

# THE POETS OF SPOHR'S LIEDER OP. 103

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**T**HIS is the first in a proposed series of articles intended to provide readers and performers of Spohr's songs with some awareness of what their texts mean, who wrote them, and what may lie or may have lain behind them. Its subject is the set of *Six German Songs for Soprano, Clarinet and Piano Accompaniment*, Op. 103, generally regarded as Spohr's supreme achievement in the *Lieder* genre.

## 1. Carl Friedrich Ernst Georg, Baron von Schweitzer (1796-1847)

Ich wahrte die Hoffnung tief in der Brust,  
Die sich ihr vertrauend erschlossen,  
Mir strahlten die Augen voll Lebenslust,  
Wenn mich ihre Zauber umflossen,  
Wenn ich ihrer schmeichelnden Stimme gelauscht,  
Im Wettersturm ist ihr Echo verrauscht.  
Sei still mein Herz, und denke nicht dran,  
Das ist nun die Wahrheit, das Andre war Wahn.

Die Erde lag vor mir im Frühlingstraum,  
Den Licht und Wärme durchglühte,  
Und wonnetrunken durchwallt ich den Raum,  
Der Brust entspross die Blüte,  
Der Liebe Lenz war in mir erwacht,  
Mich durchrieselt Frost, in der Seele ist Nacht,  
Sei still...

Ich baute von Blumen und Sonnenglanz  
Eine Brücke mir durch das Leben,  
Auf der ich wandelnd im Lorbeerkrantz  
Mich geweiht dem hochedelsten Streben,  
Der Menschen Dank war mein schönster Lohn.  
Laut auflacht die Menge mit frechem Hohn,  
Sei still...

I kept the hope deep in my breast which had trustingly opened up to it; my eyes gleamed with a zest for life whenever her magic flowed round me and whenever I listened to her flattering voice; but its echo was drowned in the roaring storm. Be calm, my heart, and think no more of it: this now is the truth — that was just wishful thinking.

The earth lay before me in a dream of spring transfused with light and warmth; drunk with happiness I went on my way as blossom burst forth from my breast; the springtime of love had awakened in me; but frost now chills me through and in my soul there is night. Be calm, my heart...

I built myself a bridge of flowers and sunshine though life and went along it in a garland of laurels and dedicated to the most noble aspirations; the gratitude of mankind would have been my finest reward; but the crowd burst into loud laughter in insolent scorn. Be calm, my heart...

The author of 'Sei still mein Herz' led a restless and enigmatic life. He was born in Frankfurt am Main on 22 August 1796, ostensibly the son of a wealthy merchant called Schweitzer and his good wife Regina, née Schaaf, though his real father was not a merchant at all but a journalist by the name of Marcus Johann Nebbien, editor of a Frankfurt newspaper called the *Intelligenzblatt*. He grew up in the period of French political and military hegemony in Europe, and it is not at all surprising that with a background such as his, he seized the opportunity which young men born a generation later, such as Julien Sorel, the hero of Stendhal's 1831 novel *Le Rouge et le Noir*, would have given their eye teeth for: he became a lieutenant in Napoleon's Imperial Guards. The moment was ill-chosen, however. Before young Carl knew where he was, the French were invading Russia and being driven out of it again, while he for his part was taken prisoner and sent to Astrakhan, a city on the Volga, near the Caspian Sea. By the time of the French collapse in 1814, Carl had managed to gain his release and join the Polish service, taking the name of his Polish patron to add to his own — it was a French name with a more aristocratic ring to it than Chopin's: Boissy de Chvègrois; he soon 'translated' its magic 'de' into a German 'von' and dropped the rest to become 'von Schweitzer', thus combining the cachet of aristocracy with an aura of stalwart Swiss respectability which he may well have craved, though there was nothing Swiss about him!

