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Incline, O Maiden...

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# Incline, O Maiden... 

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## Dissertation

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# Incline, O Maiden... 

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Incline, $O$ Maiden is a large-scale work cast as a dramatic scene for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble. It is an exploration of space between music and drama, and the problems inherent in creating a singlecharacter operatic scene. This paper, which serves as an accompaniment to the musical score, is a detailed analysis of the work and focuses on the ways in which form and recurring music motives are used to establish a dramatic conflict with only a single character.

The libretto for this dramatic scene is extracted from the play, Faust: A Tragedy, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), written in 1808, with English translation by Bayard Taylor (1825-1878). This libretto is
centered on the character of Margaret, an original addition to the Faust legend by Goethe, and is a depiction of her inner psychological turmoil as she becomes a willing victim of Faust's seduction. The story begins as Margaret has just met Faust and quickly becomes infatuated with him, and continues through the death of her mother.

Composed as a single movement, this piece is divided into two major parts for each of the two sections of action in the libretto. Each major part is further divided into smaller formal sections that are supported and delineated by five major motives that serve as the vast majority of the musical material, and are at the forefront of each formal and dramatic division in the work.

Recurring musical motives, sometimes known as leitmotivs, have a long history in opera dating back to Wagner, and in this work, explore how tradition is part of the modern creative process. In Incline, $O$ Maiden, despite the absence of interplay between characters, and given the internal struggle at the heart of the libretto, an indelible link between the drama and music is made meaningful by the unified thematic nature of the music.

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# Incline, O Maiden - Analysis <br> Problems in single-character opera 

By James D. Norman

Incline, $O$ Maiden is an exploration of the space between chamber music and drama in a large-scale work cast as a dramatic scene for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble. Of primary interest to me in the composition of this work was confronting the problem of how drama can be established without the presence of a traditional antagonist. In this scenario music must take on an even more pronounced role, as the scene cannot rely just on the onstage action to drive the narrative. Incline, $O$ Maiden is a work that uses the contrapuntal and independent nature of chamber music, but also its ability to be a character in and of itself, with the spectacle and dramatic capabilities of an operatic role.

In drama there are a few basic types of conflict in which a character is placed in opposition to some sort of external force. Sometimes these external forces are represented by another person, nature, or more generalized groups like society or religion. However, with a single-character drama there is no place for an external force, so, the conflict must be an internal one. In this case, a character is placed in opposition against her own will, fears, and hardships. Although the struggle is internal, it is often influenced by external circumstances. It is in this type of conflict that I found the greatest opportunity to create a rich dramatic experience with only a single character. However, conveying this type of drama in an operatic performance does pose a problem. How can this internal struggle be represented as an event that takes place over the course of the
scene with only a single character? This is, perhaps, where music makes its greatest contribution. Spoken dialogue (and the written word) is quick to the point, while music is a slow developing process, allowing it to play a second character of sorts, an auditory reflection of the main character's struggle. Drama is often delivered to an intended audience in a familiar language and accompanied by familiar gestures, while the language of music is often interpreted as emotional, internal, and far from discreet, rhetoric. Therefore, the onstage actor/singer's traditional dramatic role can be complemented by an active internal struggle established in the music.

The absence of traditional dramatic interplay between characters only serves to heighten the necessity of the composer to utilize music as an emotional counterpoint to the drama. Given an internal struggle, the music must, in some way, be able to represent the conflict. In Incline, $O$ Maiden, I saw the primary solution to this problem to be the often-used operatic device of recurring musical motives, sometimes known as leitmotivs. While simultaneously being able to establish the mood, tone and pace of operatic drama, the role of recurring motives and thematic material creates the unity that is necessary to form a character in the musical tapestry. In this opera, the leitmotivs are designed to make special reference to the various internal forces affecting the main character.

## THE TEXT

The libretto for this dramatic scene is extracted from the play, Faust: A Tragedy, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), written in 1808. The story of Faust-the ambitious scholar who sells his soul to the Devil in exchange for love, experience,
knowledge, and power-is a fertile source of drama and intrigue that has been the inspiration for many writers and composers. The original 16th-century legend, an embellishment on the life of an obscure historical figure, has been retold by Christopher Marlowe, Gotthold Lessing, Heinrich Heine, Paul Valery and Thomas Mann, among others, but the verse drama by Goethe is by far the most famous and influential version. Goethe's Faust is the basis for many musical adaptations, including operas by Gounod and Boito, a dramatic cantata by Berlioz, symphonic treatments by Liszt and Mahler, dramatic scenes by Schumann and song settings by numerous composers. Clearly, there is an element of musical and literary baggage associated with this text; however, it is not the title character of Faust, nor the gentlemanly devil, Mephistopheles, who is of interest to me. It is the character of Margaret (sometimes referred to as Gretchen, which is a nickname for Margaret in German, in Goethe's text) that I find to be an underappreciated and thoroughly fascinating character.

Margaret, an original addition to the Faust legend in Goethe's version, is the subject of Faust's desire, and ultimately suffers the greatest tragedy in the play. She is a tragic figure who by the end of the story has been seduced and abandoned, has killed her illegitimate child, and been condemned to death. Goethe leaves much unexplained, but having been directly or indirectly responsible for the death of her mother, sister, brother, and baby, Margaret has seemingly gone insane with guilt as she awaits her execution. She is the victim of Faust's lust. Ultimately, Margaret's struggle is an internal one as she becomes susceptible to the desires and designs of Faust (and Mephistopheles).

While Faust is intended by Goethe to represent the archetypal "everyman," possessing a broad array of human ability, strengths, and weaknesses, which are magnified in this moralistic tale, the character of Margaret seems small and inconsequential (other than being the focus of Faust's desire). But Goethe does more than just create a good girl seduced into evil ways before being saved at the end. Goethe gives Margaret the depth of a troubled life with a family broken by unfortunate deaths and sickness. I am fascinated with the idea of this character, a person who is fatally flawed in a way that allows her to be taken into Faust's web of deceit. She is a simple, innocent, and pious maiden who develops into a figure of genuine tragedy. But why? She becomes a willing victim of Faust's seduction due to loneliness, inexperience, resentment of her mother's strictness, and a troubled life, which left her caring for a child while her sick mother was no more than a burden. Almost as an act of rebellion and utter frustration with her reality, Margaret gives in to Faust. But underneath that, she is a romantic at heart, idealistic and naïve, characteristics that will lead her to assume that Faust's love is genuine and permanent, and will ultimately be her undoing.

