



Liedersträuße
Song Bouquets by Johannes Brahms

Saturday, August 25, 2018 ~ 7:30pm
St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, Bellevue

PROGRAM

Op. 42: *Drei Gesänge für sechsstimmigen Chor a cappella* (1859-61)

1. Abendständchen
2. Vineta
3. Darthulas Grabesgesang



Op. 62: *Sieben Lieder für gemischten Chor* (1874)

1. Rosmarin
2. Von alten Liebesliedern
3. Waldesnacht
4. Dein Herzlein mild
5. All' meine Herzgedanken
6. Es geht ein Wehen
7. Vergangen ist mir Glück und Heil



Op. 29: *Zwei Motetten für fünfstimmigen gemischten Chor a cappella* (1860)

1. Es ist das Heil uns kommen her
2. Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein rein Herz



In stiller Nacht (1864)

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)

Program notes by Gary D. Cannon

What were you like at age twenty? Perhaps you were in college, training for a career. Perhaps you had already embarked on that career, with varying degrees of confidence and trepidation. Perhaps you saw a life of many diverse opportunities yet awaiting you. In any case, recall yourself at age twenty, and imagine that the world's leading authority in your field crowned you the next global genius. Would this increase your confidence? Or cause a new wave of self-criticism, even fear of inevitable failure? Thus was Brahms's blessing and curse when Robert Schumann, the pre-eminent figure in German concert music, acclaimed his younger colleague in the October 1853 issue of his newspaper, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Brahms was seen by the few who had heard his piano music as the chosen one who would lead a generation of German composers to their rightful place as the world's supreme musicians.

Brahms's life had been relatively unprepossessing. He was born in 1833 in Hamburg, a port city in northern Germany not noted for its musical establishment. His father would today be classified as a freelance musician, playing frequently at taverns and joining the militia band. The young Brahms studied piano from age seven and eventually began playing professionally in restaurants and theaters (though not seaside brothels, as is commonly believed). At a precocious 13, he even conducted a small choral ensemble at nearby Winsen an der Luhe. In 1853, while touring Germany as the accompanist for an expatriate Hungarian violinist, he met Franz Liszt and the day's leading violinist, Joseph Joachim. The latter encouraged Brahms to introduce himself to Robert Schumann, which he did in September 1853. The very next month, the master-composer introduced his new young friend to the world.

That February, Schumann suffered a mental breakdown and attempted suicide, leading to his incarceration in an asylum. His wife, Clara, was one of the nineteenth century's greatest pianists. In order to make ends meet, she reenergized her concertizing throughout Europe. Brahms, having developed a close relationship with the Schumann household, moved in with them to attend to family and business duties. He remained close to Clara, accompanying her on concert trips and spending much time in Düsseldorf, until Robert's death in July 1856, when he began to perform with greater frequency. He toured as a solo pianist, also playing in chamber music and as a concerto soloist. He also gained two regular jobs as choral conductor. The first of these was a seasonal position every autumn from 1857 to 1859 as conductor of the court choir and orchestra at Detmold in northwestern Germany. He also directed a women's chorus in Hamburg.

But, more importantly, Brahms began to compose with ever greater earnest. In 1855–6 he undertook a serious study of the choral polyphonic works of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century masters, an unusual hobby for a composer hitherto immersed in piano and chamber music. Brahms and Joachim—a close friend and also a budding composer—exchanged counterpoint exercises. The first fruit of Brahms's renewed independence and study was a bevy of small-scale choral works. In the decade between 1855 and 1865, Brahms wrote no fewer than seventy-five choral miniatures, among them the Motets op.29, the Gesänge (songs) op.17 and 42, the Lieder op.41 and 44, two collections of German folksong settings, thirteen canons for women's voices, and an unaccompanied *Missa canonica* (not performed until 1983, it was believed lost for nearly a century). Each of these pieces demonstrates that his conducting jobs had taught him well the demands of singers. During this same span, Brahms also honed his craft with the First Piano Concerto (a failure at its 1859 premiere, it is now one of his most popular works), the two orchestral Serenades (like the concerto, these were aborted attempts at writing a first symphony), sets of variations for piano, a continued flurry of art-songs, and a half-dozen chamber masterworks.

