses her love for Fernand and her doubts for their future in the aria *O mio Fernando*. The excerpt I will be singing is the cantabile section of the aria, or the lyrical section. In this excerpt, Donizetti's skill for writing in the *bel canto* style is demonstrated. The Harvard Dictionary of Music defines *bel canto* as a vocal technique with an "emphasis on beauty of sound and brilliance of performance" that was popular until the mid-1800s. Aspects of *bel canto* include the utilization of accents, application of portamento or the sliding between notes, and even vibrato on every note.

O mio Fernando!
 della terra il trono a possederti
 avria donato il cor;
 ma puro l'amor mio come il perdono,
 dannato, ah! lassa! è a
 disperato orror.
 Il ver fia noto,
 e in tuo dispregio estremo,
 la pena avromni
 che maggior si de', ah!
 Se il guisto tuo disdegno
 allor fia scemo,
 piombi, gran Dio,
 la folgor tua su me!

Oh my Fernando!
To possess the throne of the country with you
I would have given my heart;
but my love pure as your pardon,
is doomed—oh miserable me!—to
desperate horror.
May the truth be known;
and in your deep contempt
I shall have the pain
which must be the great—ah!
If your justified contempt
still be wanting,
may your thunderbolt,
great God, fall on me!

***To A Wild Rose* (Edward MacDowell; poetry by Hermann Hagedorn)**

Edward MacDowell (1860-1908) was an American pianist and composer who achieved great international fame during his career. His writing style was known for its fascination with objects or events, such as flowers. Written in 1896, *To A Wild Rose* was included in MacDowell's work *Woodland Sketches* as a piano solo, and was later transcribed for voice and piano. This short song draws heavily on Irish imagery such as descriptions of landscape and the fixation on a rose. The simple piano accompaniment also demonstrates MacDowell's emphasis on melody and its priority in the music.

***The Last Rose of Summer* (Richard Alfred Miliken; poetry by Thomas Moore)**

The Irish poet Thomas Moore wrote the poem in 1805 and Richard Alfred Miliken published it in 1813. The song has a long history with classical musical settings including being used by Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Britten. The song was popularized in 1906 by an internationally-known opera star, Adelina Patti.

***A Peerless Rose* (Julia Raine)**

Written in 1895, this is one of Raine's earlier compositions. The piece was premiered by the German Prima Donna Marie Tavary at the Memphis Lyceum Theatre in the 1890s. At this time, the Lyceum Theatre was a watering hole for the Memphis elite and was frequented by famous actors and singers from all over the world.

***Edith Adair* (Julia Raine; poetry by Walter Malone)**

Written in 1898, Raine used the poem of another Memphian, Walter Malone. Malone practiced law in Memphis, yet enjoyed to write poetry and short stories in his free time. *Edith Adair* is included in his collection of poetry, *Songs of North and South* which was published in 1900.

*Edith Adair, as I went to-day
Down the long green lane, through the wildwoods gay,
By the hawthorn hedge, with its buds of white,
And the old oak tree on the breezy height;
As I walked through the fields where the blackberries grow
And the pink peach blooms from the orchards blow,
When songs of the thrush were loud in the air,
I remembered you ever, Edith Adair.*

*Edith Adair, that was long ago,
 Ere youth and ere love lost their gladsome glow;
 You said you were true, but you turned at last,
 And left me to brood on the perished past.
 The hawthorn hedge is as lovely as then,
 The thrush sings as sweet in the dewy glen,
 The sky is as blue, the flowers as fair,
 But you have forsaken me, Edith Adair.*

***Who Knows?* (Ernest R. Ball; poetry by Paul Laurence Dunbar)**

Ernest R. Ball was an American singer and songwriter whose popularity came about due to his ability to write musical standards and ballads, many of which had Irish themes. *Who Knows?* was written in 1908 using poetry by the African-American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar. Dunbar wrote the lyrics for the very first all African-American musical produced on Broadway “In Dahomey” in 1903 and was one of the first African-American writers to ascertain a national reputation.

***In Tennessee* (Julia Raine)**

Raine was living in Brooklyn in 1897 with her first husband Gilbert when she wrote this piece. This nationalistic tune was written for the Tennessee Centennial celebration and expresses her fondness for the state she calls home. While it is unknown if the song was performed at the celebration, she did write out a full orchestration for the piece and it is considered to be her greatest contribution to the music world.

Reflection

When beginning this research project, I had no intention of creating a lecture recital around the works of one Memphis composer. While I had many thoughts of different projects, I knew I wanted to explore a side of Memphis music that was rarely discussed. Often the conversation of music in Memphis begins with the blues and revolves around BB King and Elvis Presley. Their legacy draws worldwide attention, thus attracting the most investment. But with this research project, I had the opportunity to dig deeper and expose my audience to a different side of Memphis music.

What is Memphis music before BB King? From this question I immediately turned to what I know best: classical music. There is such a rich culture of classical music in this city, but it's hardly considered a key part to the history of music in Memphis. What is often forgotten about classical music is that it was in fact popular music for much of the population. Today, it's seen as old and outdated, but it's where we get most of melodies in the modern popular music world. This put me on the track of thinking about what popular music was in Memphis before the blues. I recalled the name of a composer mentioned to me by a past Rhodes Institute fellow and when I read about her, I realized my project was a chance to give exposure to this unknown composer and the popular music she wrote. This woman, Julia Raine, began to take over my thoughts and I knew her music needed to be heard. The more I researched, the more I found out about her life as a dedicated feminist, Episcopalian, and musician—not unlike myself. I wanted to be able to present her in a special way and that's when I decided a lecture recital would be the best way to represent, not only who she was from a historical standpoint, but also what she wanted to say through her music.

Preparing for this recital has challenged me to think about how to discuss music in an intellectual and critical way. I find it interesting how people are willing to examine data like graphs and tables without being experts in the subject, but as soon as music is presented in a theoretical way and discussed critically, people are much less receptive. It is difficult to show people visually how music can be analyzed, but with a lecture recital I am able to talk about a piece of music, explain what to listen for, and then perform the music in question. The goal of this type of presentation is to make the music more accessible to the audience to foster critical thinking and discussion. To aid this, I decided to include some other compositions by other popular composers at the time of Julia Raine in order to create context and to have something to compare her work to.

Being able to bring Julia Raine's compositions back to life is an honor and I marvel at her tenacious spirit in every letter she wrote and song she composed. This experience has given me a new perspective on who I am as a musician and what that means in a research environment. The preparation has been frustrating, grueling, and intense, but Julia has left Memphis a legacy to be celebrated and shared, and I thank her for that.

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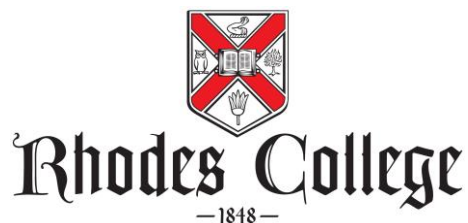
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(1797 - 1848)

To A Wild Rose

Edward MacDowell
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Richard Alfred Miliken
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In Tennessee

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