FORM AND POETRY IN SELECTED SONGS OF BARBARA PENTLAND

by

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ABSTRACT

Barbara Pentland, one of Canada’s foremost composers, is best known for her piano and chamber works. However, she composed for the voice throughout her career. The evolution of her compositional techniques is evident in her vocal works, which show post-romantic chromaticism, neo-classicism, serial techniques, aleatoric techniques and new explorations in sound. A study of Pentland’s choice of poetry, and of the manner in which she sets the text, adds further insight into her compositional craft. This document analyzes the following songs: The Cottager To Her Infant (1929); Ruins (1932); Song Cycle 1. Wheat (1943) 5. Cities (1945); Three Sung Songs 2. Life 3. Let the Harp Speak (1964); Ballad for Soprano and Violin (1979); Ice Age (1986). They were chosen because they represent important stylistic periods, and demonstrate various influences on her writing.
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Musical examples appear by kind permission of Barbara Pentland. The excerpts from *Our Town* and *Outdoor Overture* by Aaron Copland, are reprinted by permission of Boosey and Hawkes, Inc.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. John Roeder for so generously giving of his time and his valuable insights; and to Phyllis Mailing for her support and encouragement; and to Barbara Pentland for so graciously making herself available and taking a helpful interest in this project.
Barbara Pentland was born in 1912 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. At the age of nine she began piano lessons and soon after was composing small pieces. Her musical education continued at a boarding school in Montreal where she studied piano and theory, and later at the Schola Cantorum in Paris where she studied composition and theory. Her teacher there, Cécile Gauthiez, had been a pupil of Vincent d'Indy, so Pentland was given many works by César Franck to analyze. "Entries in her diaries reveal how impressed she was with the works of Franck which she was analyzing at the time."¹ After her return to Winnipeg in 1930, she continued her studies with Gauthiez by correspondence for eighteen months. At the same time she studied organ with Hugh Bancroft and piano with Eva Clare.

In 1936 Pentland was awarded a fellowship in composition at the Juilliard Graduate School of Music in New York. She studied with Frederick Jacobi (1891-1952) who introduced her to many works from the Renaissance and gave her a solid foundation in counterpoint. Looking for more freedom in her writing after two years with Jacobi, Pentland switched to Bernard Wagenaar (1894-1971) for her last year. Her three years in New York were greatly enriched by the many new works she heard at concerts. "Among these were works such as Alban Berg's Lyric Suite, Hindemith's Flute Sonata and Quintet for Woodwinds, and Copland's El Salon Mexico."² Robert Turner writes that her experiences in New York brought

² Ibid., 28.
"more modern tendencies into her work and we can note some of the stylistic
earmarks of such composers as Bloch, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky."\(^3\)

In 1939 Pentland returned to Winnipeg where she taught privately and was
a theory examiner for the Western Board (University of Manitoba). Unhappy with
the lack of opportunities, Pentland applied to the Berkshire Music Centre. She was
accepted, and in the summers of 1941 and 1942 studied composition with Aaron
Copland. She also attended a survey course of instrumental and choral music from
the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries taught by Paul Hindemith. All the
composition students, including Pentland, sang in a chorus Hindemith organized to
familiarize them with music from the medieval, renaissance and contemporary
repertoire.

In 1942 Pentland moved to Toronto which was an active musical centre. In
1943 she joined the faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music. She was
encouraged by her association with other composers, in particular John
Weinzweig, and joined the League of Composers. In the summers of 1947 and
1948, she attended the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, where she met Dika
Newlin, a pupil of Schoenberg. Pentland was already using some motivic elements
in her music, but states that "It was Dika Newlin that really started me using the
serial technique."\(^4\)

In 1949 Pentland moved to Vancouver to join the faculty of the University of
British Columbia, where she taught harmony, counterpoint and composition. In the


\(^4\) Ibid., 54.
1950’s she travelled to Europe where she was introduced to works of Boulez, Stockhausen, Berio and most notably Webern. International recognition of Pentland’s music came when her *String Quartet No. 2* was chosen for performance at the 1956 ISCM festival in Stockholm. In 1963 Pentland resigned from her teaching position at U.B.C. in order to devote herself full-time to composition. Since that time, many commissions, premieres and broadcasts have kept her an active and busy composer.

Throughout Pentland’s works a common thread can be found: her concern for social issues and in particular the devastating effects of war. This concern is manifested in many of her works including: *Ruins* (1932) for voice and piano; *Lament* (1934) for voice and string quartet; *Rhapsody: The World on the March to War Again* for piano (1939); another *Lament* from 1939, this time for orchestra; *News* (1968) for virtuoso voice and orchestra, with text concerning the Vietnam war and environmental issues, taken from news sources. War and the environment are also the focus of *Ice Age* (1986), her last composition for voice and piano.

Pentland’s compositional output includes many genres, especially piano, orchestral and chamber music. She did not write as much for the voice because of problems finding suitable texts. However some of Pentland’s finest music can be found in her songs. With the exception of descriptions in her biography, nothing

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5 Author’s conversation with Barbara Pentland at her home in Vancouver, on 21 April, 1994.

has been written on her vocal works and they are performed infrequently. However, the development of Pentland's musical style and compositional techniques can be traced through her songs. Motivic unity, imitation, and the use of opening material for conclusion prove to be especially effective in Pentland's voice and piano (violin) repertoire. This document will present a chronological survey of representative works.
The Cottager To Her Infant

Barbara Pentland's first song, *The Cottager To Her Infant*, was written in May, 1929. At this time she was pursuing piano and harmony studies with Frederick Blair, an English organist. Indeed the musical life of Winnipeg in the 1920's revolved around English organists.

Musical standards were mainly in the hands of imported English organists and choir directors brought over to conduct, adjudicate and train their various groups; and a large proportion of the repertoire was drawn from the choral works of composers such as Handel, Mendelssohn, Parry, Stanford and Elgar. The influence of this tradition is evident in the texture, tonal plan, phrase structure and chromaticism in the song.