During the early years of the so-called Restoration period, when Europe's sovereign princes returned to their thrones and set about recreating a past which the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire had almost destroyed, von Schweitzer travelled widely on the Continent and in the Russian Empire. His missions even took him to England. He also set about catching up on his own missed past by studying and taking a Ph.D. (*in absentia*) on an obscure aspect of ancient Roman thought at the University of Giessen, not far from his home town. Was this pursuit of higher learning genuine? Or might it have been a cover? In fact he was an agent of the Russian secret police, with the special task of reporting goings-on amongst the student confraternities of Germany, many of which were well known to harbour dangerously anti-establishment political ideas. It was, as Spohr well knew, a turbulent time which had culminated in the Wartburgfest, a gathering of students from all over Germany in 1817 to celebrate the tercentenary of the Reformation on the very spot where Luther had translated the Bible, and to proclaim their democratic sentiments and scorn for potentates and ruling classes. Two years later, another, more illustrious German, equally in the pay of Russia and reaction, was assassinated by a student: his name was August von Kotzebue, and — as far as box-office returns went — he was the leading European dramatist of his day. Carl von Schweitzer, however, escaped Kotzebue's fate and was rewarded for his services with the post of secretary to Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich, the Imperial Russian Viceroy of Poland. This took him safely through to the uprisings and revolutions of 1830, of which Poland bore her bitter share.

Taking after his natural father, perhaps, he now became a journalist. During the Polish uprising of 1830 he filed anonymous reports 'from our own correspondent' for the *Preußische Staatszeitung*, the organ of the Prussian government, and wrote articles espousing reactionary views, while in Petersburg the title of 'Hofrat' ('aulic councillor') was conferred on him as a reward for his services; such respectability, added to his mounting reputation as a German lyric poet, made him a useful channel between his Russian employers and Prince Metternich in Austria. A high-level go-between, he commuted between Vienna, Berlin and St. Petersburg, while at the same time adopting the persona of a man of letters. He became a German Romantic poet. Or was it perhaps his true identity? The harrowing sense of tension in his poem, which is built on contrasts — 'then' and 'now', 'joy' and 'grief', 'night' and 'day', and so on — suggests he was a 'Zerrissener', as they called them in those days, a man torn apart. Was he burdened since birth by a confused sense of his own identity? Or was he just a mimic: a man with a way with words, who could ape the sentiments of contemporary Romantic poets? Was the *Doppelgänger* motif in his poetry a genuine expression of his rootless double existence, the disillusionment more than just a pose? The themes and sometimes even the titles of his poems are the stock-in-trade of poets whose names we still know today: Müller, Uhland, Heine. But Schweitzer has long since dropped out of German literary history and been omitted from anthologies of verse.

It was during this last phase in Carl von Schweitzer's career that Spohr set one of his poems, 'Sei still, mein Herz', for the opening song of his Op. 103 set, published in 1837, the year of Queen Victoria's accession, and then another, 'Des Mädchens Klage', for the *Six German Songs*, Op. 105, a year later. The

choice is not to be wondered at. 'Sei still, mein Herz' is a passionate example of the tensions which inform so many of Schweitzer's poems and a skilful essay in a lyric mode he had entirely at his command. In it he exults in passionate love until he remembers that it is no more, and tells his heart to accept this truth, for the other was just 'wishful thinking'. I loved life, the poet continues, I was successful: but metaphorically night fell and popular favour deserted me. Yet the truth must be accepted and wishful thinking rejected, he tells his anguished heart. That Spohr responded to such sentiments is understandable. His beloved Dorette was dead, and he had married again in 1836; his master, the Prince Regent of Hesse, treated him with scant respect and consideration despite his international fame; and he knew he was under suspicion for harbouring liberal views. Poet and composer may have stood at opposite ends of the contemporary German political spectrum, but they had something in common which was inseparable from the cultural climate of their age.

