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## **A Survey of the Development of the German Lied**

Michael C. Haberman

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CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

*presents in Graduate Recital*

MICHAEL C. HABERMAN, *Baritone*  
MRS. WAYNE HERTZ, *Piano*

# PROGRAM

I

Der Lindenbaum.....Franz Schubert  
Feldeinsamkeit .....Johannes Brahms  
O du, mein holder Abendstern.....Richard Wagner  
    from "Tannhauser"

II

Eri tu che macchiavi.....Giuseppe Verdi  
    from "Un Ballo in Maschera"  
Di Provenza il mar.....Giuseppe Verdi  
    from "La Traviata"

III

Pilgrim's Song.....Peter Tschaikowsky  
Is not His Word like a Fire?.....Felix Mendelssohn  
    from "Elijah"  
Blue are Her Eyes.....Wintter Watts  
Thy Sweet Singing.....Clarence Olmstead

## INTERMISSION

IV

Vision Fugitive.....Jules Massenet  
    from "Herodiade"

V

The Listeners.....Norman Dello Joio  
Nocturne.....Pearl G. Curran  
The Little Horses.....arr. by Aaron Copland  
Shadrack .....Robert MacGimsey

**COLLEGE AUDITORIUM**

**JULY 30, 1963**

**8:15 P.M.**

NOTE: This program has been presented by Michael C. Haberman in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Education degree with a major in Music Education.

A SURVEY OF THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE GERMAN LIED

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A Research Paper  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by  
Michael C. Haberman  
August 1963

THIS PAPER IS APPROVED AS  
MEETING THE PLAN 2 REQUIREMENT  
FOR THE COMPLETION OF A RESEARCH  
PAPER.

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Wayne S. Hertz

FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Romantic period, roughly the nineteenth century, was a period that saw artistic, political, and religious revolt against the strict structure and formalism of the Classical period. In music the Romantic period was characterized by the expanding of form, the broadening of subject matter, and the development of means to express imagination and originality (15:1264).

This new spirit of freedom demanded a general expansion of the qualities of the factors of music. Harmonies, melodies, rhythms, forms, and media of performance were all subjected to great elaboration. The solo song, as a form of composition by itself, did not receive much attention before the Romantic period. With the perfection and establishment of the piano and the development of Romantic poetry in the new Romantic spirit, the solo song became established as a new and very important medium of music.

#### I. DEFINITION OF "GERMAN LIED"

The term most commonly used in this new style of song is "German Lied." A strict translation of this would be "German Song" which would imply all of the songs of Germany regardless of their style or period. However, since the composed song was largely developed during the Romantic period and because German composers were mainly responsible for its identity and establishment, the term

"German Lied" has come to specifically denote the German songs of the Romantic period.

## II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to identify the pertinent factors that established the German Lied, to see how the most important composers developed and used these factors, and to gain a perspective of the history and the composers of the German Lied.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY AND COMPOSERS

To discuss the history of almost any subject, it is desirable to trace its existence from its beginning. However with the German Lied, this is impossible. Its beginning is before the invention of notation to record the musical thoughts of the variety of people who might have been concerned. What part unwritten music, both before and after the use of musical notation, has played in the development of the German Lied may never be determined.

#### I. BEFORE THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

The first beginnings of the German Lied may be traced to the Minnesingers and the Meistersingers of the twelfth century (14:27). During the period between the Minnesingers and the Romantic composers, there was little development of the solo song in Germany. Even the great composers of the Baroque period, such as Schütz, Handel, and Bach, failed to produce true solo or art songs. It is true that many vocal solos have come to us from these composers, but most of these are parts of larger works and do not qualify as art songs. Bach wrote only one art song--"Bist du bei mir" (5:27).

There are two evident reasons for the failure of the German song to flourish during the Baroque period. The first is the domination of music composition and performance by the larger vocal works



and instrumental music. The instrumental, opera, and church forms demanded the attention of the composers, who had little interest in the much smaller song form (8:5). The second reason is the extensive use of the basso continuo. The nature of the continuo restricted the development of free and expressive accompaniments that are so important in the German Lied (9:230).