With its simple, homophonic texture and notation in chorale style, the song resembles a hymn. It begins with two four-measure phrases in the traditional antecedent-consequent pattern, and by the end of the consequent phrase in m.8 it modulates to the relative minor. The melodic line covers the modest range of an octave. The piano accompaniment resembles the accompaniment of a hymn: it is notated in chorale style; the piano doubles the vocal line (except in mm.14-22); there is no introduction; and there are organ-like changes in register, resembling a change in registration or manuals. (Ex.1)

Influences of the music of Parry, Stanford and Elgar can be seen in the expressive use of chromatic non-harmonic tones. Many of these tones set important words in the text. For example, the passing A-sharp and the accented, chromatically altered, upper neighbour F-natural in m.2, colour the words "are
In mm.9-13 an extended passage of chromaticism, comprising an irregular five-measure phrase, uses the same notes, A-sharp and E-sharp (the enharmonic equivalent of F), that appeared in mm.1-2. These illustrate the preceding text "north-wind's doleful song".

Ex.3
The same chromatic notes appear in mm.24-27, shown in ex.4, where the text also refers to a chilling action.

Ex.4

While the features mentioned above can be ascribed to the influence of Pentland’s musical environment, there are nevertheless several aspects of this song that foreshadow her future text settings. The formal plan of the song follows a pattern that will be seen in all of the songs studied -- that of bringing opening material back to conclude the song. The rounding binds the piece together in a symmetrical design, and proves especially effective in her longer, more advanced compositions such as Ice Age. The ternary form of The Cottager To Her Infant arises from both thematic design and tonality, with D major, predominant in both A sections, contrasting with the modulatory B section.

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm. 1-13</td>
<td>DM - Bm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>mm. 14-31</td>
<td>Bm-DM-Em-Bm-DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>mm. 32-43</td>
<td>DM</td>
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The choice of poetry is also indicative of what Pentland was drawn to in the succeeding years. Fully aware of the difficulty of being a woman in the professional world, Pentland became an early advocate of women’s poetry --
almost all of her vocal works are set to texts by woman poets. The text of *The Cottager To Her Infant* was written in 1805 by Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855), William Wordsworth’s sister, who is best known for the important biographical information that her journals give on her brother. This poem was her first, just as the song was Pentland’s first. There are two verses to the poem which Pentland did not set. However, in Pentland’s manuscript there is a double bar line in the penultimate bar, suggesting she may have considered repeating the music for the second and third verses, as in a hymn.

---

Ruins

Ruins is perhaps the finest of Pentland’s early songs. It was composed in 1932, shortly after her studies with Cécile Gauthiez. The overall harmonic scheme and use of chromaticism is the most daring of anything Pentland had yet written. The poem was written by George Herbert Clark and is part of a collection called The Hasting Day published in 1930. The form of the song is strophic variation, in which the first two lines of each verse use the same musical material, but the rest of each verse moves in its own direction.

The large-scale harmonic plan demonstrates how Pentland had advanced in the three years since The Cottager To Her Infant, and is an example of her grasp of late-nineteenth-century chromaticism. The chromatic figuration is more pervasive than in The Cottager, quite consistent with late nineteenth century style. For example, the piano introduction of 9½ measures presents varying alterations to the tonic chord -- both the major and minor added sixth -- over a tonic pedal. (The added sixth chord was characteristic of late nineteenth-century music.) Example 5 shows how the progression begins with a minor chord that has a minor sixth added, and then progresses to a major chord with a major sixth added. Another example is at the opening of the third stanza, where an extended ostinato includes some striking unresolved upper neighbours. (Ex.6)

George Herbert Clark (1873-1953) was born in England and came to Canada as a boy. He received his education at McMaster University and in 1925 became Head of the Department of English at Queen’s University. Pentland met him on a summer vacation on the St. Lawrence where, despite their age difference, they became friends. (Author’s conversation with Barbara Pentland at her home in Vancouver, 21 April 1994.)
The harmonies at the beginning of the song are the tonic and dominant of E-flat-minor. These continue until m.17, where a half-diminished II7 chord is introduced and left unresolved. At this point the harmony begins to meander, modulating from E-flat minor to E-minor, then, by the beginning of the second verse, to F-sharp minor. At the end of the second verse the same II7 chord in E-flat-minor is presented again, but this time it resolves to the dominant, which is sustained by the ostinato for twelve measures. The dominant prepares for the tonic reprise at the beginning of the third verse. During that reprise, at m.63, the II7 chord is attained again. After a resolution to the dominant there follows a traditional cadential progression.(Ex.7) The final tonic chord, like the opening one, has an added sixth, but this time only the minor sixth.
As in Pentland’s first song, striking musical ideas are clearly associated with important words in the text. The poem reflects the sadness and destruction of war, referring specifically to the battle of Ypres in 1917 during the First World War. The pivotal II7 chord, in particular, appears in each verse at the most dramatic moments. In the first verse it sets the text "sombre sky"; its lack of resolution and the consequently meandering harmony fittingly describe the following text, "Like lost souls...". In the second verse the II7 chord sets the text "frantic shell and searching fire", and in the last verse it reappears pointedly on the word "slain". A dramatic use of harmony is also apparent at the end of the song. Whereas the first two verses of the poem describe the ruins of trees and buildings, it is only at the last verse that there is a description of the ruins of soldiers. Pentland dramatizes this human desolation by adding only the minor sixth to the tonic and withholding the major sixth that was added at the beginning. The musical material in mm.26-29 can also be seen to relate to the text. At this point the second verse ends, but the music introduces new melodic material. However, this new material is not developed; rather the phrase turns abruptly to cadence on the tonic major (the only occurrence of that harmony in the song). Perhaps Pentland is depicting musically the unfulfilled hopes and dreams of the young
soldiers killed at Ypres.

