

# Translations

My first office at Madison College was on the second floor of the east wing of Duke Hall, which at that time was half music, half art, with a theatre in the middle where the gallery is now. The theatre was shared by the music department and the “theatre area” of the Communication Arts Department. I had a window, with a sill, that faced east, but did not at that time bring the tree to share my space. It continued to grow, and acquire somewhat larger pots, at our home in the country. Following my first few years at Madison, my office in Duke was given to the former Department Head, who stepped back down to the voice faculty and displaced the most junior member. So I moved to the basement of Converse Hall, with several other faculty and some Wenger Practice Modules, since the number of practice rooms in Duke was inadequate. There I typed my dissertation and became “Dr.” Little. After two or three years in Converse basement, my office was moved once again to a house on the corner of Grace and Main Streets, which was called Masters’ House. That space is now occupied by the incipient Hotel Madison. It was my biggest office of my JMU tenure (because in 1977, Madison College became James Madison University), and that space was very handy for many needs. During my second year at Madison College, I had proposed a class that would provide credit for participants in Opera productions, of which I was the director and producer. So my larger office was at times helpful for reduced staging rehearsals. While I was in the Masters House office, the tree came to share my space, at first on a window sill and later, in a bigger pot, on the floor. During the 1980’s the tree and I shared my Masters House office, while planning, fund-raising and construction of a new Music Building occurred. When that building was finished, in 1989, I moved myself and my tree into my new (and present) office, Rm 341, where we have been ever since.

I was originally hoping to harvest fruit from the tree, because I had seen a seed-planted lemon tree at the home of a family friend in central Pennsylvania one summer, and it was—in July—busily producing blossoms (very fragrant), and fruit, both unripe and ripening. So I believed that was possible for my former grapefruit seed. But it has never borne flowers or fruit. Just lots of leaves. In retrospect, it is probably good that it has not blossomed, because over the years, I have had many students trying to sing through allergy attacks brought on by our rural valley air, and the fragrance and pollen of a citrus tree probably would have caused difficulties for many.

Anyway, I discovered at some point that citrus varieties often cross-pollinate. So it is unusual for a seed-grown citrus tree to be true to its generating parent. What kind of fruit would be produced by a hybridized tree? Maybe a Gremon, or Grorange, or maybe a Grumquat? Or perhaps a lowly “Grime,” would be the fruit produced by my tree. But that is just conjecture, since fruit necessarily must be preceded by a blossom. So my tree is not a fruit-bearing tree, though it is descended from a citrus family. Still, the filtration and oxygenation of the air in my office is a benefit uniquely due to the tree, and who knows how many voices have been helped by that purity.

Where will the tree go next...?!

## **Beau soir: Claude Debussy**

When rivers are pink in the setting sun,  
and a slight shiver runs through fields of wheat,  
A suggestion to be happy seems to rise up from all things  
And ascends toward the troubled heart;  
A suggestion to taste the charms of the world  
while one is young and the evening is fair,  
For we are on our way just as this wave is:  
it is going to the sea – and we, to the grave!

## **Du bist die Ruh: Franz Schubert**

You are peace, the mild peace,  
You are longing and what stills it.  
I consecrate to you full of pleasure and pain  
As a dwelling here my eyes and heart  
Come live with me, and quietly  
Close the gates behind you  
Drive other pain out of this breast  
May my heart be full with your pleasure.  
The tabernacle of my eyes  
By your radiance alone is illumined,  
O fill it completely!

## **Von ewiger Liebe: Johannes Brahms**

Dark, how dark it is in the forest and field! Night has fallen; the world is now silent.  
Nowhere, a light and nowhere smoke. Yes, now even the lark is silent.  
From yonder village there comes the young lad, taking his beloved home.  
He leads her past the willow bushes, talking so much, and of so many things:  
“If you suffer shame and if you grieve, if you suffer disgrace before others because of me,  
Then our love shall be ended ever so fast, as fast as we once came together;  
It shall go with the rain and go with the wind, as fast as we once came together”  
Then says the maiden, “Our love shall never end!  
Steel is firm and iron is firm, Yet our love is firmer still.  
Iron and steel can be recast by the smith but who would transform our love?  
Iron and steel can melt; our love, our love will have to last forever!”

## **Clair de lune: Gabriel Faure**

Your soul is a chosen landscape charmed by masquers and revelers  
Playing the lute and dancing and almost sad beneath their fanciful disguises!  
Even while singing, in a minor key, of victorious love and fortunate living  
They do not seem to believe in their happiness  
And their song mingles with the moonlight.  
The calm moonlight, sad and beautiful, which sets the birds in the trees dreaming,  
And makes the fountains sob with ecstasy,  
the tall slender fountains among the marble statues!

## **From La Traviata: "De miei bollenti spiriti": Giuseppe Verdi**

My passionate spirit and the fire of youth she tempers with the gentle smile of love.  
Since the day when she told me, "I want to live, faithful to you alone!"  
I have forgotten the world and lived like one in heaven.