In September 1862 Brahms first visited Vienna and began to develop a reputation as an important composer

of chamber music, piano works, and art songs. The next season he served as conductor of the Vienna Singakademie, with which he programmed Renaissance motets, music by Bach, and earlier nineteenth-century works, showing a refined ear for music of the near and distant past. These early styles had already fundamentally influenced his own choral compositions. When the complete, contrapuntally infused *Ein deutsches Requiem* was first heard in 1869, Brahms became the foremost composer of concert music in the German-speaking world.

Building on the success of the *Requiem*, Brahms initiated a series of mid-length works for chorus and orchestra, including the Alto Rhapsody (1869), *Schicksalslied*, and *Triumphlied* (both 1871). The much beloved *Liebeslieder* Waltzes (1869) and two books of Hungarian Dances for piano brought Brahms more deeply into the vein of those making music at home. More prestige came with his directorship of the orchestra and chorus of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. During this period he wrote the choral Lieder op.62, now one of Vienna's musical leaders.

All this, yet he had composed no symphony, no string quartet, no opera, no oratorio. In fact, two string quartets came in 1873. Once he finally finished a symphony (1876), three more followed moderately quickly, interrupted by two concertos, two overtures, and two mid-length works for chorus and orchestra. He began to turn down positions—such as, in 1878, the post of Cantor at St Thomas in Leipzig, once held by his beloved Bach—because his Viennese reputation became so secure. With more songs, more chamber music, more organ works, and more choral miniatures came more fame, prestige, honors, and income. And all of it started because he wrote great music for choirs.

And for piano, too. And sometimes other instruments. And maybe a solo voice.

But mostly because choirs.



OP. 42: *Drei Gesänge für sechsstimmigen Chor a cappella* (1859–61)

I. ABENDSTÄNDCHEN

Clemens Brentano (1778–1842), from *Lustige Musikanten* (1803)

In this, the first of his three *Gesänge* for 6 voices, Brahms right away reveals why the six-voice texture was so necessary. The warmth and richness of the opening sonority—women, then men, each in closed triads—brilliantly conveys the gentle mixture of comfort and melancholy as “the flute laments” at sunset. The simple echo effect was one of the elements Brahms adapted from the earlier antiphonal masters. Brahms varies his use of this effect, as, for example, at “*stille, stille*” (“still, still”, or “quiet, quiet”), when the outer voices echo the inner.

Hör, es klagt die Flöte wieder, und die kühlen Brunnen rauschen, golden wehn die Töne nieder, stille, stille, laß uns lauschen! *Hear, the flute laments again, and the cool fountains whisper, the golden tones waft down, quietly, quietly, let us listen!*

Holdes Bitten, mild Verlangen, wie es süß zum Herze spricht! *Lovely plea, gentle yearning, how sweetly to the heart it speaks!*
Durch die Nacht, die mich umfängen, blickt zu mir der Töne Licht. *Through the night which surrounds me, the music's light looks to me.*

2. VINETA

Wilhelm Müller (1794–1827), from *Lyrische Reisen und epigrammatische Spaziergänge* (1827)

Vineta was a mythical city that sank into the Baltic Sea after a flood. Think of it as a northern Atlantis. Wilhelm Müller—best known as author of the texts to Schubert’s song-cycles *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Die Winterreise*—adds to the Vineta myth a tolling of bells from below the sea, enticing mariners to the depths like a beckoning beloved. Assigning only the women’s voices to the third verse—“Und der Schiffer...” (“And the boatman...”)—is a superb if unconventional touch: if he had used the men, Brahms would have literally depicted the boatman, but instead he subtly conveys the sailor’s lonely emptiness. Likewise the stark octaves for “des Herzens tiefem Grunde” (“the deep bottom of the heart”) both reveals starkness and renders audible the tick-tock of a heartbeat. A less insightful composer might have given a dark, mysterious conclusion, but Brahms ends happily, even optimistically, for here the sailor himself speaks, genuinely and innocently glad of the bells’ siren song, oblivious to danger.

Aus des Meeres tiefem, tiefem Grunde
klingen Abendglocken, dumpf und matt.
Uns zu geben wunderbare Kunde
von der schönen, alten Wunderstadt.

In der Fluten Schoß hinabgesunken,
blieben unten ihre Trümmer stehn.
Ihre Zinnen lassen goldne Funken
widerscheinend auf dem Spiegel sehn.

Und der Schiffer, der den Zauberschimmer
einmal sah im hellen Abendrot,
nach der selben Stelle schiff er immer,
ob auch ringsumher die Klippe droht.

Aus des Herzens tiefem, tiefem Grunde
klingt es mir wie Glocken, dumpf und matt.
Ach, sie geben wunderbare Kunde
von der Liebe, die geliebt es hat.