Ex. 8

How green they grew on the little farms!
Song Cycle

A marked change in Pentland's compositional techniques took place after Ruins. Her earlier songs, late romantic in style, have a thicker chordal texture and pervasive chromaticism. However, works from the 1940's show Pentland writing in a linear and diatonic, neo-classical style, with a leaner texture. This is the result of the three years she spent in New York, and most importantly the two summers working with Aaron Copland and Paul Hindemith. In her article "On Experiment in Music", Pentland expresses her admiration and familiarity with Hindemith's music:

...he treats music as art and not as an emotional outlet. He resembles the classic period in his objective approach as opposed to the super-romanticism of the Schoenberg school. He has developed a linear counterpoint based on a new harmonic synthesis which he has expounded in a treatise on harmony. He grew up with the post-war experimental years through various phases until in 1928 his new style was apparent in the song-cycle Marienleben.¹⁰

Pentland's compositional study with Copland, and her study of his music, also had a profound effect on her.

Certainly the most important influence on Pentland's style, which resulted from the summers at Tanglewood, was Copland.....Copland led her towards a lighter style, and the clear, open texture found in his works....¹¹

The five songs in Song Cycle were written between 1942 and 1945, ten years after Ruins. Pentland began them in December 1942, following her second summer working with Copland. The poems were written by the Canadian West Coast poet Anne Marriott.¹² Pentland writes that "the cycle is made up of five


¹¹ Eastman, 42.

¹² Anne Marriott was born in 1913 and resides in Vancouver.
poems which Anne Marriott wrote for me to set to music, with the idea of expressing aspects of Canada in those war years between 1943 and 1945". The songs were premiered by and dedicated to Frances James Adaskin, one of the first and probably best known Canadian singers to support Canadian music.

"Wheat", the first song of the cycle, was written in 1943. Pentland explains that "this song delineates the wide prairie space of rolling miles where the wheat blows". Hindemith’s influence is apparent in the constantly shifting tonal centres, bitonality, and contrapuntal texture. The voice and right hand of the piano share motivic material and tend to shift tonal centres almost every bar. In contrast, the left hand frequently has an ostinato. This sometimes creates a bitonal harmonic structure. In example 9, the left hand has an ostinato, and the right hand is triadic with the voice taking its pitches from each of the triads. However, the triads do not belong to a single key.

Ex.9

![Musical notation](image)

Copland’s influence can be seen in Pentland’s use of melodic lines built on


14 Ibid.
descending triads. This trait is found in many of Copland’s works.

*Outdoor Overture* (1938)

*Ex. 10*  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Flute} & : \\
\text{Clarinet in B} & : \\
\end{align*}
\]

*Our Town* (1940)

*Ex. 11*  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Flutes 1,2} & : \\
\end{align*}
\]

The form of the song is ternary: Section A, mm.1-17, is characterised by an ostinato of eighth notes centred on F; Section B, mm.18-34, has a quarter-note ostinato centred on A-flat; and the reprise of A begins in m.35 with a variation on the opening melody accompanied by the opening left-hand ostinato. The vocal line of mm.5-7 is then reprised more literally at m.44. Each section ends similarly with a falling major third and with textual reference to the blowing of wheat or wind. Both the first A section and B section end with piano interludes.

Despite more modern harmonies, vestiges of tonality remain in "Wheat", much as they do in Copland’s and Hindemith’s works of this period. For example, root motion by fourth plays an important structural role in the song. The vocal line
at the end of the first two sections suggests plagal cadences.

*Ex. 12*

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{IV} \\
\text{I}
\end{array}
\]

Although the ending of the final section has quartal, not triadic, harmony, it still suggests plagal root movement from F down a fourth to C.

*Ex. 13*

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{IV} \\
\text{I}
\end{array}
\]

Despite Pentland’s change in musical style, she still continues to display a musical sensitivity to the poetry. For example the "ceaseless prairie wind" is expressed by the constant motion of an ostinato figure. The slow harmonic rhythm of the ostinato expresses the unchanging expansiveness of the prairies. So do the long, wide-ranging phrases of the vocal line; for example, the first phrase is
nine measures long and covers the range of a twelfth. There is, however, one point in the song where the musical momentum stops. At the text "rustles the silence" both hands of the piano and the voice converge on a single tonality, and for one bar there is no movement in the piano.

Pentland's new linear, contrapuntal style can be seen in the imitation between the right hand of the piano and the vocal line. For example, in mm.6-9 the imitation is fragmented and transposed.

The piano interludes also imitate vocal material. For example, in m.15, after the first vocal phrase is completed, the piano repeats four pitch classes from the vocal line in mm.6-7.
The piano interlude in mm.30-34 begins with two measures echoing, at T8, the vocal line from mm.19-20. It then moves seamlessly into T5 of the vocal material from mm.6-9.

The piano interlude at mm. 41-43, unlike the other interludes, draws its material from the opening piano introduction, not from earlier vocal lines. This material is fragmented and partly transposed: it begins with the third note of the opening phrase, and at m. 42 the phrase abruptly shifts to T4, omitting two notes in the process.
In "Wheat", Pentland furthers her development of techniques to achieve musical unity. Many of her earlier songs are unified simply by the return of opening material at the conclusion. In *Song Cycle*, unity is also attained through formal devices, as well as through sophisticated techniques of imitation. Pentland continues throughout her career to expand techniques of motivic unity.

"Cities", the last song of *Song Cycle*, was written two years after "Wheat". In the text Anne Marriott continues her description of Canada, this time illustrating the geographical and economic diversity of Canada. The music is in binary form. The opening A section is characterized by syncopated, almost jazz-like rhythms. The B section begins in m.39 with an ostinato. Pentland continues her exploration for greater unity with increased use of recurring rhythmic and melodic motives, traits found in the music of Hindemith and Copland.

The compositional style is very similar to Copland’s, with strong rhythmic motives and shorter phrases than in "Wheat". The phrases, two to three bars in length, are unified by various melodic and rhythmic devices. For example, the first
bar contains a cell on which the rest of the song is built -- a descending fifth and an upper neighbour note.

Ex. 19

\[ \text{\textbf{Ex. 19}} \]

This cell makes up the opening vocal phrase as well as much of the piano accompaniment in various pitch and rhythmic transformations.