Incline, $O$ Maiden is focused on the moment after Margaret has just briefly met Faust in the street outside her home. She returns home to tend to her sick mother and begins to day-dream about Faust, her ideal man, a handsome gentleman who will take her to a better life. As she fantasizes about Faust, Margaret is both innocent and erotic as she slowly undresses, wondering who was that man she met, and singing a romantic song about the King of Thule. Ultimately, she finds a box of jewelry that has mysteriously been left for her, and while lost in her fantasy, she imagines that these jewels could only
be for a beautiful, noble woman. Juxtaposed against this romantic fantasy world is the reality of her life, a poor, lower-class existence where she is alone and beholden to a strict, sick mother. She laments of her tough childhood and lonely existence. As part one ends, she discovers that her mother has died. As part two of this dramatic scene begins, Margaret is at her mother's grave in front of the image of the Mater Dolorosa (the image of the Virgin Mary grieving at the foot of the Cross). There she prays-a prayer of loss, of repentance, of anger.

Incline, $O$ Maiden is not concerned with the events that unfold within Goethe's Faust, but with the character of Margaret, who becomes a participant in her own downfall. Crippled by the stress and responsibility of caring for an elderly, sick mother, and the pain of the loss of her brother and sister, she becomes the victim of the desires of Faust. It is this moment in her life which I attempt to capture in a short dramatic scene for mezzosoprano and chamber ensemble.

## ANALYSIS

There are many parts to an analysis, especially when dealing with a piece of this length. Rhythm, harmony, orchestration, counterpoint, and form are all significance to this work, but the needs of the drama are fundamental to the composition of the music. The nature of the text as I have extracted it does not present a clear dramatic arch, and thus it is the job of the music to reinterpret this text in a manner that clearly delineates the drama and the character of Margaret. In Incline, $O$ Maiden the dramatic divisions of the text and a careful outline for the use of the various leitmotivs dictate the form.

Incline, $O$ Maiden was composed as a single movement work divided into two major parts for each of the two sections of action in the libretto [see Appendix C for the complete libretto]. The first part (measures $42-331$ ) deals with the character of Margaret at home as she tends to her mother and dreams of a better life. The second part (measures $332-565$ ) is a prayer Margaret offers at her mother's grave in front of an image of the Virgin Mary. Part One can be divided into eight formal sections following a 42-measure introduction, while Part Two has five sections. Dramatically, as delineated by the text, Part One is divided into three parts, while Part Two is in one dramatic part.

| Part One <br> Formal Parts |  | Part Two |  |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Dramatic Parts | Formal | Dramatic |  |
| Introduction (mm. 1- 41) |  | Section 1 (mm.332-357) | Part 1 (1. 49-82) |
| Section 1 (mm. 42-92) | Part 1 (lines 1-6) | Section 2 (mm.358-435) |  |
| Section 2 (mm. 93-100) | Part 2 (lines 7-33) | Section 3 (mm.436-485) |  |
| Section 3 (mm. 101-150) |  | Section 4 (mm.486-536) |  |
| Section 4 (mm. 151-165) |  | Section 5 (mm.537-565) |  |
| Section 5 (mm. 166-188) |  |  |  |
| Section 6 (mm. 189-219) |  |  |  |
| Section 7 (mm. 220-288) | Part 3 (1. 34-49) |  |  |
| Section 8 (mm. 289-331) |  |  |  |

As a complement to the dramatic structure of the piece, and as a full-scale depiction of the inner psychological turmoil of the main character, the tempo of the piece gradually slows from the beginning until the end. Starting with the upbeat and lively introduction at a metronome marking of quarter note equals 116, the piece descends, as does Margaret's fragile state-of-being, to a morose and grave marking of 48 beats per minute. The form of the piece follows the drama very closely. [See Appendix B for a full formal breakdown.]

Before a formal analysis can be constructed there must be an introduction and analysis of perhaps the single most important element to understanding the piece, the leitmotivs. Leitmotiv may not be the best term for these various thematic materials since they don't represent objects or people in the traditional Wagnerian understanding. Instead, they represent the various emotions and factors at work in Margaret's life. These five major motives serve as the foundation for the vast majority of the musical material, and are at the forefront of each formal and dramatic division in the work.

## THE MOTIVES

There are five major themes/motives in this work. [See Appendix A for Theme Table.]

## Margaret's Theme / Death Theme

Margaret's theme could be considered the main theme, appearing prominently at each of the major dramatic moments of the work. Primarily composed in the minor mode, its most prominent feature is the presence of both the lowered and raised $7^{\text {th }}$ scale degree. The fact that the raised $7^{\text {th }}$ never fully resolves to the tonic creates a cross relation of sorts, a double inflection of the minor scale which is developed both harmonically and melodically over the course of the work. The dramatic leap to the $7^{\text {th }}$ degree and subsequent falling of a minor $3{ }^{\text {rd }}$ serves to set this theme apart from the more subdued and passive thematic materials of the other motives. Primarily serving as the most literal depiction of the character of Margaret, this theme is also the main musical depiction of Margaret's personal relationship with death, especially as it has affected her life and family.

## Fate Chords

The Fate Chords, which often appear in the piano (and occasionally in the string section), represent the difficult past that Margaret has had to overcome, and the tragic fate that will befall her. The chords are always presented in a stark manner with little or no adornment, although at times, through the emphasis of either their dissonant or more lyrical qualities, they hint at both the future that she hopes to attain and at the darker reality of her past and present. Echoed in these "Fate Chords" is the cross-relation created in Margaret's Theme, occurring between the F\# of upper most-voice in the $2^{\text {nd }}$ chord and the F-natural of the $3^{\text {rd }}$ chord in the lower voice.