Eine schöne Welt ist da verunken,
ihre Trümmer blieben unten stehn,
lassen sich als goldne Himmelsfunken
oft im Spiegel meiner Träume sehn.

Und dann möcht ich tauchen in die Tiefen,
mich versenken in den Wunderschein,
und mir ist, als ob mich Engel riefen
in die alte Wunderstadt herein.

*From the sea’s deep, deep floor
ring evening bells, dull and soft.
To us they give wondrous tidings
from the beautiful, ancient, magic city.*

*In its flooded lap, deeply sunken,
there remain its ruins still.
Its battlements leave golden sparks
reflecting on the mirror [of the sea’s surface].*

*And the boatman, who this magical glimmer
has once seen in the bright sunset,
toward those same stars navigates himself forever,
even if around him the coastal rocks threaten.*

*Over the heart’s deep, deep foundation
ring to me the bells, dull and soft.
Ah, they give wondrous tidings
from the love, the beloved that once was.*

*A beautiful world is there sunken,
its ruins remain below still;
let the golden heavenly sparks
often look in the mirror my dreams.*

*And then I would dive into the depths,
sinking myself into the wondrous shine,
and to me it is as if an angel beckons
from the ancient, magic city there below.*

3. DARTHULAS GRABESGESANG

James Macpherson (i.e., “Ossian,” 1736–1796) as translated by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803),
Stimmen der Völker in Lieder

In 1761, the Scottish historian/translator James Macpherson began to publish epic poetry ostensibly written by Ossian, a third-century Celtic bard. Nowadays the prevailing opinion is that Macpherson actually wrote Ossian’s output outright. The works of Ossian found their way to Germany by way of Johann Gottfried Herder, the Enlightenment figure who also helped to popularize Shakespeare in translation.

Darthula was a beautiful Celtic maiden who fell in love with the warrior Nathos. When he died in battle, she killed herself atop his body. Ossian recounts that, upon her death, the region’s bards sang lovingly of her beauty. Brahms begins with stark and mournful restraint; not until the poem’s third stanza—at “Nimmer kommt dir die Sonne”, “Never will the Sun come”—do all six voices appear simultaneously. The first word sung all together is “weckend” (“awaken”), a sudden, passionate, consciously futile appeal that Dartthula might awake. When the Sun itself addresses the deceased Dartthula, the tempo moves faster, the tonality shifts from subdued D minor to bright G major, and all voices sing together. Gentle triplets depict the waving of leaves in the breeze. Such optimism renders the stark return to D minor all the more melancholy.

Mädchen von Kola, du schläfst!
Um dich schweigen die blauen Ströme Selmas!
Sie trauren um dich, den letzten Zweig
von Thruthils Stamm.

Wann erstehst du wieder in deiner Schöne?
Schönste der Schönen in Erin!
Du schläfst im Grabe langen Schlaf,
dein Morgenrot ist ferne!

Nimmer, o nimmer kommt dir die Sonne
weckend an deine Ruhestätte:
Wach auf, Dartthula!
Frühling ist draußen!

Die Lüfte säuseln,
auf grünen Hügeln, holdseliges Mädchen,
weben die Blumen!
Im Hain wallt sprießendes Laub!

Auf immer, so weiche denn, Sonne!
Dem Mädchen von Kola, sie schläft!
Nie erhebt sie wieder in ihrer Schöne,
nie siehst du sie lieblich wandeln mehr.

Maiden of Colla, you sleep!
For you are the blue currents of Seláma* silent!
They mourn for you, the last branch
of the root of Truthil.**

*When will you rise again in your beauty?
Fairest of the fair ones of Erin!*
You sleep the grave’s long sleep;
the sunrise is distant!*

*Never, O never will come the Sun
to awaken your restful state:
“Wake up, Dartthula!”
Spring is outside!*

*The breezes whisper
on green hills, sweet maiden,
weaving the flowers!
In the grove the sprouting leaves do wave!”*

*Forever go away, you Sun!
The maiden of Colla, she sleeps!
Never will she rise again in her beauty,
never will you see the lovely one walk more.*

* Colla = father of Dartthula

* Seláma = the region where Nathos died in battle

* Truthil = the founder of Colla’s clan, killed in the same battle as Nathos

* Erin = Celtic name for Ireland

* Dartthula = in Celtic myth, Dartthula killed herself after the death of her lover, Nathos



OP. 62: *Sieben Lieder für gemischten Chor* (1874)

I. ROSMARIN

From *Des knaben Wunderhorn*

Often we think of Brahms primarily as the master of the big forms: symphony and concerto, multimovement chamber work and *German Requiem*. But one should never neglect a master's miniatures. In the *Sieben Lieder*, op.62, Brahms reveals the same compositional sophistication as in his large-scale works, but in a more intimate, perhaps more soulful guise.