During the middle of the eighteenth century, a style of song composition known as the First Berlin School was developed. This was similar to the French vaudeville song and attempted to break away from the bel canto style of the Italian Baroque, which was dominating Germany and the rest of Europe. The melodies of the First Berlin School were as simple as possible and were intended to "arouse the impression of being long familiar" (8:5).

During the last portion of the eighteenth century, the Second Berlin School was developed. This school, containing composers such as Hiller, Schulz, Reichardt, Zumsteeg, and Zelter, differed from the First Berlin School by its attempt to become somewhat involved with the text in the composition of the song. Although this period was not considered to be too important to the Romantic composers, some of the ideas it used were later developed by them (8:6).

When considering the Classical period, one would think that he would be confronted with an array of beautiful, melodic songs with composers such as Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). These two composers had all the attributes

necessary to write songs in the style of the German Lied. However, they did not choose to apply their talents to solo song composition in any significant manner. Neither wrote over forty songs.

Although Haydn was mostly an instrumental composer, he was well aware of the beauty of the voice and wrote some very singable songs. His accompaniments do not contain the style of the nineteenth century, but some display an equality between the voice and accompaniment that was seldom used in his day. The outstanding criticism of Haydn's vocal solo compositions is his indifference to the text (5:28-30).

The songs of Mozart do not live up to the quality established in his other choral works. It is believed that he wrote most of his songs merely for home entertainment and gave very little serious thought to them (6:171, 172). However, Mozart did compose several very musically outstanding songs. One of his best is the "Das Veilchen." It is the first example of the durchkomponiert or "through composed form" to be put to expert use. In this he was most considerate of the text. His declamation through key, rhythm, and melodic variation was quite new to his time and were factors that would later see great development (3:988).

As was true of the Baroque period, the solo song of the Classical period suffered because of the occupation of the composers with the larger vocal forms and instrumental music. Another reason the smaller song form was not established was the lack of suitable text. Very little poetry of quality was available to Mozart, but the one poem of exceptional poetic value he did set to music inspired a

musical masterpiece. The title of it is "Das Veilchen" (3:988).

The next person of concern to the German Lied after Haydn and Mozart was Ludwig von Beethoven (1770-1827). He, like Haydn, was primarily an instrumental composer (9:335) and expressed his dislike for composing songs several times. But regardless of this dislike he wrote seventy-nine art songs and was very important in establishing this medium as an acceptable form of composition (5:35).

Beethoven had one advantage that the composers before him did not have. This was the availability of some of the Romantic poetry. This is not to say that he had an overabundance of good verse or that he always made good choices when poetry was at hand. However, he saw the value of an inspiring text and used several poems of Goethe and other renowned poets (5:36).

## II. THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

After Beethoven, the Romantic style was well established. Along with this spirit of freedom came the German Lied of the Romantic period. The existence of two factors are primarily responsible for the development of this new type of song. They are (1) the great quantities of high quality poetry and (2) the perfection and establishment of universal use of the piano (12:972). The qualities and capabilities of the piano and the conception of the inspiring poems from the likes of Goethe, Schiller, and Heine enabled the Romantic composers to make a fusing between voice and melody, word, and accompaniment. This fusing made each part of equal importance in a manner

that exhibited a unity never before conceived (7:145).

If ever history has made conditions right for something to happen and then produced a man with the capabilities to make it happen, it was done with the German Lied and Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828). All the foundational work for the new style had been done by time through periods, styles, and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven. The piano was refined and the text was waiting to be used. Schubert merely needed to add his genius to make the German Lied flower to its great heights. Schubert was the first composer of considerable potential to devote his greatest efforts to the composition of song (8:8). He wrote nearly six hundred songs, the very first of which were patterned after the songs of Zumsteeg, but all of the remaining ones were in the new Romantic style that Schubert initiated (10:928).