Innocence Theme
Always appearing as a duet between instruments, the Innocence Theme never serves as the primary melody of a given section. Representing Margaret's naïve innocence, there is an ironic quality to this music, since Margaret has suffered greatly in her life, losing almost everyone close to her. Still, the music here is primarily sweet, slow, and simple. The Innocence Theme is derived directly from Margaret's Theme. The simple dyads of this theme, constituted by three intervals that appear throughout the work in various other incarnations, contain the same pitch content of Margaret's Theme, as shown below in a melodic realization.

Ex. 1 - Breakdown of Innocence Theme Pitch Content


Furthermore, the Innocence Theme is typically heard in the key of $\mathrm{f} \#$ natural minor, while Margaret's Theme primarily has a tonic of C. The intervallic tritone distance between these two key areas cannot get farther apart melodically and harmonically, which mirrors the two ends of Margaret's emotional spectrum represented by these themes.

## Margaret's Lament/Lullaby

Margaret's Lament is less of a motive than the other themes since it hardly goes through any transformation and appears at only a few key moments in Part One (although, briefly referenced at the very end of Part Two). Often accompanying the text "And Mother's case, so hopeless, so weak and miserable," the lament is a docile and sweet reflection on the mother that she loves so dearly. As strict and burdensome as her mother is, Margaret can't imagine a world without her-this is why the theme does not return in Part Two. Harmonically and rhythmically this music is simple and does not serve further development in the larger structure of the piece. It appears in several different key areas, and often shifts around freely within a given statement of the Lament.

## The Future / The Unknown / Faust

The motive of Faust/the Unknown does not have a real analogue to the story but, in general, represents the unknown, the strange uneasiness that seems to follow Margaret around, and in some ways the looming Faust encounter that sets the story into action. In its prime form, it takes on an element of mystery and a sense of something inauspicious coming. This is the intended affect, but like the future, its meaning is always unknown.

Also composed of a simple set of dyads (note the prominent use of the perfect $4^{\text {th }}$ and minor $7^{\text {th }}$ intervals, just as in the Innocence Theme), this motive undergoes the greatest amount of development, changing forms at all times, adapting to the tone and mood of the music and drama. And like the Innocence Theme, the Faust/Unknown motive is derived from Margaret's Theme. See here:

Ex. 2 - Breakdown of Faust/Unknown Motive Pitch Content


In much the same way the Innocence Theme was drawn from Margaret's Theme, the motive of Faust/Unknown contains the same pitch set, but instead has been transposed to the major mode. Despite the bleak future that awaits Margaret (even within the course of this piece), she dreams of a better life and, therefore, this theme often takes on a tender quality and accompanies moments of hope as much as it hints at a dark future.

## THE FORMAL ANALYSIS

Incline, $O$ Maiden begins with a short introduction (mm. 1-41), much like a traditional overture, with the goal of prefacing the action and briefly introducing some of the major themes. The scope of the work has two overriding principles: the gradual slowing of the tempo, and the gradual darkening of the music from beginning to end. The introduction
begins the piece in a bright and lively manner. Margaret's theme is presented in a rhythmically energetic variation in the violin, starting in the first measure. To help soften the darker quality of the motive, it is harmonized by the cello in the key area of Ab (a closely related major key area to c minor, the key of the violin). While the cello doesn't present a strong sense of any key area, it often comes to rest at cadential moments on an Ab . The overall effect given by the violin and cello, working as a unit, is of an Ab Lydian key area (using the D , a raised $4^{\text {th }}$ scale degree from the violin).

Also introduced in this very opening material are the Fate Chords in the piano. However, the Fate Chords are not presented in their standard form. They are temporally and rhythmically separated, delineated in a manner that, in effect, presents them as a percussive figure driving the rhythmic action of the passage. One by one the chords of the motive are added, in rhythmic succession. Finally, the winds enter (m. 7), introducing the third major motivic material, the Innocence Theme. The first three notes in both the flute and clarinet parts constitute the same the dyadic construction of the Innocence Theme, but just like in strings and piano, this material is far removed from its primary form. Here, this motivic material simply serves as the beginning of a flourish figure in counterpoint to the rhythmic theme in the strings. By measure 16, the motives in the strings and winds have devolved into the very basic elements of their parent themes. In the winds, the fundamental voice-leading of the Innocence Theme (the arpeggiated upper voice, and step-wise lower voice moving in contrary motion) is fully present, and in the strings, the descending minor $3^{\text {rd }}$, which is so prominently featured in Margaret's Theme, has become the only recognizable component.

The Introduction also features Margaret's Lament/Lullaby quite prominently, presented in a virtually complete form (mm. $25-39$ ). The theme, like most everything else in the piece, is integrated with the other motives. The clarinet accompaniment in m. 32, for example, is the complete melodic introduction of the Faust/Unknown motive (although somewhat out of order). Present in the first eight pitches of the clarinet line is the complete pitch set established by the four dyads of the Faust/Unknown motive. Last, as the section of Margaret's Lament comes to a close, the Fate Chords make their first complete statement in the winds and strings (mm. $37-39$ ). Following this statement of the Fate Chords, the flute plays Margaret's Theme in its original form distantly above the suspended harmony. Out of the echoes ring the motive of Faust/Unknown. With that, each of the five major motives has been introduced, and the drama begins.

Part One is in eight sections musically, but in only three parts dramatically. Following the text (please see a copy of the libretto in appendix B or in the score), lines 1-6 first introduce the character of Margaret. She sings about a man (Faust) she had just met in street, and quickly the text takes on an element of youthful fantasy as Margaret supposes that the man is "gallant" and of a "noble family". This section of text corresponds to the first section of music (mm. 42 - 92) in Part One. Essentially a set song for Margaret, the music is upbeat and tends to stay on the consonant side of the harmonic spectrum.

Measures 42-49 are a brief recapitulation of the energy and lightness from the beginning of the Introduction and a continuation of the rhythmic attacks of the Fate Chords in the piano. At measure 50 the piano steadies rhythmically and the Fate Chords
are transformed into a more traditional chord progression. In the winds (m. 54), the Innocence theme enters in its truest form, slow-moving and bittersweet. Margaret is clearly delighting in her brief daydream (as represented by the presence of her musical Innocence), but the harmonic grounding (both the Innocence Theme in the winds, and the rhythmic piano are rooting in the minor mode with an $\mathrm{f} \#$ tonic) keeps this section from becoming dramatically divorced from her more complicated daily routine.