The source of the texts for the first two songs in op.62 is *Des knaben Wunderhorn*, which can be thought of as the poetic equivalent of Grimm's fairy tales. Two people, Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano (author of the first op. 42 text), collected old poetry, much of it intended for children, but with darkness and death hovering at every corner. "Rosmarin" tells of a maiden who goes to the garden intending to weave a rose wreath for her wedding, but instead she fashions a garland of rosemary, a traditional symbol of remembrance, for her beloved's funeral.

Es wollt die Jungfrau früh aufstehn,
wollt in des Vaters Garten gehn.
Rot Röslein wollt die brechen ab,
davon wollt sie sich machen ein Kränzlein wohl schön.

Es sollt ihr Hochzeitskränzlein sein:
"Dem feinen Knab, dem Knaben mein,
ihr Röslein rot, ich brech euch ab,
davon will ich mir winden, ein Kränzlein so schön."

Sie ging im Grünen her und hin,
statt Röslein fand sie Rosmarin:
"So birst du, mein Getreuer, hin!
Kein Röslein ist zu finden, kein Kränzlein so schön."

Sie ging im Garten her und him,
statt Röslein brach sie Rosmarin:
"Das nimm du, mein Getreuer, hin!
Lieg bei dir unter Linden, mein Totenkränzlein schön."

*The virgin would arise early,
would go to her father's garden.
Red little roses she would pick,
of them she would make a little garland so beautiful.*

*It shall be her bridal wreath:
"For the fine fellow, my fellow,
the little red roses I will pick,
of them will I wind a little garland so beautiful."*

*She goes to the greenery, here and there.
Instead of little roses she found rosemary:
"So you are, my faithful one, no more!
No little rose is to be found, no little garland so beautiful."*

*She goes to the garden, here and there.
Instead of little roses she picked rosemary:
"Take this, my faithful one, there.
Lies beside you, under the linden tree, my funeral garland so beautiful."*

2. VON ALTEN LIEBESLIEDERN

From *Des knaben Wunderhorn*

In this second song of the *Sieben Lieder*, the women's and men's voices are occasionally separated to speak the roles of the two lovers. Like "Rosmarin", the text begins simply enough—a man joyfully trotting on his horse to his beloved's home—but ends with gentle tragedy: they must keep their assignation hidden from the town. Brahms cleverly paints the trotting horse ("Trab, Röslein, trab") slightly differently at every verse.

Spazieren wollt ich reiten der Liebsten vor die Tür,
sie blickt nach mir von weitem und sprach mit großer Freud:
"Seht dort meins Herzens Zier, wie trabt er her zu mir!
Trab, Röslein, trab, trab für und für."

*Strolling, I would go riding to my sweetheart, to her door.
She sees me from afar and speaks with great joy:
"See there, my heart's adornment, how you trot here, toward me!
Trot, little horse, trot, trot on and on."*

Den Zaum, den ließ ich schießen und sprengte hin zu ihr,
ich tät sie freundlich grüßen und sprach mit Worten süß:
“Mein Schatz, mein höchste Zier, was macht ihr vor der Tür?”
Trab, Rößlein, trab, trab her zu ihr.

Vom Rößlein mein ich sprange und band es an die Tür,
tät freundlich sie umfassen, die Zeit ward uns nicht lang,
im Garten gingen wir mit liebender Begier.
Trab, Rößlein, trab, trab leis herfür.

Wir setzten uns danieder wohl in das grüne Gras
und sangen her und wieder die alten Liebeslieder,
bis uns die Äuglein naß von weg'n der Kläffer Haß.
Trab, Rößlein, trab, trab fürbaß.