Ex. 20

\[ \text{\textbf{Ex. 20}} \]

The same pitch classes of this opening vocal line (mm.3-8) return in the opening vocal line of the B section (mm.41-44).

Ex. 21

\[ \text{\textbf{Ex. 21}} \]

This cell repetition is disguised by the distinct change in texture, from the strong syncopated rhythms of section A to a quintuplet ostinato figure at m.39. However, even this new ostinato is based on the opening five note cell, containing a falling fifth as well as an upper neighbour tone.
Another unifying element of the song is a whole-tone scale fragment. This appears clearly in the left hand of the piano at m.2, m.18, and mm.35-37. Example 23 shows this whole-tone fragment, in retrograde, as the highest pitches in each of the opening five bars of the vocal line.

An additional unifying idea is the rhythmic motive that is stated first in m.2 and recurs throughout the A section (mm.18-19, mm.20-21, mm.21-22, modified at m.23 and m.24, m.31, m.34 and mm.36-37).

Perhaps this tightly knit musical unity is Pentland’s way of portraying the sense of the poem -- Canada is similarly diverse with "fishing towns and the prairies, with banking cities and factory towns, but they are still all bound to the
town [Ottawa] with the carillon tower". For example, the B section begins with the text describing Quebec -- a distinct society -- and Pentland fittingly changes the character of the music. However, even though the texture and rhythm are different, the pitches are the same, perhaps signifying that although Quebec is distinctly different from the rest of Canada, it is still Canadian.

Just as the increasingly motivic construction of Pentland’s music shows the influence of Hindemith and Copland, so do some metric features of "Cities". For example there is metric conflict in mm.48-50 where the accents do not correspond with the time signature.

Ex.25

\begin{music}
\newclef{bass}
\newclef{treble}
\newclef{clef=percussion}
\begin{music Staffs}
\newclef{bass}
\newclef{treble}
\newclef{clef=percussion}
\end{music}
\end{music}

There is also metric conflict in mm.31-34. The meter is 2/2, however the voice is in 6/8; and the piano alternates between 4/4, 6/8, 9/8 and 5/4. (Ex.26)

Like the first song of the cycle, "Wheat", "Cities" ends with quartal harmony, a favourite colour of both Hindemith and Copland. Considering the songs were written over a span of two years, this element helps to unify the cycle. There are however some noticeable changes in Pentland’s writing in these two years. "Cities" uses strong rhythmic motives, and new rhythmic techniques such as metric conflict. The phrases are shorter, as Pentland increases the motivic
density. The texture of "Wheat" is thicker with, for example, the use of octave doubling of the melody in the piano introduction accompanied by a low ostinato. "Cities" has a sparser, more contrapuntal texture with often just two voices in imitation. This trend toward economy of material and texture can be seen to reach its fullest expression in her next group of songs.

Ex. 26

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Prairie city streets} & \quad \text{know no bond nor reign} \\
\text{R.H.} & \quad \text{piano} \\
\text{L.H.} & \quad \text{voice}
\end{align*}
\]
The Three Sung Songs were written almost twenty years later, in 1964. At this time Pentland was most concerned to use musical material with the greatest economy. The music of Anton Webern had a profound effect on her writing, and encouraged her to eliminate all non-essential notes in her compositions.

I first heard Webern’s music in 1947 when I went to the MacDowell Colony and met Dika Newlin, who was a student of Schoenberg. At that point my music was in the neo-classical style and contained too many notes to satisfy me. I love Webern’s work because it offered a way of stripping music down to the bare essentials. His materials were so restricted, yet his music was so revealing and expressive. His ideas freed me from the last vestiges of influence of the 19th century or of the neo-classical style. They opened up my landscape.15

Except for an opera written in 1952, Pentland had not written anything for voice since 1945. She explained that her biggest problem was finding "short, simple, direct lyrics that do not have their own musical rhythm"16 -- that is, texts that would accommodate her newly economical musical style. For this reason she turned in 1964 to a set of Chinese poems from the Sung Dynasty, each expressing a single mood.17 The form of the music follows the form of the poetry. Each poem is divided into two verses, and each song likewise is divided into two sections that correspond to the verses.

The influence of Webern is evident in the texture, text setting and serial techniques. The music is brief, with a pointillistic texture very similar to Webern’s.

---


16 Eastman and McGee, 96.

It is interesting that Pentland uses a device Webern never used -- *Sprechstimme* -- to add colour and emphasis to the text. The music is composed with the twelve-tone technique. The vocal line is strict in its presentation of different row forms, but the piano is much freer. Pentland in an interview states:

"I've never been a strict serialist. I haven't written much more than a few very short pieces where I've used fairly strict serialism, because I don't predetermine any of my writing. For example, I couldn't do what Boulez did in *Les Deux Structures*, where everything is serialized. Fantastic labour. I couldn't do that, because I rely too much on the musical impulse to get me going. I never like to feel as if everything is in a straitjacket, because it's too inhibiting to the musical fancy."\(^{18}\)

In the second song "Life", the twelve-tone structure is clear. The prime form (T0) is stated immediately by the voice in a syllabic setting of the first line. The last three statements of the row are elided. The first elision occurs at m.33 where the final pitch class of T1 is the first pitch class of RT7I.

*Ex.27*

\[\text{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Ex27.png}}\]

The last two row forms are elided at m.39 where the last pitch-class of RT7I becomes the first pitch-class of RT0. The use of elision is typical of Webern.

*Ex.28*

\[\text{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Ex28.png}}\]

---

Row boundaries correspond neatly with those of the text for the first three statements, but then cease to coincide, as is apparent in ex. 27 and ex. 28. However, this does not affect the listener’s perception of the poetic form, as the musical phrases are structured more by rhythm and English syntax than by the row forms.

Twelve-tone structure in the accompaniment is harder to hear. The piano opens the song with a two-part counterpoint exploring various imitative relations that obscure the row. As shown in ex. 29, the two hands each present a perfect fourth in m.1, suggesting imitation at T10. In mm.2-3, however, the hands appear to be inversionally related at T4I, as they play two registral lines \(<G5, E5, B4, C#5>\) and \(<A2, C3, F3, E_b2>\) that project an inversional centre of D4. Both the suggested relations obscure the true row relation in this passage, in which T8I and RT0I are combined.