The second division of the text (lines 7-33 in the libretto) marks a return to reality for Margaret. Her brief dalliance with this unknown "gallant man" has been replaced by her "Mother's case" (line 7) and her "troubled life" (line 19). Textually, the overarching message of this section of the drama is about her distinct loneliness. While she fantasizes about this man who will come to take her away, she knows that such things do not happen. During this part of the text (lines 7-33), in part a functional history of her life, we learn about Margaret's loss of her father and younger sister, and her brother who is off to war (presumably). These losses are made more profound as she recounts that she had to raise her infant sister while her mother lay ill. Part two of the text and drama reveal the innermost thoughts and motivations of Margaret.

There is a lot to be learned about the character of Margaret in this second dramatic part, and thus the music is far more varied. The second dramatic part constitutes sections 2 through 6 of the music, each meant to accentuate and develop a slightly different part of Margaret's story. Section $2(\mathrm{~mm} .93-100)$ is very short: only a passing introduction to the theme of Margaret's Lament. This section is very simply orchestrated to further
emphasize this as a prelude to the music to come. After a short statement of Margaret's Lament, the motive of the Unknown chimes in high in the piano (m. 100), reminding the audience that there is still much that is unknown. This section also marks the first major drop in tempo, from quarter note equals 116 to 84 .

Section 3 (mm. $101-150$ ) begins with a duet between the violin and cello, that accompanies the singer throughout most of this passage. The duet is derived from the Innocence Theme, borrowing the two-voice, homophonic texture of the motive (however, this will give way to greater independence of the voices later in the section). This is new music melodically, although there is still an emphasis on the minor mode intervals (see the rising minor third in mm. 103-104 in the violin and the harmonizing 9ths and 7ths in the cello). At measure 111, there is an interesting rhythmic event as the music slows down and the meter shifts from a duple (4/4) to a triple feel (9/8). The tempo remains unchanged, and the eighth note pulse stays the same, so the effect is of a slowing of tempo because of a longer beat length. The winds enter, quietly playing faster figures, music that is also derived from the Innocence Theme and augmented to feature prominently the descending minor $3^{\text {rd }}$, a major feature of Margaret's theme. The intended effect is the slow transition from the sweet innocence of Margaret's character at the beginning of the story to the darker past she is about to reveal over the next several minutes of music. In measure 132, however, Margaret's $9 / 8$ song is interrupted by a resolute interjection in the piano-the purest form of the Fate Chords. Time seems to stand still, and these slow-moving chords resonate one by one. Margaret continues her song after the completion of the Fate Chords. As she sings the line "But now my days
have less of noise and hurry," she is reminded of all that is missing from her life, and the music all fades away, and the voice drops down into its lowest register, giving way to darker, more foreboding music.

A tritone dissonance between the last remnants of the vocal line and a low chord in the piano give way to Section 4 (mm. 151 - 165). This passage, which is both approached and left by long sustained chords, stands alone in terms of sentiment. Margaret's Theme, which hasn't appeared in any full form since the Introduction, makes its first full statement here, also making its only appearance of the entire piece in the voice part. Stark and unadorned, this section allows the darkness and emotional qualities of Margaret's Theme to be unhindered by excess orchestration or musical development. Harmonically, Section 4 is separated out from the rest of the piece, as the music is rooted in the F minor mode, representing the first time the music has reached the flat side of the spectrum since the very opening of the Introduction. Immediately following this section, the music reestablishes a minor mode in a sharp-side key.

Section 5 (mm. $166-188$ ) is transitional in nature. Emotionally and musically, it is passive, with very little dynamic change, serving essentially as a time of reflection for Margaret. In the text, Margaret says, "Yet, I would take again, and willing, all the worry," almost apologizing for feeling so put upon. Her guilt is reflected musically in the static drone of the violin (m. 167), which is linked to the $9 / 8$ passage with dotted quarter values and over-the-barline syncopations. While this passage is building upon the quiet sweetness of the Lament motive, Margaret's Theme is interjected in harmonized form in
the strings and winds ( m .171 ), providing a short break in the drone of the violin. By the end of Section 5 a noticeable shift in the harmony has occurred, where for the first time austere major tonalities are heard plain and clear, and a sustained E major triad (in 6/4 inversion) provides a subtle reminder of earlier harmony.

Sections 5 and 6 are bridged by one last tender moment where Margaret tells us that her mother is, despite everything, "So very dear to me." In quiet repose, Section 6 (mm. 189 - 219) begins the last part of this sequence of text/drama. The Fate Chords enter in the strings, marked sul tasto, to further distance them with a softer, less resonant sound. In an effort to create tension, unease and an element of mystery, a dream-like passage in the piano (built upon the Faust/Unknown motive) is laid delicately above the string texture. Each time the Fate Chords return, their purpose is to stop the action and cause both the audience and the onstage drama to take a moment of reflection. Here again, Margaret's text (lines 22-23) is not meant to further the action, but seems more like an inner dialogue. Lines like "My body's chill, and shuddering," have more than one meaning. Following the physical action on stage, Margaret has been closing down the drafty old house and has already mentioned that it is "not so warm outside," however, there is a foreshadowing nature to these lines which suggests that she is aware that something terrible awaits her. "I feel, I know not why such fear," she states.

This dream-like stasis (mm. 189 - 200), which also marks another point in the gradual slowing of the tempo, serves as a bridge to the final portion of the second dramatic section in Part One. Musically, Margaret's Lament returns in full form, while the text
reveals that Margaret had been forced to raise her sister, the sister who had died. This clearly is a source of major guilt for Margaret and so, once more the emotion builds to a slow, even statement of the Fate Chords (measures 216-218), which will ultimately bring a close to this dramatic section. Margaret's story has been told, and we understand her background. As if tired of dwelling on her misfortune, the drama and music move on.

The last dramatic section of Part One can be broken into two musical sections. The drama and text of the section return to the fantasy and whimsy of the beginning. Margaret goes to her room and prepares for bed, only to find a strange box on her desk containing beautiful new jewelry, and she is drawn back into her earlier fantasy. There is an element of eroticism to this section as Margaret prepares for bed, and in a way, we are voyeurs looking in on her private life, seeing her as a frail woman desperately in want of true love.