*The reins, I let them loose, and I sprang to her,
I did so friendly greet her, and said with sweet words:
“My treasure, my highest adornment, what are you doing by the door?”
Trot, little horse, trot, trot over to her.*

*From my little horse I sprang and tethered it to the door,
so friendly I embraced her, our time was not long;
to the garden we went with loving desire.
Trot, little horse, trot, trot softly forward.*

*We sat ourselves down well in the green grass
and sang here and there the old love-songs,
until our little eyes were wet because of gossipers' hatred.
Trot, little horse, trot, trot, trot onward.*

3. WALDESNACHT

Paul Heyse (1830–1914), *Der Jungbrunnen* (1850)

Paul Heyse, winner of the 1910 Nobel Prize in Literature, wrote four poems used by Brahms in his opus 62. Heyse's poetry was much beloved by his musical contemporaries, having been set prominently by Schumann and Hugo Wolf. The texts used here come from an early Heyse collection, written when he was a twenty-year-old student in Bonn.

“Waldesnacht”, the third number in opus 62, is the most complex thus far. Brahms finds music that perfectly reflects the text in all three verses, as for the sweet leaves (“Rauschen süß”), envious distance (“mißgönnte Ferne”), and floating joy (“Friede schwebet”). Another example is the more pointed, dissonant harmony that closes each verse, which somehow magically describes torments (“Qualen”), fragrance (“Düften”), and a melancholy “good night” (“gute Nacht”). Note also how Brahms occasionally sets the sopranos apart from the rest by having them enter just one beat earlier. This motive will become crucial in the final movement.

Waldesnacht du wunderkühle, die ich tausendmale grüß.
Nach dem lauten Weltgewühle, o, wie ist dein Rauschen süß!
Träumerisch die müdne Glieder berg ich weich ins Moos,
und mir ist, als würd ich wieder all der irren Qualen los.

Fernes Flötenlied, vertöne, das ein weites Sehnen rührt,
die Gedanken in die schöne, ach, mißgönnte Ferne führt.
Laß die Waldesnacht mich wiegen, stillen jede Pein,
und ein seliges Genügen saug ich mit den Düften ein.

In den heimlich engen Kreisen wird dir wohl, du wildes Herz,
und ein Friede schwebt mit leisen Flügelschlägen niederwärts.
Singet holde Vögellieder, mich in Schlummer sacht!
Irre Qualen, löst euch wieder, wildes Herz, nun gute Nacht!

*Woodland night of wondrous cool, who a thousand times I greet:
after the loud turmoil of the world, O how your leaves are sweet!
Dreamily my tired limbs settle softly into the moss,
and to me it is as if it were again of all my many maddening torments.*

*Distant flute-song, sound out, which stirs a wide longing;
thoughts of the beautiful, alas, envious distance is leading.
May the woodland night cradle me, still every pain,
and with a holy satisfaction I inhale the fragrances.*

*In the hidden, narrow circles will you be well, you wild heart,
and a joy floats with soft beating of wings, downwards.
Sing, lovely bird-songs, to me in gentle slumber!
Maddening torments, leave me again; wild heart, now bid “good night”!*

4. DEIN HERZLEIN MILD

Paul Heyse (1830–1914), *Der Jungbrunnen* (1850)

Brahms loved canons. He wrote well over a dozen independent canons that have survived, with untold quantities that he destroyed or integrated into other works. Most composers are content to write a melody and then wait several measures for the next entrance. (Think of how long the second singer waits before entering in “Row, row, row your boat”.) Brahms, however, lacks any such patience and more than makes up with it in skill. The canonic section in “Dein Herzlein mild” is brief, just two bars, but it is offset by just one beat. And it is not only a melodic canon, but each entry has a supporting harmonic line as well. This is a skill very, very few composers ever hone.

Heyse’s poem also deserves special mention, since English translation doesn’t do justice to a crucial element. He takes advantage of the homonymic relationship of the noun “Knospen”, meaning either eyes or a flower’s buds. Hence when the nighttime buds blossom, so do the lover’s eyes.

Dein Herzlein mild, du liebes Bild, das ist noch nicht erglommen, *Your gentle little heart, your beloved image, it is not yet glowing;*
und drinnen ruht verträumte Glut, wird bald zu Tage kommen. *and within it rests dreamy embers that will soon come to day.*

Es hat die Nacht ein’n Tau gebracht den Knospen all im Walde, *It was night that brought a dew to the buds of the forest,*
und Morgens drauf da blüht’s zuhauf und duftet durch die Halden. *and in the morning are numerous blossoms and fragrances on the hills.*

Die Liebe sacht hat über Nacht dir Tau ins Herz gegossen,
und Morgens dann, man sieht dir’s an,
das Knösplein ist erschlossen.