Ex. 29
Pentland takes advantage of some sophisticated properties of the row.\textsuperscript{19} In m.2, the dyad \{G,A\} is an ordered segment of both row forms. Similarly in m.5, the dyad \{E,F\#\} in the left hand of the piano, which occupies order positions ten and eleven in T\textsubscript{8I}, coincides with the same pitch classes occupying order positions nine and ten of TO in the voice. This property of invariance is manifested more fully later in the song. In m.12 for instance, three forms are present. The three row forms exhibit five invariant dyads.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{TO} & \quad \langle t, 7, 0, e, 1, 8, 3, 5, 6, 4, 2, 9 \rangle \\
\text{T\textsubscript{8I}} & \quad \langle t, 1, 8, 9, 7, 0, 5, 3, 2, 4, 6, e \rangle \\
\text{RTO} & \quad \langle 9, 2, 4, 6, 5, 3, 8, 1, e, 0, 7, t \rangle
\end{align*}
\]

By m.19 it becomes increasingly difficult to label the row forms in the piano as Pentland is using small motivic echoes that interact locally with the voice.

\textit{Ex.30}

The two other row forms used in the song also have invariant properties.

\[
\begin{align*}
T1 & \langle e, 8, 1, 0, 2, 9, 4, 6, 7, 5, 3, 1 \rangle \\
RT7l & \langle 5, 3, 1, 2, 4, e, 6, 8, 7, 0, 9 \rangle
\end{align*}
\]

The invariant trichord \{Bb, F, Eb\} is used at m.33 at one of the points of elision, using the ordered segment to complete Tl and then again to begin RT7l. Two pitch classes from the trichord, F and Eb, are used in the piano, at m.33, at the point of elision.

Ex.31

For the third song of *Three Sung Songs*, "Let the Harp Speak", Pentland also chose a row that has many invariants under certain transformations. Four forms of the row are used.

\[
\begin{align*}
T0 & \langle 4, 2, 5, 7, 6, e, 8, t, 0, 3, 1, 9 \rangle \\
T5l & \langle 1, 3, 0, t, e, 6, 9, 7, 5, 2, 4, 8 \rangle \\
T1l & \langle 9, e, 8, 6, 7, 2, 5, 3, 1, t, 0, 4 \rangle
\end{align*}
\]

Note that the segments invariant between T0 and T5l are in retrograde. The piano is composed primarily of the invariant dyads from T5l and T0, with no clear statements of the row forms. For example, the first bar of the piano is made up of
the following invariant dyads: \{4, 2\}, \{1, 3\}, \{7, 5\}, \{0, t\} and \{6, e\}.

\begin{ex}
\begin{align*}
4 & 2 & 7 & 5 & 6 & e & 4 & 2 \\
\end{align*}
\end{ex}

The vocal line presents clear statements of TO, T1I, T5I and RT0. However, at mm. 24-26, Pentland presents the invariant trichord of TO and T5I, \{4, 2, 5\}. This trichord is used to link the statement of the two rows with TO presented in mm.17-24\(^1\), and T5I in mm.27-33.

\begin{ex}
\begin{align*}
4 & 2 & 5 \\
\end{align*}
\end{ex}

A trichord of the same type, \{023\}, is used in the piano and vocal line on "Let the harp strings speak for me" (mm. 32-33).

\begin{ex}
\begin{align*}
[ & 3 & 0 & 2 ] \\
\end{align*}
\end{ex}

Pentland again uses the technique of elision. For example, at m.8 in the vocal line,
the first two row statements elide, using the last pitch-class 9 of T0 as the first pitch-class of T1I. This use of elision highlights the invariant properties of the row. She also uses the technique of rotation with the first and last pitch-classes of T5I presented from mm.27-33.

A formal device used in Pentland’s earlier, tonal songs finds a most appropriate use in these twelve-tone songs, namely the reprise of opening material at the end of a work. In both "Life" and "Let the Harp Speak", we hear the original row form of the voice, T0, reprised as the last vocal phrase, but in retrograde, so that the voice ends with its beginning pitch.

The vocal line of all three songs of the cycle has some wide leaps of sevenths, ninths and tenths, a trait found in many of Webern’s songs. Pentland often uses these wide leaps for text painting. For example, in "Let the Harp Speak" a descending ninth is used on the first word "raindrops".

Ex. 35

There are many other examples of text painting in the same song. She uses staccato sixteenth notes in the piano to depict raindrops, or perhaps the harp. In m.8 there is a melisma in the vocal line colouring the word "flowing". At this point the staccato sixteenth notes in the piano cease for the first time and are replaced with sustained chords. Pentland also uses the low register of the voice when the text refers to sadness. For example, the lowest note in the vocal line is presented on the word "sorrow" in m.15. The only occurrence in the song of a dotted rhythm occurs in m. 20 on the word "bitter".
Ballad

Pentland’s musical language takes on another dimension in the 1960’s when she began to experiment with new sounds and indeterminacy. These new materials present quite a contrast to the serial technique, motivic structures and new rhythmic techniques of her preceding songs. Pentland had been hesitant to incorporate indeterminacy into her music until 1966. Eugene Wilson, a member of the UBC Department of Music Chamber Music Ensemble, gave her the encouragement to adopt improvisatory elements, and a commission from the ensemble resulted in *Trio con alea*. She was still using aleatoric elements when she composed her *Ballad* for soprano and violin in 1979. The performers are given general guidelines for determining durations, so rhythm is fairly free, but the pitches are precisely specified.

The piece is in an arch form -- A B C B A. Contrasts of short, concise motives and tonality define sectional divisions. The text, which is anonymous, also supports the arch form. Both A sections repeat "O wae is me". The first B section states that the poetess’s true love is gone, a fact which is further illuminated in the second B section (which reveals that he rode away to see his true love). The C section is a more objective description of the fickle loved one galloping off over the mead.