Ex. 3 - Melodic unfolding of "Faust/Unknown" motive as the "jewelry fantasy" begins (m. 220)


Section 7 (mm. 220 - 288) constitutes the entirety of this "jewelry fantasy." Yet another notch down in the tempo, this section begins with a highly chromatic figure in the winds, meant to accompany Margaret's retreat to her bedroom as she lightly sings a song of love to herself ("The King of Thule"). The Faust/Unknown motive (m. 221) serves as the
foundation of the music in the winds (more clearly than it has appeared in the past), a melodic unfolding of the chords from that motive. Another statement of the Fate Chords begins in the strings (m. 222), but this time released from their static stoicism, gradually building the tension as Margaret is about to discover the jewelry left on her desk. Clearly, to find an unexpected item in her room startles Margaret, and thus the music comes to a halt (m. 230) as the clarinet oscillates slowly between two pitches. Ascending chords in the strings increase the tension while Margaret prepares to open the box.

The sight of the valuable jewels inside takes Margaret back into her fantasy. Above her exuberant decree, the Faust/Unknown motive (which is actually Faust, who has snuck these jewels into her house in an attempt to woo her) enters in the flute (m. 247), then in the clarinet, and finally in the violin in a repeating canon which creates a harmonic blanket. Underneath, the piano (m. 251) intensifies steadily as she revels in her newfound adornments. However, the music never gives in to the emotional fantasy of Margaret, and in effect becomes divided. Starting in measure 265, the winds continue their support of her fantasy, building and swirling around on Faust's motive. The piano and strings, ominously voiced four octaves apart, bang out a melody of their own. Margaret continues to sing obliviously to herself, while independently the strings and piano reference back to the duet that accompanied Margaret's detailing of her unfortunate past (mm. 103 - 131). These three independent musical ideas continue to build to a climax in measure 287. One last time, the Fate Chords interject, this time quite bombastically, taking over the texture in full harmonization, as if fate has finally caught up with young Margaret.

This "jewel fantasy" signifies a significant departure from other musical depictions of the Faust story, and in particular, the character of Margaret. For example, this scene is treated quite differently in Gounod's operatic version, where Margaret's "Jewel Song" is a light and somewhat frivolous waltz. It serves as a virtuosic showpiece for Margaret; it is pure and clear, and dramatically highlights her naïve innocence. While Gounod's famous aria serves as a successful depiction of Margaret's dreams of wealth, she remains a single-dimensional character. In my treatment of this scene, Margaret does indeed sing quite happily of her discovery and fantasizes of a better life, but musically, her internal struggle grows more and more dark. Her innocence is her fatal flaw, so while she happily accepts these mysterious jewels, the music increasingly grows more dissonant as she has just fallen prey to Faust, and set forth on the path towards her ultimate demise.

As Margaret merrily delights in her fantasy, unknowingly sealing her tragic outcome, the Fate Chords (m. 289) interject again, and signal the last section (section 8) of Part One. There is no more text in Part One, but the drama continues as Margaret discovers that her mother has passed away. In the play, Margaret is given medicine by Faust that ultimately causes her mother's passing, but the true guilt is left unexplained. Inside this dramatic scene the details are not changed, but are boiled down to their most fundamental effects on Margaret: her mother dies and she feels the guilt. Section 8 (mm. 289-331) is a musical lament that follows the action of Margaret as her mother dies and is laid to rest.

As stated before, a monolithic statement of the Fate Chords begins this section. Beneath these towering chords, a mournful chorale plays in the lower register (played by the clarinet and strings). The chorale, in part derived from Margaret's theme, proceeds somewhat out of time, starting and stopping on weak beats. Its rhythmic freedom is grounded by the continued presence of the Fate Chords at the highest and lowest registers of the piano.

Ex. 4 - Death Chorale with Margaret's Theme Embedded (m. 295)


As the Fate Chords come to a close in measure 311, a solo line in the cello continues the mournful lament. Again, it is a free development of Margaret's Theme, which has been consistently linked to death in her life. Finally, the winds make one last statement of the Innocence Theme in measure 324, which brings us to the end of Part One.

Part Two (mm. $332-565$ ) is comprised of a single dramatic scene, Margaret's prayer of loss, repentance, and anger. Musically, it is broken down into five sections. Over the course of the entire part, the music grows more and more dissonant, and increasingly agitated as Margaret's sense of loss increases. Consumed with guilt-"Past guessing, beyond expressing, the pangs that wring my flesh and bone!"-and distraught with grief, Margaret ultimately becomes emotionally broken and begs for help and for salvation.

The first section of Part Two (mm. 335 - 357) serves as an introduction. The scene opens with Margaret at her mother's grave where the image of the Virgin Mary sits in front of her. Marked at a new slower tempo, the music opens with a high solo violin statement of Margaret's Theme, fully embracing its dark, somber overtones. Disturbingly slow and eerie, the flute joins in duet with the violin, and an expansive development of the theme unfolds. Beneath them, a new figure is developed between the clarinet and cello in the bottoms of their registers, leaving a hole in the middle of the spectrum. The clarinet/cello duet quietly becomes a slow-moving chord progression (m. 346), which becomes the basis of a passacaglia that anchors and drives the music of the first part of Margaret's prayer.

Ex. 5 - The Passacaglia


Margaret's prayer begins at measure 361 (section 2, mm. 358 - 435) with the lines "Incline, O Maiden, thou sorrow-laden, thy gracious countenance upon my pain." This heart-wrenching plea takes place in an oscillation between two pitches, B-flat and Bnatural. Notably, these two pitches constitute the height of dissonance in Margaret's Theme. That unresolved dissonance seems like the appropriate point of entry for a prayer of sorrow and guilt. As a sustained drone, the piano, clarinet and cello begin to slowly develop the passacaglia. By the end of this opening declamation by Margaret, the passacaglia has slowly made one full statement (mm. 358 - 369). At measure 370 the passacaglia takes on a position of higher prevalence in the overall texture, and has moved from the clarinet and cello to the violin and flute. On top of the chord progression, the voice continues to freely incant her prayer as she continues to pray to Virgin Mary, asking for her pain to be taken away. The passacaglia makes two more statements in d minor (mm. $370-381$ ) as the clarinet and cello snake along in support of the vocal line. In some cases, the passacaglia figure is accompanied by a sustained pedal-point, which can undermine the sense of a harmonic progression, but the rising nature of the chords is clearly heard as a recurring ostinato that repeats essentially unchanged.