Schubert's songs have an emotional but contemplative style (8:8) set in a variety of moods within textures of continuity (9:238). His songs are not in any sense urbane, for Schubert came from the so-called middle class society--the first composer to do so (2:1). Virtuosity and power of voice are not needed in Schubert's songs, nor are they dramatic in the style of Wagner (6:212).

Although it is doubtful that anyone ever reached the genius of Schubert, there are three other "giants" of the German Lied. They are Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), and Hugo Wolf (1860-1903). Due to the shortness of time between Schubert and Schumann, it is not believed that the music of Schubert influenced Schumann to any important degree (10:944), even though there are many similar characteristics between the two. His songs are not especially difficult to

sing, but the singer must have a fine musical and poetic sense to develop the intended meaning of the songs (6:225, 226).

Unlike Schumann, Brahms studied Schubert's music and was influenced by the earlier master in his own writing (10:944). He not only studied the works of Schubert but was well versed in the history of music in general. Brahms used his knowledge of the earlier periods to develop his own style. He is said to have combined the Romantic and Baroque eras (4:289). As did Schubert, Brahms had a love for nature and used this as a source for many of his songs (4:277, 278). He liked the low voice but wrote many suitable songs for all voices (6:179, 180). There are nearly three hundred art song and folk song arrangements of Brahms published today. This is not an indication of his total output for he was very meticulous and threw many songs away without having them performed (4:269).

When discussing the art songs of Brahms it is almost impossible to neglect the influence of the folk song on his writing. Although Schubert, Schumann, and many others gave considerable attention to the folk song, Brahms made extensive studies of them in Serbia, Hungary, and other European countries as well as Austria and Germany (4:283, 284).

The main intention of Brahms in his folk song arrangements was to add accompaniments to the original melodies and texts. However, he would not hesitate to alter the original if it would facilitate the expression of his musical ideas. In his later periods, these alterations became quite extensive (4:283). Not only is the arrangement of

folk songs important in Brahms, but their influence in most of his vocal music is quite evident. This is pointed out in the following quotation.

The attempt to combine the purely melodic expressiveness of a folk song with the more elaborate musicodramatic conception of a nineteenth century song seems to be one of the predominant characteristics of Brahms's vocal works (6:179).

After Brahms came the last of the great Romantic composers of song, Hugo Wolf. With him the song established its ultimate attainment of declamation. He often used a type of dramatization found in Wagner. Wolf composed in rather spasmodic periods of great haste separated by intervals of very little writing (8:9).

It is true that Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf were the most important composers of German Lied. However, one must not overlook the many other fine songs of composers primarily known for their instrumental works, or who have not managed to receive popular recognition for their songs. The following is a list of some of these composers.

Johann Carl Loewe (1796-1869). Loewe wrote many songs (eight volumes) with quite a variety of content. However, his melodies were not very attractive and his songs have not maintained the popularity of some of the other composers (10:941).

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). Mendelssohn wrote some very delightful songs. Most of them are in a style similar to that of Zelter and Weber who were of the period just before Schubert (8:9).

Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Liszt is not given due recognition for his songs. Many of them are of high quality. His use of an Italian type of melody prevented him from using the modulations and dramatic expressions that are characteristic of his instrumental works. His songs demand technique but are not in the flash and virtuosi style connected with his name (10:942).

Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Wagner did not compose very many songs and some of these were in French. He was mainly concerned with the larger vocal forms. He did not have a very great influence on the development of the German Lied (6:241).

Robert Franz (1815-1892). Franz wrote nearly three hundred songs; many of which were specifically written for a mezzo-soprano. These are not complicated or difficult but require poetic and musical sensitivity to be done well (6:190). His over sentimentalizing is a major reason for the fading of his vocal works (8:9).

Peter Cornelius (1824-1874). Cornelius is another composer who has not received sufficient recognition. He wrote very well for the voice and had a high musical quality. Like Wagner, Cornelius wrote many of his own poems (6:188).

Richard Strauss (1864-1949). Strauss has written some very excellent solos for the voice, although some of them require an operatic range and volume (6:236). He did not use them for experimentation as was done in his operas and orchestra works. Many of his

harmonic structures are quite complex, but he always maintained the desire to keep in the realm of the tonic and dominant chords (10:949).