The opening A section itself is a small rounded binary form. A prominent motive which is used throughout the piece, is presented four times in the A section. It is made up of a falling minor third, in the soprano, set against a rising minor third embellished with a quarter tone, in the violin.
As at the opening of "Life", an imitative texture is suggested by the opening thirds. Indeed there are many examples of imitation between the violin and soprano throughout the work. For example, the violin’s ascending minor sixth at the beginning of the third line echoes the voice’s ascending minor sixth at the end of the second line. This imitation on a new interval creates the contrasting part of the rounded binary form of section A.

The new motive also foreshadows the B section which begins with a violin solo introducing a similar motive at the bottom of page one. It is heard three times before the voice enters, at the bottom of page one and the top of page two, and then again on the second line of the second page at T10.
The contrast between the B section and the A section is created by another motive introduced by the voice at the end of the second line on the second page. The skeleton of this motive is immediately imitated in the violin.

On the third line of the second page the B section ends, like the A section, with motive X, this time at T2. The transposition of motive X at this point, corresponds to a shift of tonic from D-flat of section A, to F here. The new tonic becomes apparent where an F triad is spelled out linearly with alternations between G-sharp and A-natural on the third line of page two. This is also supported by the Z motive which spells the dominant-seventh chord of F.
The C section is quite distinct from the other sections. The rhythm is precisely notated in common time, and the tempo is twice as fast as in the previous sections. The dotted rhythm also provides a strong contrast to the previous sustained pitches. The galloping horse is effectively illustrated throughout the C section. The violinist is asked to tap dotted rhythms on the body of the instrument, and there is extensive use of double stops. Unlike in the A and B sections, both the vocal part and the violin present all twelve tones.

These textual and rhythmic changes accompany a change of tonic, to C major/minor. The violin at the beginning of the section outlines C-minor followed by a dyad {G,F} suggesting the dominant of C.

Ex.41

Similarly, the long C5 and E5 at the end of section C’s first vocal phrase, ("white steed") suggest C-major. However, over the second phrase of this section (the second measure of page three), the tonality shifts again as the vocal line presents diatonic scale fragments of G-flat/ F-sharp natural minor.

Ex.42

The last two bars of section C act as a retransition, in that the violin and voice bring back pitch-classes from the motives X and Y in a higher register. These are
shown in the example:

*Ex. 43*

![Motives X Y X X](image)

The reprise of the B section that follows the pause includes many of the motives from the first B section. It begins with an altered version of motive Y: instead of the ascending minor sixth, an ascending major sixth is used, on the word "true".

*Ex. 44*

![My True (?) Love](image)

The violin figure at the beginning of the last line of page three is the same as in the last phrase of the first B section, but at T6. The Y motive is contained within this figure.

*Ex. 45*

![Motive Y](image) ![T6 (Y)](image)

The last vocal phrase at the bottom of page three is a variation on motive Z; again it suggests the dominant of F major/minor, resolving to the tonic. The violin
imitates this motive, varied and at a different transpositional level, but the combination supports the F tonic at the end.

Ex. 46

The subsequent vocal line at the top of page four suggests motive Y with the interval of a sixth and a ninth.

Ex. 47

On the second line of page four the voice presents motive Z at T5, this time outlining a dominant seventh chord on F.

Ex. 48

The final A section is abbreviated, but it reprises all of the prominent motives and pitch classes from the opening A section, in the same rounded binary
structure as at first. The first part presents motive X, centred on E-flat; the second part begins with the retrograde of motive Y -- D to F-sharp instead of F-sharp to D; and the song closes with motive X centred on E-flat.  

Pentland deploys many colouristic effects in the song. She has written ornamental quarter-tones and specifies a wide vibrato. The latter appears in the voice in the first B section on the word "Love", where it is perhaps an imitation of crying. There are also various colouristic violin techniques such as *sul ponticello* and *sul tasto*, as well as the indication to tap on the body of the instrument. The harsh *sul ponticello* lends a sardonic twist to the quote from the Wedding March from *Lohengrin*, setting the text "His bride-to-be" in the reprise of the B section.  

Ex.49 

At the end of section C, the horse galloping off into the distance is colourfully depicted with a very high glissando on the violin. Glissando is also used in the voice to colour text. For example, in the reprise of section B, Pentland sets the word "true" on an ascending glissando, suggesting perhaps that the faithfulness of the "true love" is questionable.

---

20 The key relations of the song emphasize the minor third interval prominently outlined in motive X. From the first A section until the end of the first B section, the tonal centres move from E-flat to F to G-flat. From the C section until the end of the final A section, the tonal centres move from C to F to E-flat.

21 Both quarter-tones and variations of vibrato were first used in Pentland’s *String Quartet No. 3* in 1969.

22 Pentland uses quotes in other vocal works, such as *America the Beautiful* in *News*, and Richard Strauss’s *Don Juan* in *Disasters of the Sun*. 
Ice Age

Ice Age, Pentland’s last work for voice, is a setting of a poem by Dorothy Livesay.\(^{23}\) Livesay was one of the first English language poets that Pentland had found to be both “modern and flexible enough to work with”.\(^{24}\) The two collaborated on an opera called *The Lake* in 1952 and on a large-scale work for voice and chamber ensemble called *Disasters of the Sun* in 1976. *Ice Age* is the title poem of a collection Livesay published in 1975. It prophetically describes a “nuclear winter” ten years earlier than scientists, depicting not only the physical devastation of our planet with all its creatures, but of mankind.\(^{25}\) Pentland describes the poem as expressing helplessness in the midst of the Cold War.\(^{26}\)

It is possible to hear *Ice Age* as encapsulating all aspects of Pentland’s previous songs. There is use of serial technique but it is much freer than in *Three Sung Songs*. Pentland continues her use of quarter-tones, *Sprechstimme*, and aleatoric freedom, as well as local imitation and text painting. As in *Ballad*, she indicates specific vocal timbres, and uses glissandos for special effects. Pentland’s exploration of new timbres includes the voice singing into the strings of the piano. She also explores textural blocks of sounds, involving piano pedalling, pedal tones...