By 1839, the year in which Spohr scored his English triumph with the first performance of *Calvary* at the Norwich Festival, Hofrat von Schweitzer was beginning to have had enough. Describing himself as a retired army officer, he settled in Stuttgart, although it was not in fact until 1844 that he finally retired from his secret service job. At last he could live the life to which birth had not entitled him. As Baron von Schweitzer he spent his last years in the capital of the Kingdom of Württemberg, where he became known as a well-to-do collector of *objets d'art*. Three years later he died suddenly in Cologne while he was on a journey. His true identity was still a mystery even to his friends.

## 2. Robert Reinick (1805-1852)

### *Zwiegesang*

Im Fliederbusch ein Vöglein saß  
 In der stillen, schönen Maiennacht,  
 Darunter ein Mägdlein im hohen Gras  
 In der stillen, schönen Maiennacht.  
 Sang Mägdlein, hielt das Vöglein Ruh,  
 Sang Vöglein, hört das Mägdlein zu,  
 Und weit hin klang der Zwiegesang  
 Das mondbeglänzte Tal entlang.

Was sang das Vöglein im Gezweig  
 Durch die stille, schöne Maiennacht?  
 Was sang doch wohl das Mägdlein gleich  
 Durch die stille, schöne Maiennacht?  
 Von Frühlingssonne das Vögelein,  
 Von Liebeswonne das Mägdlein;  
 Wie der Gesang zum Herzen drang,  
 Vergess' ich nimmer mein Leben lang.

A little bird sat in the lilac tree in the lovely quiet May night,  
 Beneath it sat a maiden in the tall grass in the lovely quiet May night.  
 When the maiden sang the bird kept its peace; when the bird sang, the maiden listened,  
 And their duet rang out far along the moonlit valley.

What did the little bird sing in the branches during the lovely quiet May night?  
 And what do you think did the maiden sing during the lovely quiet May night?  
 About the spring sunshine the little bird sang, about the joys of love the maiden sang;  
 And how their song penetrated right to the heart I shall never forget all my life long.

Robert Reinick was a merchant's son. He was born on 22 February 1805 in Danzig, which had become part of Prussia in 1793 in the Second Partition of Poland, and grew up there through the reign of Napoleon, who made it a Free City. After Napoleon's final defeat Danzig reverted to Prussia, and it is therefore not

surprising that young Reinick went to Berlin, the Prussian capital, in 1825 to study painting. From Berlin he moved on to Nuremberg, which had become a hallowed place in German art ever since the short-lived young Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder had sung its praises and those of its greatest son, the painter Dürer, in the pioneering essays in which he formulated the Romantic conception of visual and musical art in 1797. In 1831 Reinick moved on to Düsseldorf, which was becoming known as an artistic centre. But then, in 1838, he set off, like many a young German before and after him, to the land where the lemon-trees bloom, the land whose artistic achievement Wackenroder had placed on an footing equal with that of Germany. He spent some years in Italy. Then he came home. At first he seems to have lived in the Bohemian spa of Gräfenberg, where the hydropathic treatment of ailments and diseases was being pioneered, and then at Zoppot, a seaside resort near his home-town, Danzig.

By 1844 he was in Dresden, the Saxon capital. Sometimes called 'the Florence of the North', it was one of the main cultural centres in Germany, and Reinick soon became acquainted with famous contemporaries such as Mendelssohn and the poets Eichendorff and Chamisso, whose names and poems are inseparably associated with the songs of Robert Schumann. He had already become well known as the co-author of a collection aptly entitled *Liederbuch für deutsche Künstler* ('Songbook for German Artists', 1833), his collaborator being his friend Franz Theodor Kugler, the leading German art historian of his day. In 1837, while he was still working as an artist in Düsseldorf, this was followed by the first of three volumes aptly entitled 'Songs of an Artist with Marginal Drawings by his Friends' (*Lieder eines Malers mit Randzeichnungen seiner Freunde*). Two further volumes had followed by 1844, the year which saw the publication of his *Lieder und Fabeln für die Jugend* ('Songs and Fables for the Young'). His illustrated ABC for children large and small, another landmark in the history of children's literature and the nineteenth-century illustrated book, appeared in 1845. But Reinick's major contribution to the graphic art of mid-nineteenth-century Germany was the set of verses he wrote to accompany *Auch ein Totentanz*, a striking sequence of woodcuts on the theme of the dance of death and inspired by the 1848 Revolution. They were by Alfred Rethel, a young artist who was reviving the 'lost' art of Dürer with a brilliance of technique and an eye for surrealistical detail scarcely equalled since the sixteenth century and foreshadowing the art of the twentieth-century Expressionists.