Ex. 6 - Margaret's Prayer (m. 358)


At measure 382, the passacaglia modulates up a half-step through traditional common chord reinterpretation. The chord at measure 381, made up of a D - A pedal in the lower voices and a B-G\# diad in the upper voices, functions primarily as a V/V (or vii/V) chord over a D pedal in the original passacaglia. However, reinterpreted, it can be read as a fully diminished $7^{\text {th }}$ vii chord in e-flat minor, and thus facilitates a half-step modulation. This element of traditional harmonic motion further creates the sense of mortality and grounding in tradition, which lies at the root of Margaret's religious beliefs that bring her before the Virgin Mary, asking for forgiveness. The passacaglia makes two statements in e-flat (mm. 382-394) before reaching a fevered pitch as Margaret reaches the height of her plea for salvation from the Heavens. The piano continues to chime out the last chord of the passacaglia (mm. 395 - 398) as the church bells toll, and on top of this, Margaret's theme pushes through as a reminder of her own struggles and humanity.

The passacaglia regains a footing and begins again, this time present in the piano as a delicate and simple figure (m. 402). As an eerie, ghostly image above the passacaglia,
the strings in very slow moving harmonics begin to play the Innocence Theme. Its presence here accompanies the lines in the text (lines 59-69), where Margaret unburdens herself, laying claim to her guilt. "This anxious heart so burneth, why it trembleth, why it yearneth, knowest Thou, and Thou alone!" she announces to God. The passacaglia section comes to a close as Margaret weeps on the floor for her mother, and for her own salvation.

Section 3 of Part Two (mm. $436-485$ ), is a period of calm before the final prayer for help. Margaret begins to pot some plants in front of her mother's grave and weep for her lonely sorrow, in what is a rather solemn moment. For this passage, the music stands still, representing this final moment of solemnity. The driving force of the passacaglia has faded away, leaving only the ringing of the Unknown motive (mm. 437-439 in the piano). The chords of Faust/the Unknown linger on as they are orchestrated across the winds and strings in measure 441. The music is quiet, calm and sustained, and Margaret methodically pots the plants to be left for her mother. By measure 448 , those sustained chords from the Unknown motive become a faster moving, yet bittersweet chorale.

The height of Section 3 is reached in measure 462 as the Innocence Theme returns in the winds, and takes over in its original form for the first time since measures $81-91$ in Part One. Echoing the winds, the strings perform an augmented version of the Innocence Theme on harmonics. The piano floats above this texture performing its dream-like music, using the motive of Faust/Unknown as its starting point. Each element is harmonically static, and combined they create a motionless sonic background. Dramatic
solo cadenzas in the clarinet and flute, reminiscing on past motives, bring this section to a close. The clarinet draws material from the accompaniment figure from Part One where Margaret announces that her brother is a soldier (mm. 151-165), while the flute rhapsodizes once more on Margaret's Theme.

As Margaret's sentiments of loneliness grow colder, her prayer to the Virgin Mary, "Incline O Maiden," becomes more forceful and determined. Section 4 (mm. 486 - 537) of Part Two opens with a recapitulation of the prayer in the vocal part from measure 358, while new chords at the farthest reaches of the piano's range educe a cold, sterile texture. Beneath the voice, and between the piano chords, the strings begin a fevered canon built upon a merging of the flute and clarinet cadenzas from only a few measures earlier. The vocal part, as it has been for the entirety of Part Two, moves rhythmically independent of the instrumental accompaniment.

By measure 499 , as the chords in the piano die away, the angular lines in the violin and cello finally reach culmination in measure 500 as arpeggiated chords. Each of the chords in the sequence are split-note harmonies [a split-note harmony is a chord in which one or more pitches are split by adding a note a half-step away]-the first, for example, is an Eb chord with both the raised and flat third present (Eb-G-Bb-Gb). These split-note harmonies are the final realization of the unresolved, double inflected $7^{\text {th }}$ scale degree from Margaret's Theme-both pitches occurring in a single-harmony. Further enhancing this passage, the chords move by mediant relations, or thirds, just as with the final resolution in Margaret's Theme. This chord progression (mm. $500-503$ ), building by
thirds, finally gives way to the voice and piano-the piano performing a hybrid of the dream-like development of the Faust/Unknown motive from measure 462. The arpeggiated chords of the strings return in measure 508 to build again, and give way to the piano and voice (again on a development of the Faust/Unknown motive). And one last time, the frantic chords in the strings build to a climax in measure 518.

Ex. 7 - Split-note harmonies in the arpeggios of the Violin (m. 500)


The height of Margaret's prayer to the Virgin Mary and her mother is reached at, "Help! Rescue me from death and stain! O Maiden! Thou sorrow-laden, incline Thy countenance upon my pain!" (lines 79-82). As this last plea is given, the ensemble is at its highest dynamic and emotional point. The split-note harmonies in the string progression resolve themselves into straight major tonalities, which still move by thirds from chord to chord. The final stratification of the double-inflection of the $7^{\text {th }}$ scale degree from Margaret's Theme is realized in measure 518 when the emerging, pure major harmonies, in the top of the texture, are juxtaposed with the cello and piano forcefully bellowing out dissonant chords below (see Ex. 11).

For example, the first harmony of the climactic moment (m. 518) is a D major harmony in the upper voices, while below, the cello and piano play an open fifth built on E-flat (which is a split-note root of D ). The second harmony (m. 519) is an F major harmony above an open fifth built on D-flat (a splitting of the fifth of the F major chord). By separating these harmonies in the texture, they represent the final resolution of Margaret's Theme, and symbolically, the final resolution of her inward struggle.