Max Reger (1873-1916). The songs of Reger are not particularly good. He over used harmonies and motifs, was not considerate of the voice, and was not too careful in his choice of text (8:10).

It must be realized that not any period or style can be definitely defined as to dates, composers, and styles. The above list is not intended to be a complete list of composers of German Lied, but one that identifies the most recognized of the period.



## CHAPTER III

### ELEMENTS OF THE GERMAN LIED

The German Lied gains its identity from the fusing of text, melody and accompaniment. The full meaning of a song can be obtained only by seeking out the entire meaning of each of these items and then relating them to each other. Another element of importance to the German Lied, as in all music, is the structure or form in which it is written. The relative importance between these elements and the style in which they were used differed with each composer. In an attempt to limit the length of this chapter but still give a representative sample of the period, only the music of Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf will be discussed.

#### I. TEXT

Schubert was the first composer that managed to make an inspiring blending between words and music with consistent success. He was not always careful in his choice of poems for he set practically everything he found to music. Schumann said, "He would have gradually set the whole of German literature to music" (5:44, 45). Regardless of the quality of the poems, there was usually something in them that appealed to Schubert. Although he did have some very poor text, among his works are some of the best poems of Germany. He used seventy-one of Goethe (3:6) and forty-two of Schiller (2:11), two of Germany's most remarkable poets. To these poems and others of quality, Schubert

responded with great genius (9:238).

In letting himself interpret the text freely, Schubert used much more declamation than had been used before. He would let the music elaborate upon the parts of the poem he thought most important, often repeating words or phrases (8:8). However, it can not be said that he gave the text the most important position in his thinking, for it was not uncommon for him to sacrifice the meaningful interpretation of the text for his musical expressions. Schubert was concerned with the overall mood of the poem, which he generally captured superbly (10:240).

Brahms was very much like Schubert in respect to the balance of words and musical factors. Examples of beautifully executed declamation are abundant in his music, but he also allowed the text to be awkwardly set in favor of musical continuity. The fact that Brahms realized he was not being completely loyal to the text may be one of the reasons why he shied away from poets such as Goethe and Schiller and chose most of his verse from the lesser poets of Germany (7:150).

Schumann had more regard for the text than either Schubert or Brahms. He had grown up with a literary background and developed a superb sensitivity to words. He only made repetitions in the poem when he thought they were justifiable from a poetic standpoint (10:943).

Schumann's attention to the text resulted in his style being very influential on the early songs of Hugo Wolf (10:949). Wolf is the culmination of the composers who derived everything from the

text--form, rhythm, melody, and harmony (11:2). He believed that the music should interpret and illustrate to develop and add to the meaning of the poem, not that the poem was merely a source to inspire a musical work of art.

Wolf used varieties of harmonies, rhythms, and chromaticisms to approach a relatively word by word style of declamation (6:242, 243). Wolf obtained more complete declamation than any other composer of the German Lied, but like Schubert and Brahms, he occasionally found it necessary to sacrifice the poetic structure for an adequate musical setting (11:3).

## II. MELODY

Very closely related to the text is the melody. Upon thinking of melody in the German Lied, Schubert is the first composer to come to mind. The fact that Schubert was more gifted with beautiful melodies than the rest of the Romantic composers is seldom disputed (9:237). Not only was he capable of writing outstanding melodies, but he gave them his prime consideration. He would sacrifice everything possible to maintain the flow of his melodic line (6:212).

Brahms also considered the melody more superior than the declamation of the text. He very seldom breaks his melodic line to use a parlendo style or other means of declamation (6:179). His melodies are generally quite simple as in the folk songs he so enthusiastically collected and studied.

A composer who seemed to try to develop a balance between the

melody and the text was Schumann. He desired to have a very melodic line in the style of Schubert and Brahms but would not sacrifice the correctness of the text to maintain this line. His melodies, although they do not reach heights of Schubert, are full of warmth and vigor and express a great amount of inventiveness (10:143).