The fact that Reinick is known as a writer of lyrics for others to illustrate or set to music rather than as a painter in his own right has a good reason for it. In Düsseldorf his paintings and woodcuts, which were often of religious subjects, had attracted attention, notably one of Saul and David. But he had contracted an eye disease which worsened during his stay in Italy, forcing him to return home to seek treatment, though in vain. He may not have been a genius comparable to Beethoven, yet like him he experienced the trauma of losing the very faculty on which his artistic vocation depended. Unlike Beethoven, however, who could continue to compose even after he could no longer hear, Reinick could not go on painting. Instead he had to have recourse to words. It was at least some reward that his poems appealed to a graphic artist of Rethel's stature and to great composers of *Lieder* such as Schumann, Brahms, Hugo Wolf, as well as Spohr himself.

### 3. Emanuel Geibel (1815-1884)

#### *Sehnsucht*

Ich blick' in mein Herz, und ich blick' in die Welt,  
 Bis vom Auge die brennende Träne mir fällt;  
 Wohl leuchtet die Ferne mit goldenem Licht,  
 Doch hält mich der Nord, ich erreiche sie nicht.  
 O die Schranken so eng, und die Welt so weit,  
 Und so flüchtig die Zeit!

Ich weiß ein Land, wo aus sonnigem Grün,  
 Um versunkene Tempel die Trauben glühn,  
 Wo die purpurne Woge das Ufer bechäumt,  
 Und von kommenden Sängern der Lorbeer träumt.  
 Fern lockt es und winkt dem verlangenden Sinn,

Und ich kann nicht hin!

O hätt' ich Flügel, durchs Blau der Luft  
Wie wollt' ich baden im Sonnenduft!  
Doch umsonst! Und Stund' auf Stunde entflieht —  
Vertraure die Jugend, begrabe das Lied! —  
O die Schranken so eng, und die Welt so weit,  
Und so flüchtig die Zeit!

I look into my heart and look out at the world till from my eye a burning tear falls;  
The distance gleams with golden light, it is true, but the north holds me fast and I cannot reach it.  
Oh, how narrow the limits, how wide the world, and how fleeting is time!

I know of a country where, out of sunlit green foliage around half-buried temples, grapes glow, and the wine-dark wave casts its surf on the shore, while the laurel dreams of poets to come.  
It beckons from afar, luring the longing senses, but I cannot get there!

Oh, if I had wings, through the blue of the sky I would plunge into sunlit vapour!  
But it isn't to be! The hours pass, one by one — lament your lost youth and bury your song!—  
Oh how narrow the limits, how wide the world, and how fleeting is time!

Spohr's inclusion of a setting of Geibel's poem 'Sehnsucht' ('Longing') in the *Sechs deutsche Lieder* raises some interesting questions. In the first place, the set was published in late 1837, though a letter dated 28 February 1838 tells us that he had promised to write it for Princess Mathilde zu Schwarzburg-Sondershausen early in 1837. If so, the text of Geibel's poem must have reached him by then, because 'Sehnsucht' was the first of the six poems to be composed: he wrote it in October 1837. Yet Wolfgang Stammeler, the editor of the critical edition of Geibel's works published in Leipzig in 1920, states that Geibel wrote it at the beginning of 1838 and that it was first published that year in one of the almanachs that were so fashionable at the time, the *Deutsches Taschenbuch* edited by Karl Buchner in Berlin. In the case of an established poet, this discrepancy would be easy to account for. Geibel was to become a household name in Germany, but when Spohr included 'Sehnsucht' in his new set of songs he was unknown. In fact his first collection of poems did not appear until 1840, and it took some time before they made their mark and earned him the enormous readership which accounts, at least in part, for the 3,600 musical settings that it has been estimated have been made of them. Whatever the explanation — and the simplest and most likely one is private, pre-publication contact, probably through intermediaries — Spohr was certainly on this occasion nothing if not up-to-date. Indeed his setting of Geibel's poem may well have helped to earn the twenty-two-year-old poet the approval of the drawing-room public, which in turn must have been a significant factor in his meteoric rise to fame as the 'German Tennyson', exactly ten years after the future poet laureate had made his first impact in England