Ex. 8 - Climactic Chords (m. 518)


The last section of Part Two begins in measure 537 and continues until the end of the piece. The climactic chords have reached their end, and a short moment of silence is observed (mm. 536) before Margaret's prayer finally concludes. Once again, the tempo slows (to a very morose quarter note equals 48 marking), and the music, now suddenly quiet, begins again with brief hinting at Margaret's Lament from Part One. The music builds to its height in measure 541, where Margaret's Theme returns for final statements, first in the winds, then the strings, and finally the piano.

As Margaret turns and walks from her mother's grave, a solo violin (mm. 548) echoes back to the very opening solo of Part Two. The piano enters quietly playing familiar chords-they are the Fate Chords, but their sequence has been reversed. Gradually from measure 549 until the very end, the piano cycles back to the beginning of the Fate Chords while slowly descending to the very bottom of the piano's range. And finally, the flute and clarinet enter again, playing another familiar theme, an unadulterated repetition of the Innocence Theme, reminding us one last time of Margaret's lost innocence.

## CONCLUSION

Margaret's crisis is one of identity. As we first encounter her character, she is an innocent, naïve maiden who dreams of love and nobility. However, underneath she reveals a layer of bitter disappointment, misery and hardship. And upon losing the last thing of value in her life, her dear but burdensome mother, she has reached the breaking point, which ultimately leads her down a tragic path. The primary goal of Incline, $O$ Maiden is the depiction of Margaret in this fragile state as she goes through the emotional torture of losing her mother, but more importantly her identity. To accomplish this depiction, Margaret, over the course of the libretto, is presented in various states of emotional development. To create a character who would be susceptible to Faust (and to deception), she must be naïve and ignorant of the world. Part One depicts Margaret as a character given to flights of fancy, accompanied by music that is bright and innocent. However, she is also a person who has suffered greatly, to the point that one last tragedy might be enough to push her past the edge. Thus, there is a darkness in the music that is allowed to gradually mature and pervade the texture. In Part Two, having lost everything
that she holds dear, Margaret begs for help from the Virgin Mary. This is accompanied musically by a steadily increasing musical dissonance representing her tortured soul and internal turmoil. She feels guilty for the death of her mother; but, musically, we know that she will never be forgiven, at least, not by herself.

Through the persistent and timely use of recurring musical motives and through a direct and focused libretto, I believe that, while there is only a single character, Margaret's internal dramatic struggle is vividly and effectively established over the course of this dramatic scene. The character of Margaret and the libretto is enhanced by the independent role of the chamber ensemble, and through that independence is able to create a powerful counterpart to the traditional drama being framed on stage. Despite the absence of interplay between characters, an indelible link between the drama and music is made meaningful by the unified thematic nature of the music. Given the internal struggle at the heart of the text and the onstage drama, the music must be able to represent that conflict. Through recurring musical motives, which simultaneously establish the mood, tone and pace of the operatic drama, the music takes on the character of Margaret's internal struggle, and together with the character of Margaret, the problem of establishing a protagonist/antagonist relationship is resolved.

## APPENDIX A

## Leitmotiv/Theme Table

1. Margaret's Theme / Death Theme


## 2. Fate Chords



## 3. Innocence Theme


4. Margaret's Lament / Lullaby

5. The Future / The Unknown / Faust


## APPENDIX B

Outline Summary of Incline, O Maiden


## APPENDIX B

Outline Summary of Incline, O Maiden

| Division | Measure \#s | Thematic Material | Design | Tonal Structure | Tempo | Text |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| PART TWO | m. 332-565 |  |  |  |  |  |
| Section 1 | m. 332-357 | Margaret's Theme - Violin (m. 332) | Introduction to Part Two / Extended Violin Solo on Margaret's Theme | Marg. Theme - c/unstable | . $=60$ |  |
|  |  | Introduction of Passacaglia - clar./cello (m. 346) |  | Passacaglia - d minor |  |  |
| Section 2 | m. 358-445 |  |  |  |  | Lines 50-58 |
| 2a | m. 358-400 | Passacaglia <br> (Margaret's theme - voice) | 5 Full Statements of the passacaglia, each growing more intense, building to a climax in m. 394 | Pass: d minor (3 statements) eb minor (2 statements) |  |  |
| 2 b | m. 401-435 | Passacaglia | Passacaglia returns after 8-measure interlude 4 more statements of modified passacaglia | Voice: Unstable Pass: d minor (3 times) eb minor ( 1 time) |  |  |
| Section 3 | m. 436-485 | Faust/Unknown motive - piano (m. 437) Winds/String (m. 441) Innocence Th. - Winds/Strings (m. 462) | Further development of Faust/Unknown motive - first heard in traditional chordal pattern in piano, before becoming bell-tones in Winds/Strings. Faust motive eventually turns into elaborated chorale (m. 449). Innocense theme takes over at m. 462 in augmented cannon between Winds and Strings. Faust/Unknown motive becomes dream-like music box material. | Faust: f\#-E - d\# Innocence: d\# Voice: Unstable | - $=60$ | Lines 59-78 |
| $\text { Section } 4$ $\mathbf{4 a}$ | $\begin{gathered} \text { m. 486-537 } \\ \text { m. 4486-500 } \end{gathered}$ | Margaret's Prayer from m. 436 returns <br> Innocence theme - piano <br> Margaret's Theme countermelody from Part One, Section 4 (m. 151) | In a brief, intensified recap of Margaret's prayer that opened Part Two, the Innocence theme becomes highly distorted | No harmonic center |  | Lines 79-82 |
| 4b | m. 501-517 | Margaret's Theme - development of crossrelation | Cross-relation in Margaret's Theme manifests as split-note harmonies that move by 3rds -first appear as arpeggiations in the violin |  |  |  |
| 4c | m. 518-537 | Margaret's Theme - further development | Climax of Part Two -- Split-note chords reach ultimate conclusion. Ensemble moves in unison -- Margaret's Theme makes short interjection |  |  |  |
| Section 5 | m. 537-565 | Margaret's Lament - ensemble (m. 537) | Texture crashes to a halt after climax, returns softly | Fate Chords: end in f\#/A | d $=48$ |  |
|  |  | Margaret's Theme - ensemble Innocence Theme - Winds (m. 554) Fate Chords - Piano | Small fragment of Marg. Lament motive gives way to statements of Margaret's theme that starts in Winds, passes to strings, then to the Piano, before one final statement in the solo violin. <br> Fate chords enter in piano and begin to play the progression in reverse until the end. Innocence theme enters in winds and fades until end. | Innocence: f\# |  |  |