**Petrarch Sonnets: Franz Liszt (1811-1886)**

**Sonnet 47**

Blest be the day, and blest the month, the year, the spring, the hour, the very moment blest,  
The lovely scene, the spot, where first oppress'd I sunk, of two bright eyes the prisoner:

And blest the first soft pang, to me most dear,  
Which thrill'd my heart, when Love became its guest;  
And blest the bow, the shafts which pierced my breast,  
And even the wounds, which bosom'd thence I bear.

Blest too the strains which, pour'd through glade and grove,  
Have made the woodlands echo with her name;  
The sighs, the tears, the languishment, the love:  
And blest those sonnets, sources of my fame;  
And blest that thought—Oh! never to remove!

Which turns to her alone, from her alone which came. (Wrangham)

**Sonnet 104**

I fynde no peace and all my warre is done, I feare and hope, I bourne and freese lyke yse;  
I flye above the wynde, yet cannot ryse; And nought I have, yet all the worlde I season,  
That looseth, nor lacketh, holdes me in pryson,

And holdes me not, yet can I escape no wyse.

Nor lets me leeve, nor die at my devyce, and yet of death it giveth none occasion.

Without eye I see, and without tongue I playne; I desyre to perishe, yet aske I health;

I love another, and yet I hate myself; I feede in sorrow and laughe in all my payne,  
Lykewyse pleaseth me both death and lyf, and my delight is cawser of my greif. (Wyatt)

**Sonnet 123**

On earth reveal'd the beauties of the skies,

Angelic features, it was mine to hail;

Features, which wake my mingled joy and wail,  
While all besides like dreams or shadows flies.

And fill'd with tears I saw those two bright eyes,

Which oft have turn'd the sun with envy pale;

And from those lips I heard—oh! such a tale,

As might awake brute Nature's sympathies!

Wit, pity, excellence, and grief, and love

With blended plaint so sweet a concert made,

As ne'er was given to mortal ear to prove:

And heaven itself such mute attention paid,

That not a breath disturb'd the listening grove—

Even æther's wildest gales the tuneful charm obey'd. (Wrangham)

**From Don Pasquale: Bella siccome un angelo: Gaetano Donizetti**

Beautiful as an angel on earth as a pilgrim fresh as a lily that opens upon morning.

Eyes that speak and laugh, glances that cover the heart,

Hair that surpasses ebony, enchanting smile!

A soul innocent and ingenuous that ignores itself.

Incomparable modesty, goodness that makes one fall in love.

To the poor piteous, gentle, sweet, loving!

Heaven made her be born to make a heart beat.

**The Legend of Grapefruit Tree**

by Dr. John Little

There are probably two things that my students—present and former—may tend to remember. One is my habit of shouting: “Just a minute...!” after they knock on the door at their lesson times. So, I can finish the final thing in the previous lesson, or finish writing an assignment on my lesson form.

The other thing is my tree. First-year students are sometimes surprised, taken aback, or occasionally oblivious to the arrival of “the tree,” when I bring it in to the office sometime in October. It is my habit to take the tree out to the Main Street patio, where it spends the summer months in sunshine and rain, so when the frost returns to the valley, I have to get it back to its place in my studio, where it functions as a shady air freshener, and indoor orchard.

The tree started life as a seed in a breakfast grapefruit that I and Gail consumed one morning at our breakfast table in our rented duplex in Champaign, IL, where I was then pursuing course work for my D.M.A. in vocal performance and literature, with a minor in Choral Conducting. (The degree completion arrived at the end of my 3rd year on the voice faculty at Madison College, in May 1977.)

Anyway, back to breakfast. As I was consuming half of the grapefruit, I observed that, as usual, it had many seeds. And I wondered to myself whether those seeds were alive and functional. As I pondered that question, I noticed on the windowsill beside me a pot, with dirt in it, but no longer a living plant. (I have no recollection of what was the original occupant of the pot.) So, I planted all of the grapefruit seeds around the periphery of that pot, and then watered the now-seeded dirt. As the next few days or weeks passed, I continued to ponder the pot, watching for signs of germination. Sure enough, in not many days (it was a south-facing window...), green shoots began to emerge from the seeds. After a couple of weeks, I had probably a half-dozen young trees growing in that smallish pot, with miniature trunks and a leaf or two on each one. Upon consideration, I realized that all of those trees simply did not have room enough to thrive in that small pot, so I forthwith chose the sturdiest looking sprout and transplanted it to the middle of the pot after pulling and disposing of all its siblings. From that point onward, until we moved east to the small town of Harrisonburg, VA (pop. 18,200), in August of 1974, the tree sat on that south-facing windowsill, and gradually became larger, produced branches and more leaves, occasionally being watered, and providing companionship to the family during meals.

When we set forth on our odyssey from Champaign-Urbana to Harrisonburg—a trip fraught with stress and peril as our unborn son, Brian, made himself known 3 months before he was due to arrive—but that’s a different story, having little, or nothing, to do with “the tree—the tree, in its pot, rode in the cab of out rental truck, with several other plants, including an avocado tree named “Avery,” since deceased, but at the time much larger and apparently sturdier than the former grapefruit seed, and our cat, “Morris.” When we arrived in Harrisonburg and moved into our rental house west of town, the tree was placed in an appropriate window vantage in the kitchen.