Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

KYRON BASU

BMus (University of Victoria, 2018)

“Phonetic Journey: Sound in Singable Translations”

School of Music

1:00 pm
Thursday August 20, 2020
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Joseph Salem, School of Music, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Benjamin Butterfield, School of Music, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Martha McGinnis, Department of Linguistics, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Kristin Semmens, Department of History, UVic

Dr. Stephen V. Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Singable translations have a long history as a tool to broaden the reach of foreign language music to new audiences. Current translation theory prioritizes the transfer of poetic meaning and structure. I argue that the phonetic sounds of a poem serve a musical function which is, in many cases, intimately bound to a composer’s setting of that poem. I propose that the phonetic properties of a poem are important expressive devices that should be given equal consideration to semantic content.

I develop a theory called Expressive Phonetic Mapping to effectively describe and translate phonetic features of musical significance. I apply this theory to selections from Franz Schubert’s *Winterreise*, analyzing existing translations by Harold Heiberg and Jeremy Sams. Supplementing my arguments with formal analysis, I show how modifications to the type and placement of speech sounds at critical moments can enhance the expressiveness and coherence of these translations, often with minimal change to or loss of semantic information.

My thesis culminates in an original singable translation of Hugo Wolf’s “Fussreise,” where I combine Expressive Phonetic Mapping with another method of translation: Peter Low’s “Pentathlon Principle.” I aim to extend existing theories by integrating phonetics into their approaches. That is, considering how the quality of translations can be improved by giving attention to the vocal sounds used, and how those sounds relate to the underlying music.