*Gentle love has overnight poured dew into the heart,
and then in morning one sees in you
your eyes [or buds] have blossomed.*

5. ALL’ MEINE HERZGEDANKEN

Paul Heyse (1830–1914), *Der Jungbrunnen* (1850)

The fifth song in opus 62 is the only one written for six, rather than four, voices. This allows it to have richer, fuller harmonies for the ends of each verse. Here Brahms juxtaposes the men against the women, making the text feel like a conversation between two lovers. The music seems gentle enough, but only in the third verse do we realize that all along there was an undercurrent of melancholy. Not that we should be surprised, of course, especially if we’ve heard the preceding four movements. Brahms is preparing us for the inevitable: that this collection itself will have no happy ending.

All meine Herzgedanken sind immerdar bei dir:
das ist das stille Kranken, das innen zehrt an mir.

*All my heart’s thoughts are always of you:
it is the silent illness that gnaws inside me.*

Da du mich einst umfangen hast ist mir gewichen Ruh und Rast.
All meine Herzgedanken sind immerdar bei dir.

*Since you once embraced me, peace and rest have left me.
All my heart’s thoughts are always of you.*

Der Maßlieb und der Rosen begehrt ich fürder nicht.
Wie kann ich Lust erlösen, wenn Liebe mir gebricht!
Seit du von mir geschieden bist hab ich gelacht zu keiner Frist.
Der Maßlieb und der Rosen begehrt ich fürder nicht.

*Daisies and roses I no longer desire.
How can I satisfy lust when I lack love!
Since you from me have parted, I have at no time laughed.
Daisies and roses I no longer desire.*

Gott wolle die vereinen die für einander sind!
Von Grämen und von Weinen wird sonst das Auge blind.
Treuliebe steht in Himmelshut, es wird noch Alles, Alles gut.
Gott wolle die vereinen, die für einander sind!

*Would that God united those meant for each other!
Sorrowing and weeping will otherwise blind their eyes.
True love is in heaven’s protection, and it will still all, all be well.
Would that God united those meant for each other!*

6. ES GEHT EIN WEHEN

Paul Heyse (1830–1914), *Der Jungbrunnen* (1850)

“Es geht ein Wehen” is the most optimistic number of the cycle, though you’d never know it from the opening. Basses enter in stark octaves, sustaining longer notes below unstable chords in the upper voices: this is the lament of a jilted bride as it wafts on the breeze. The counterpoint thickens at mention of the bride’s yearning (“muß sie noch weit...”) in a gentle E minor. Brahms extends the end of the second verse with yet more counterpoint, transitioning from minor to major. The listener’s optimism wins out with confidence that the bride will find her one true love. And in fact, from his calling her “my treasure” (“mein Schatz”), we can theorize that the listener had loved her from afar all along, and now will come to her aid.

Es geht ein Wehen durch den Wald, die Windsbraut hör ich singen. *Deep pain goes through the wood, I hear the wind-bride singing.*
Sie singt von einem Buhlen gut und bis sie dem in Armen ruht, *She sings of a dear wooer and until she rests in his arms,*
muß sie noch weit in bangem Mut sich durch die Lande schwingen. *she must still yearn with anxious courage, wandering through the land.*

Der Sang der klingt so schauerlich, der klingt so wild, so trübe, *The song rings so haggardly, it rings so wild, so murkily,*
das heiße Sehnen ist erwacht, *that heated longing is awakened:*
mein Schatz zu tausenden gute Nacht! *my treasure, a thousand times “good night!”*
Es kommt der Tag eh du’s gedacht, der eint getreue Liebe! *The day will come that you have imagined, the one true love!*

7. VERGANGEN IST MIR GLÜCK UND HEIL

Old German folk poem, collected by Franz Ludwig Mittler, published in *Deutsche Volkslieder* (1855)

The seventh and final song reveals the overarching theme of the previous six: that lovers must, for one reason or another, be apart. In a choice highly unusual for Brahms, every chord is in root position, the most stable and unremitting way of voicing a chord. The result is a sense of solidity, as if the text’s unremittingly gloomy message is fundamentally inevitable. Brahms, a lifelong bachelor, had originally set this text for solo voice and piano in 1868, and now in 1874 made an unaccompanied choral arrangement. One wonders why he decided to revisit this music at this juncture. In this guise, the song is all the more stark. All is bleakness. All is lost. The End.

Vergangen ist mir Glück und Heil und alle Freud auf Erden;
elend bin ich verloren gar, mir mag nicht besser werden.