## APPENDIX C

Incline, $O$ Maiden

Text by
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)
Adapted from Faust: A Tragedy
Translated into English, in the original metres, by Bayard Taylor (1825-1878)

## libretto

In a small cottage with a small garden, in a German country town sometime in the 19th century -- it is a cold, grey evening in winter. Margaret is a young and naïve woman who lives with and cares for her sick mother. She will soon become a victim of a young scholar by the name of Faust, who has made a deal with the devil, in part to seduce Margaret. She will succumb to this seduction due to loneliness, inexperience, resentment of her mother's strictness, and a troubled life which left her caring for a child while her sick mother was no more than a burden. The story begins where Margaret returns home to care for her mother after first laying eyes on the handsome Faust.

PART ONE
Enter Margaret from outdoors. Her mother lies in a bed in the corner of the room. Excited and happy, Margaret puts her hat and cloak away.

## MARGARET

(fantasizing to herself as she prepares medicine and wet cloth for her sick mother.)
O Mother, I'd something give, could I but say
Who was that gentleman, to-day.
Surely a gallant man,
And of a noble family;
And much could I in his face behold,-
And he wouldn't, else, have been so bold!
(Grabbing a lamp, she goes to the window and opens it.)
And Mother's case, so hopeless, so weak and miserable.
And yet 'tis not so warm outside.
I feel, I know not why, such fear!-
(Margaret enters her mother's room and looks over old portraits and letters, going through her mother's old clothes and jewelry.)

For our household small has grown,
We have no maid: I do the knitting, sewing, sweeping,

The cooking, early work and late,
And mother, more than others, might take comfort,
A nice estate was left us by my father,
A house, a little garden near the town.
But now my days have less of noise and hurry;
My brother is a soldier,
My little sister's dead.
True, with the child a troubled life I led,
Yet I would take again, and willing, all the worry,
Mother, So very dear was she.
My body's chill and shuddering,-
I'm but a silly, fearful thing!
And Mother's case, so hopeless, so weak and miserable.
So slowly, day by day, she could not think of giving
The poor wee thing its natural living;
And so I nursed it all alone
With milk and water, lulled in my lap with many a song.
It smiled and grew strong: 'twas my own.
(Thinking her mother has fallen asleep, Margaret slips off to her room. She begins to sing while undressing.)

There was a King in Thule,
Was faithful till the grave,-
To whom his mistress, dying, A golden goblet gave.
(Hums tune slowly trailing off... She opens the press in order to arrange her clothes, and perceives a mysterious box of jewels.)

How comes that lovely casket here to me?
I locked the press, most certainly.
'Tis truly wonderful! What can within it be?
God in Heaven! Whence came
Such things? Never beheld I aught so fair!
Rich ornaments, such as a noble dame
On highest holidays might wear!
How would the pearl-chain suit my hair?
(She adorns herself with the jewelry, and steps before the mirror.)
Were but the ear-rings mine, alone!
What helps one's beauty, youthful blood?
One may possess them;
But none the more do others care.

They praise us half in pity, sure:
To gold still tends,
On gold depends
All, all! Alas, we poor!
(Margaret returns to where her mother sleeps, excited by her fantasy and these wonderful new jewels. However, she discovers that all is not well with her mother.)

Over the passage of time, Margaret continues to care for her mother, giving dose after dose of medicine. Ultimately this is of no avail, and her mother dies. She is taken to the nearby church where she is buried.

PART TWO

Not long after the death of her mother, Margaret goes to her grave. She kneels before a shrine, with an image of the Mater Dolorosa (the Virgin Mary weeping for the suffering of her son, Jesus). Before this image of the Virgin Mary and her mother's grave, Margaret pots flowers.

## MARGARET

(putting fresh flowers in the pots)
Incline, O Maiden,
Thou sorrow-laden,
Thy gracious countenance upon my pain!
The sword Thy heart in,
With anguish smarting,
Thou lookest up to where Thy Son is slain!
Thou seest the Father;
Thy sad sighs gather,
And bear aloft Thy sorrow and His pain!
Ah, past guessing,
Beyond expressing,
The pangs that wring my flesh and bone!
Why this anxious heart so burneth,
Why it trembleth, why it yearneth,
Knowest Thou, and Thou alone!
Where'er I go, what sorrow,
What woe, what woe and sorrow
Within my bosom aches!
Alone, and ah! unsleeping,
I'm weeping, weeping, weeping,

The heart within me breaks.
The pots before my window,
Alas! my tears did wet,
As in the early morning
For thee these flowers I set.
Within my lonely chamber
The morning sun shone red:
I sat, in utter sorrow,
Already on my bed.
Help! rescue me from death and stain!
O Maiden!
Thou sorrow-laden,
Incline Thy countenance upon my pain!
(Margaret slowly turns and leaves the grave.)
end.

# Incline, O Maiden... <br> a dramatic scene for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble 

James D. Norman<br>(2008)

Instrumentation<br>Flute<br>Clarinet in B flat<br>Piano<br>Mezzo-Soprano<br>Violin<br>Violoncello

Approx. duration: 28 minutes
score is in c for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble

\[\)|  Text by  |
| :--- |
|  Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)  <br>  adapted from Faust  | Jamen D. Norman

\]

(2008)

A small cottage with a small garden, in a German country town sometime in the 19th century -- it is a cold, grey evening in winter.

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Incline, O Maiden...






## Incline, O Maiden...













Incline, O Maiden...



Incline, O Maiden...


Incline, O Maiden...


Incline, O Maiden...





Incline, O Maiden...



Incline, O Maiden...





Incline, O Maiden...
















## VITA

James Duffy Norman was born in Salem, Oregon on June $7^{\text {th }}, 1980$. After graduating from South Salem High School in 1998, he attended the University of Southern California, where he earned a Bachelor of Music degree in music composition in 2002. He earned his Master of Music degree from the University of Texas at Austin in 2004. Remaining at the University of Texas to continue his education, he began his doctoral degree in the fall of 2004.

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