Bard College Conservatory of Music
Graduate Vocal Arts Program
Texts and Translations Guidelines

THE POEM
Write out the poem in its original format as conceived of by the poet.

Include the name of the poet, with their dates (see NOTE), either on the program or with your texts and translations. If the poem comes from a larger collection, it is not necessary to cite it unless you wish to do so. You may choose to include this information in your program notes.

Be sure to use the version of the poem that was set by the composer. Check the source against the score.
Some poems exist in multiple versions (Dickinson!). Sometimes composers (on purpose or accidentally) used a different word within a line. Often not all stanzas of a poem were set. You can make a note of these discrepancies and omissions in your text and translations, or in your program notes.

You may write out the poem in the original alphabet in which it was written (e.g. Cyrillic, Arabic, Hangul) or use romanization.

TRANSLATION

"Translations should be communications, not gaps and barriers; if they repel more than they attract, then they cannot be considered communications, and in this respect, translations. Faithfulness in the commonly understood sense of the word is often unfaithfulness in a higher sense."
        – Georg Friedrich Daumer (1800-1875)

The purpose of a translation is to give your reader a sense of the spirit of the poetic line, and not a word-by-word rendering. Often a literal word-by-word translation will miss the essential meaning. Use elegant syntax that avoids awkwardness or forced turns of phrase.

Honor punctuation and capitalization whenever possible. Honor line breaks and stanza breaks.

Line up the translation with the original text, side-by-side. Sometimes this is not possible when you are trying to create a smooth and meaningful translation. In this case, meaning takes priority.

FORMATTING
Use text boxes, not columns.

Avoid page breaks in the middle of a song to prevent the gentle percussive flurry of turning pages while you are singing. Of course, sometimes this is unavoidable.

An optimum font is one that is not too small to read in dim lighting, but not too big to cause unintentional line breaks or create an overly long document. Print out a sample page to test your choice.

If you have a series of poems in English, you can place them side-by-side on the page to save paper.

NOTE: BIRTH AND DEATH DATES

If one of the living composers and poets on your program has not published their birth date, you may choose not to include birth and death dates of any of the poets and composers on your program page or texts or translations, and instead indicate the date of composition for each work on your program. You may of course list the birth and death dates that you have, and simply omit the birth date that is unavailable.