Bis in den Tod leid ich groß Not,

so ich dich Lieb muß meiden,

geschieht mir ach, o weh der Sach!

Muß ich mich dein verjehen, groß Leid wird mir geschehen.

Erbarmen tu ich mich so hart, das kommt aus Bohlers Hulde,
die mich in Angst und Not hat bracht, und williglich das dulde.

Um dich allein, Herzliebste mein, ist mir kein Bürd zu schwere;
wärs noch so viel, ich dennoch will

in deinem Dienst ersterben, nach fremdar Lieb nit werben.

Um Hülf ich ruf, mein höchster Hort, erhör mein sehnlich Klagen!

Schaff mir Herzlieb, dein Botschaft schier,

ich muß sonst vor Leid verzagen!

Mein traurig Herz leidet großen Schmerz, wie soll ichs überwinden?

Ich sorg, daß schier der Tod mit mir

will ringen um das Leben; tu mir dein Troste geben.

*Gone is my happiness and salvation and all joy on earth;
wretched am I, and utterly lost, I cannot wish to be better.*

Even to death will I suffer great distress,

for I, dear love, must be far from you,

I am all sadness—alas, O woe is my fate!

I must go away from you: great suffering will happen to me.

*I pity myself so fervently: it comes from a lover’s graciousness,
who in me has caused such anxiety and distress, and willingly I suffer.*

*For you alone, my heart’s beloved, is to me no weight too heavy;
were it not so great, I still would*

die in your service, and never solicit a stranger’s love.

For help I cry, my highest refuge: bear my fervent lamentation!

Grant my heart’s love your pure message;

I must otherwise despair in pain!

My doleful heart sorrows in great pain, how shall I overcome?

I fear that soon death with me

will wrestle for life; to me grant your comfort.



OP. 29: *Zwei Motetten für fünfstimmigen gemischten Chor a cappella* (1860)

I. ES IST DAS HEIL UNS KOMMEN HER

Paul Speratus (1484–1551), first verse

To Brahms, as to Bach, the term “motet” signified a short sacred work of multiple distinct sections, almost akin to miniature movements, based on a Lutheran chorale. He begins *Es ist das Heil* with a simple, traditional four-voice harmonization of the sixteenth-century chorale tune. In fact, Bach himself had written an entire cantata around this tune. The chorale harmonization functions as a prelude to a fugue, reminiscent in a way of many Bach organ works. It is perhaps more accurately a series of interconnected mini-fugues based on each of the chorale’s melodic phrases. The chorale is also preserved as a *cantus firmus* in the baritone line: that is, it occurs prominently in elongated notes. Brahms even outdoes Bach in this counterpoint exercise. By the time we arrive at “der hat g’nug für uns all getan”, the entrances are so condensed that the notion of a fugue is nominal at best.

Es ist das Heil uns kommen her von Gnad und lauter Güten: *It is salvation that has come to us through grace and pervading goodness:*
die Werke helfen nimmermehr, sie mögen nicht behüten! *good works will never help, they may not protect us!*

Der Glaub sieht Jesum Christum an: der hat g’nug *Faith looks to Jesus Christ: he has done enough*
für uns all getan, er ist der Mittler worden. *for all, he has become the mediator.*

2. SCHAFFE IN MIR, GOTT, EIN REIN HERZ

Psalm 51: 10–12

Though brief, *Schaffe in mir, Gott*, is grandly conceived. This student of Baroque polyphony is already a master who ingeniously updates canonic and fugal traditions with modern approaches to structure, chromatic harmony, and text-painting. The first movement, which centers on a canon between the soprano and bass voices, dates from 1857 (the rest of the motet was written by 1860). The two parts sing the same notes, but the basses expand them to twice the sopranos’ rhythmic values. This process, called augmentation, was very common among the great polyphonists of the sixteenth century. The second section is a strict fugue in four voices, beginning with the tenors, while introducing tonal ambiguity. Bach would have been immensely impressed by this angular, ambiguous fugue which seems to break all the rules but is actually viewing them through an innovative prism. The final movement returns us to a gentle G major, but midway through the sopranos interrupt with a bouncy, quicksilver fugue subject that emphasizes not lullaby but rapture—we are invoking, after all, the “freudige Geist” (“spirit of joy”).

Schaffe in mir, Gott, ein rein Herz,
und gib mir einen neuen gewissen Geist.

*Create in me, God, a pure heart,
and give me a new, confident spirit.*

Verwirf mich nicht von deinem Angesicht,
und nimm deinen heiligen Geist nicht von mir.