Using Schumann's regard for words as a beginning, Wolf developed a style in which the melody became increasingly more subservient to the text. In some of Wolf's songs, declamation of the words was used to such an extreme degree that a melody hardly seems to exist (6:242).

### III. ACCOMPANIMENT

The German Lied in the Romantic period raised the accompaniment to a degree of importance that it had never before obtained. In many instances, the piano part was as important and required as much interpretation of the text as the voice line. This importance of the accompaniment is one of the chief differences between the folk song and the art song (5:7).

One can not overstress the importance of the piano in the development of the art song. With its flexibility, the composer could make the accompaniment a very effective means of adding to the interpretation and expression of the text. The capability of the piano to be played in a singing style enabled the composers to do more interweaving between the voice and accompaniment (5:9, 44, 45).

Indications of the coming importance of the accompaniment were

evident in Haydn and Mozart. It developed considerably in the songs of Beethoven and then blossomed to its full height with the Romantic composers starting with Schubert. Schubert had a large amount of variety in his piano parts. They range from rather simple to very difficult and complicated. He constantly interwove the accompaniment and voice lines to obtain his desired effect. His imagination, boldness in harmony, and lyricism combined by an endless array of ideas generated very powerful accompaniments (10:939, 940).

The accompaniments of Schumann are very important and generally quite difficult. The melody of the song is often put in the piano and it is very common for the piano to have comparatively long passages by itself.

In the music of Brahms the accompaniments are often rather complicated harmonically, pianistically, and rhythmically. Many have a heavy texture, and the pianist must be very careful not to overpower the voice (6:179-180). The bass line of Brahms is very important. Many sketches of just the bass and melody have been found among his unfinished and unpublished works (4:269).

Hugo Wolf perhaps attached more importance to the accompaniments than the other composers of his time. Most of his accompaniments are as important as the voice, and several are nearly musically complete by themselves (13:1762). A pianist playing songs of Wolf must be extremely sensitive to the text, for the accompaniment is exceptionally important to the proper interpretation (6:242).

## IV. FORM

There are many types of forms used in the German Lied--various kinds of short forms, rondos, three part forms, and many different combinations of forms are commonly found. However, the greatest number of songs can be roughly classified in one of the three following forms: (1) Strophic--the repeating of the same music for different stanzas of the poem. (2) Composite or modified strophic--generally the same music for each stanza of poetry but with some alterations. (3) Durchkomponiert or through-composed--different music for different words in the poem (5:5).

Most of the composers wrote songs in all three forms. Schubert was one of these. He liked the strophic and modified strophic but some of his best known compositions are his ballads in the durchkomponiert form. Among these is his famous setting of Goethe's "Erlkönig" (10:936).

Brahms was very meticulous about the form of his songs as he was in all of his music. He liked the strophic for its folk song implications and stated that it ranked the highest of all the song forms (8:9). Like Schubert, Brahms was also very adept at writing in most of the forms suitable for the German Lied (7:148). Differing from the other composers of the period was Hugo Wolf, who restricted most of his songs to the durchkomponiert form.

The song cycle. The idea of making the German Lied become part of a larger form was realized in the establishment of the song cycle.

The cycle is a series of songs relating to the same poetic subject and forming a complete musical composition. The first example of the song cycle was Beethoven's "An die ferne Geliebte" (10:937, 962). Famous examples from the Romantic period are Schubert's "Die schöne Müllerin" and "Winterreise"; Schumann's "Frauenliebe und Leben" and "Dichterliebe"; and Brahms's "Magelone" (1:700). After Brahms, the song cycle was used extensively throughout Germany and other European countries (10:962).

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

A research paper of this nature can not dwell on any specific composer or individual composition. It has only attempted to obtain an overview of the history, the composers, and the important factors which were pertinent in the development of the German Lied. For one to gain a deep insight into the songs of the Romantic period, he would do well to study each composer in detail and to examine his music as to style and technique, thereby discovering the consistencies and the differences of the composers and gaining a knowledge of their songs.



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