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\(^{23}\) Dorothy Livesay was born in 1909 in Winnipeg. She has produced approximately five hundred poems, books, prose, plays, librettos, many receiving prestigious awards. Recently moving from Galiano Island, Livesay is now living in Victoria, B.C.

\(^{24}\) Eastman and McGee, 100.


\(^{26}\) In conversation with Barbara Pentland at her home in Vancouver, on 21 April, 1994.
and clusters.

_Ice Age_ is composed with a free serial technique. The opening vocal material is a row that is repeated three times throughout the song, transposed and musically varied.

*Ex. 50*

TO

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{In this coming co-} \\
\text{(o) -}
\end{array}
\]

T1

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{In this co-} \\
\text{ming cold}
\end{array}
\]

T2

\[
\text{Worse than an ani-}
\]

Interspersed between the opening material are sections of contrasting material, creating a Rondo form: A B A¹ C A² D A³. Each section is introduced by a piano interlude of a few bars. The sections are distinguished by tonality, motivic material and pitch-class set content.

The three bars of piano music that begin the opening A section introduce the A material. A huge chord is built down from a high register, consisting of the
pitch-class set \{0,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9\}.

Ex. 51

The first chord in m.1 includes two intervals found in other chords throughout the song. An interval class 1, \{G,A_{\flat}\}, and a minor sixth, \{G_{5}, E_{b}6\}, in the right hand are prominently set in a high register and contrasts the low left hand cluster.

Ex. 52

In mm.4-6, the voice begins by repeating four of the piano’s previous pitch classes, \{2,4,5,0\}. These are repeated again in the piano, m.7, and augmented by other pitch classes to make up the hexachord \{2,4,5,6,9,0\}. In m. 8-10 the voice starts its next phrase by presenting new pitch classes, \{e,1,9\}, which complete the twelve-tone aggregate.
The B section (mm. 14-31) is clearly defined by a new chord in mm. 14-15, this time built up from the low register, and pianissimo.

Ex. 53

The interval of a minor third is prevalent in this section. The descending minor third is used specifically where the text deals with "rain" and "snow". This can be seen in the "rain" motive \{0,e,8\} that is first introduced in the piano at m. 23 and is repeated in the vocal line on "rain" at m. 26, and again in the left hand of the piano in m. 29.  

Ex. 54

\[27\] This trichord \{014\} - the rain motive - also occurs in mm. 23-24 \{1,t,9\} and \{0,3,4\}, and in m. 26 \{5,4,1\}. 
intervals at the end of the section, on the text "yin yang ancient and balanced". Here Pentland uses parallel fifths and fourths, perhaps to evoke the pentatonic scale and the oriental "yin yang".

Ex.57

In the A\textsuperscript{2} section (mm.55-62), A material is presented transposed up a whole tone as the vocal line presents a fairly strict transposed repetition of the opening vocal phrase (mm.4-13). There is added quarter-tone ornamentation to intensify the word "worse".

The D section (mm.63-80) opens with an accented augmented trichord in the piano interlude. The trichord is prominent throughout this digression, associated with text involving the "sun". The augmented trichord \{0,4,8\} is presented horizontally in the vocal line in m.69 ("ripped away leaf") and in mm.73-74 ("is moving to destroy"). In both cases the piano accompanies it with a ninth chord on B, giving the trichord a distinct sonority.
In mm.65-66 Pentland combines the E-flat minor tetrachord from m.40 (which set up the text "supersonic planes") with the rain motive, to colour the text "sun's energy".
The augmented and minor intervals, however, are sharply contrasted with the "yin yang" (perfect fourths and fifths) material from the previous digression, when the text shifts to "the still centre heart's power".

Ex. 60

A reprise is foreshadowed when Pentland presents opening pitches from the A material at T0 \{0,2,4,5,6,t\} in the piano (on the word "centre") in m.76. Perhaps Pentland is pointing out that this A material is the musical centre of the song.

In the concluding A³ section (mm.81-93), as in other vocal works, Pentland returns to opening material. At first, the restatement of A is not strict. There are similar ideas however, which signal the recurrence of the A section, such as a huge chord built over the two-and-a-half bar piano introduction beginning in m.81. Also the dyad \{t,8\} at mm.83-84 in the vocal line, is an inversion (T0I) of the dyad \{2,4\} from m.5.

Ex. 61

coming cold now who
However, at mm.85-89 there is a direct reprise of mm.1-9, rounding off the form. This final A section provides satisfying closure to the song by incorporating some of the preceding digressive material. Notably the perfect fourths from the "yin yang" material, which has always been used to complete a digression, recur in A³, on the text "I am of God good?"

Ex.62

In the Coda (mm.94-101) Pentland brings back musical material from various sections of the song. An E-minor triad with an added flat fifth in m.95 is a transposition of the tetrachord in m.40. An untransposed reprise of the A material (over which the voice sings "Who among us dares to be righteous?") begins in m.97. On the word "dares" Pentland sets an augmented trichord horizontally and linearly, in the right hand of the piano and in the vocal line, recalling section D.

Ex.63

Here the pitch-class E resolves to F, as it does in the opening piano line (mm.2-3),
and in the vocal line (m.5). On the word "righteous" the "yin yang" material reappears, consisting of perfect fourths and fifths.

*Ex. 64*

Pentland’s sensitivity to the text is seen in the way she uses minor and augmented intervals to accompany the text’s descriptions of nuclear destruction. Intervals of sevenths and ninths are also used for dramatic points: the rain motive in the piano in m. 23; on the word "shriek" in mm. 43-44; and mm.60-61 on "tortures".