*Reject me not from your face,
and take your Holy Spirit not from me.*

Tröste mich wieder deiner Hilfe,
und der freudige Geist erhalte mich.

*Comfort me again with your help,
and may the joyful spirit uphold me.*



IN STILLER NACHT

Text after Friedrich von Spee (1591–1635)

Brahms harbored a deep love for the folk music of German and eastern European peoples, arranging many traditional melodies for solo voice or choir. *In stiller Nacht* was published in a set of fourteen original compositions using German folksong texts, but here the text is in fact an adaptation after Friedrich von Spee, a seventeenth-century German Jesuit priest. The subject matter of the original is Christ's suffering at the Mount of Olives. Brahms takes a more universal approach to the text, recalling laments of any variety. It is set homophonically, with each of the four vocal parts moving simultaneously. Occasional brief silences underline the speaker's weeping.

In stiller Nacht, zur ersten Wacht, ein Stimm beginnt zu klagen, *In still night, at the first watch, a voice begins to lament;*
der näch't'ge Wind hat süß und lind zu mir den Klang getragen; *the night wind sweetly and gently brings the sound to me.*

Von herbem Leid und Traurigkeit ist mir das Herz zerflossen, *With bitter sorrow and mournfulness is my heart melted;*
die Blümelein, mit Tränen rein hab ich sie all begossen. *the little flowers, with pure tears do I shower them all.*

Der schöne Mond will untergahn,
für Leid nicht mehr mag scheinen,
die Sterne lan ihr Glitzen stahn, mit mir sie wollen weinen. *The beautiful moon wants to set from sorrow,
and never again to shine;
the stars, their glittering fades: with me they wish to weep.*

Kein Vogelsang, noch Freudenklang man höret in den Lüften,
die wilden Tier traurn auch mit mir in Steinen und in Klüften. *No birdsong, no joyful sound can be heard in the air;
the wild animals mourn also with me among the stones and in gorges.*



ABOUT OUR CONDUCTOR

Dr. Gary D. Cannon is one of Seattle's most versatile choral personalities, active as conductor, singer, and musicologist. Since 2008 he is Artistic Director of the 90-voice Vashon Island Chorale and of the Cascadian Chorale, a prominent chamber choir in Seattle's Eastside suburbs. In 2016 he founded a versatile professional choir, the Emerald Ensemble. At the invitation of the Early Music Guild, he founded and directed a Renaissance choir, Sine Nomine (2008–15). He has conducted for Vashon Opera three times, and has also directed Anna's Bay Chamber Choir, Choral Arts Northwest, Earth Day Singers, Kirkland Choral Society, and the Northwest Mahler Festival.

As a tenor soloist, he has appeared with Pacific Northwest Ballet as well as several regional orchestras and choirs. He provides pre-concert lectures for Seattle Symphony and writes program notes for choirs across the country. Cannon is formerly an instructor at Whatcom Community College (2004–6), where he received the Faculty Excellence Award. His independent musicological research emphasizes early-twentieth-century British music. A California native, Dr. Cannon holds degrees from the University of California at Davis and the University of Washington.

A FEW WORDS....

Thank you for attending our concert!

We are a group of community choir ~~needs~~ singers who have joined together for three weeks in the late summer to sing new genres and gain small ensemble experience.

During the traditional choral year, our members participate in various local community choirs including the Seattle Bach Choir, Sine Nomine, Redmond Chorale, Cascadian Chorale, and Kirkland Choral Society, as well as several area church choirs.

We'd like to thank our coach and conductor, Gary Cannon, for helping us refine our sound as an ensemble, and for providing us extensive information about Brahms and his music.

We also wish to thank St. Margaret's Episcopal Church for graciously supporting our efforts and hosting both our rehearsals and our concert.

Be sure to visit summerfling.org for the latest news, or email info@summerfling.org if you are interested in participating or supporting us in the future.

WHO WE ARE

Artistic Director

Aaron Giles

Coach & Conductor

Gary D. Cannon
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Soprano

Elisabeth Baeskens
Vera Giles
Heather Irwin
Abigail Rausch

Tenor

Aaron Giles
Sam Hauer
Christopher Kruse
John La Fond

Alto

Dawn Fosse Cook
Gail Erickson
Kathy Rausch
Rachel Turow

Bass

Rick Commo
Jeremy Kings
Samuel Rausch
Trevor Tsang
Doug Wyatt

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