*Ex. 65*

(The minor ninth and major seventh are both interval class 1, which as indicated earlier, is used in many of the piano chords. This exemplifies, as we have seen in her other songs, the strong sense of motivic unity.) In sharp contrast to these descriptions of destruction, more consonant intervals of the perfect fourth and fifth are used whenever the text refers to things that are good. This effective contrast helps to intensify the harshness of the musical and poetic descriptions of destruction.
CONCLUSION

In summary, much can be learned about the evolution of Barbara Pentland’s musical style through the study of her vocal compositions. Over the time span of fifty-seven years -- from 1929 until 1986 -- Barbara Pentland took a variety of compositional approaches. In the early songs Pentland was writing with post-romantic chromaticism. After studies with Copland and Hindemith in the early 1940’s, she adopted a neo-classical approach. Twelve-tone technique was used in Three Sung Songs (1964), and in her later songs, freer serial techniques were used as well as aleatoric techniques and new explorations in

However despite the changes in her musical language, all of the songs contain similar devices. Motivic unity is a trait found in almost all of her music, showing a concern for an economical and integrated use of material. All her songs involve a dialogue for voice and accompanying instrument, with a profuse amount of imitation. In many of her works, Pentland returns to opening material at the close of a song, rounding out the work in a disciplined design. Pedal tones can be found in many of Pentland’s works, and are used in all of the songs studied, except for Song Cycle.

Pentland’s choice of text and the manner in which she sets the text is of utmost importance to her. It is not surprising that the main reason for the smallness of her output of vocal works is the difficulty she had in finding texts that suited her. But when she found a text that inspired her, the music became the servant to the poem. All of her vocal works end with the text; with the exception of a couple of songs that have a two or three-bar instrumental closure, there are
no postludes. Her one act opera *The Lake*, and her work for large chamber ensemble, *Disasters of the Sun*, similarly end with unaccompanied voice. Pentland has always made the text primary, and when the words are completed, so is the music.
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Barbara Pentland (1912)

Works for Solo Voice and Piano (unless otherwise specified)

1929 The Cottager to Her Infant
1930 Aveu fleuri
1932 Ruins
1932 A Lavender Lady
1934 Lament (voice and string quartet)
1935 They Are Not Long
1937 Starless Night
1938 The Mask
1940 Unvanquished
1945 At Early Dawn (tenor, flute and cello)
1945 Song Cycle
1952 The Lake (one-act chamber opera)
1964 Three Sung Songs
1970 News (voice and orchestra)
1971 Sung Songs Nos. 4 and 5
1976 Disasters of the Sun (mezzo-soprano; fl; B flat cl; horn; 2 perc; pno;
prepared tape; vln; vla; vcl.)
1979 Ballad for Soprano and Violin
1986 Ice Age
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CAROLYN HART, Soprano
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Richard Epp, Piano

Frühlingslied
Das erste Veilchen
Romanze
Neue Liebe

Fünf Lieder Op. 3 (1908-9)

Dies ist ein Lied
Im Windesweben
An Bachesranch
Im Morgentaun
Kahl reckt der Baum

Drei Lieder Op. 25 (1934)

Wie bin ich froh!
Des Herzens Purpurvogel
Sterne, Ihr silbernen Bienen der Nacht

Chansons Pour Les Oiseaux (1948)

La colombe poignardée
Le petit pigeon bleu
L’oiseau bleu
Le petit serin en cage

- INTERMISSION -

Quattro Liriche Di Antonio Machado (1948)

La primavera
Ayer soñé que veia a Dios
Señor, ya me arrancaste
La primavera

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy
(1809-1847)

Anton Webern
(1883-1945)

Anton Webern

Louis Beydts
(1895-1953)

Luigi Dallapiccola
(1904-1975)
A Song For The Lord Mayor's Table (1962)  

William Walton  
(1902-1983)  

The Lord Mayor’s Table  
Glide Gently  
Wapping Old Stairs  
Holy Thursday  
The Contrast  
Rhyme  

* In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree with a major in Voice.  

MENDELSSOHN  

Frühlingstèd - Spring Song  
(Op. 19 Nr. 1)  
In the woods there are sweet sounds of birds singing and beautiful flowers blooming towards the May light. My spirit also blooms with the thought of your goodness, which makes my soul rich, as does a dream to the poor one. -Ulrich von Lichtenstein  

Das erste Veilchen - The First Violet  
(Op. 19 Nr. 2)  
When I saw the first violet, I was ravished by colour and scent! The bearer of bloom I pressed full of joy to my swelling, hopeful breast. The bloom is gone, the violet is dead. All around spring flowers of blue and red. I stand in the midst and hardly see them; The violet, appears to me in a spring dream. -Egon Ebert  

Romanze - Romance  
(Op. 8 Nr. 10)  
Just once from his glance, from his sweet mouth, Greeting and kiss should light up the gloomy depths of the heart. I cannot forget him. I cannot regret it. I did not sin wantonly. Heaven will pardon. -from the Spanish  

Neue Liebe - New Love  
(Op. 19 Nr. 4)  
Not long ago I saw the elves riding through the moonlit woods, I heard their horns sound and their bells tinkle. Their little white horses bore golden stags’ antlers and flew Swiftly along; it was as if wild swans drew through the air. The queen nodded to me and smiled as she rode past. Did she mean my new love? Or am I to die? -Heinrich Heine  

WEBERN  

Fünf Lieder Op. 3 - from "The Seventh Ring" by Stefan George  

Dies ist ein Lied  
This is a song from you alone: of childish longing, of pious tears... Through morning gardens it sings, lightly winged. This song is meant to move but you alone.
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Recital Hall
Tuesday, May 3, 1994
8:00 p.m.

DOCTORAL RECITAL
CAROLYN HART, Soprano
with
Richard Epp, Piano
&
Anne Simons, Violin

FORM AND POETRY IN THE VOCAL WORKS
OF
BARBARA PENTLAND (b. 1912)

The Cottager to her Infant 1929
(Dorothy Wordsworth)
Ruins (Ypres 1917) 1932
(George H. Clarke)

Song Cycle 1942-45
1. Wheat (Anne Marriott)
5. Cities

Sung Songs 1-3 1964
2. Life (trans. Clara M. Candlin)
3. Let the Harp Speak (Hsin Ch’i Chi)
(Yen Chi-tao)

Ballad for Soprano and Violin (1979)
(anon.)

Ice Age 1986
(Dorothy Livesay)

* In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree with a performance major in Voice.