Geibel was just a few years younger than Tennyson. He was born on 17 October 1815 in Lübeck, exactly sixty years before the great German novelist Thomas Mann, whose depictions of life in that Baltic seaport in Geibel's day provide a vivid backdrop to his first major novel, the family saga *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Emanuel, the son of a Lutheran pastor, was expected to follow in the paternal footsteps by studying theology. But two semesters at Bonn University were enough to convince him that classics was a more attractive subject for a young man drawn to poetry and art. He left Bonn and went to Berlin, where he met up with his old school friend Ernst Curtius, who was soon to make his name as an archaeologist and historian of ancient Greece, and who communicated his enthusiasm for the classical world to the young poet. Like Reinick, Geibel managed to make the acquaintance of leading literary figures such as Schumann's poets, Chamisso and Eichendorff. One of Berlin's literary meccas in the 1830s was the drawing-room of the writer Bettina von Arnim, and it was through her good offices that Geibel managed to fulfil the great longing expressed in his poem 'Sehnsucht' to see Greece with his own eyes. In 1839 she obtained him a two-year

appointment as tutor in the household of Prince Katakazis, the Russian Ambassador in Athens. Curtius was there already, and Geibel soon persuaded his employer to give him unlimited summer leave, so that the two young Lübeckers could head off for the isles of Greece, 'intoxicated with joy and sunshine'. It was an experience which he looks forward to in this poem, with its references in its second stanza to ruined temples covered with vines and to Homer's wine-dark sea, and the memory was to stay with him all his life.

Home in Germany again, Geibel spent much of 1840 and 1841 as the guest of Baron Karl von der Malsburg at his home, Schloß Escheberg, not far from Kassel, where Wilhelm Otto von der Malsburg and his artistic wife, Caroline, were Spohr's close friends. It was to be the happiest year of his life. Apart from everything else, he was absorbing himself in the study of Spanish — his host's father had translated Calderón — and discovering his gift as a translator. The publication in 1843 of his German rendition of Spanish folksongs and romances was to lead the way to the *Spanisches Liederbuch*, the collection of Spanish lyrics in translations by Geibel and Paul Heyse which was published in 1848 and was to provide texts for Hugo Wolf in 1889-90.

By then Geibel was dead. He died on 6 April 1884 — Spohr would have been a hundred the day before! — heaped with honours, and acclaimed as the laureate of the new German Empire. Seldom had a poet acquired greater fame and wider popularity. His *Gedichte* of 1840 ran to one hundred editions during his lifetime, and his subsequent works seemed to fulfil the early promise. The Kings of Bavaria and Prussia had drawn him to Munich and Berlin with generous patronage. He became a national institution. But few poets have seen their reputation decline so rapidly. His centenaries passed almost unnoticed. Yet the magic of his verse is still audible to us in the settings of his poems by Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, Reger, and, of course, Spohr himself.

#### 4. August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874)

Alles still in süßer Ruh,  
Drum, mein Kind, so schlaf auch du!  
Draußen säuselt nur der Wind:  
Su susu! Schlaf ein, mein Kind!

Schließ du deine Äugelein,  
Laß sie wie zwei Knospen sein!  
Morgen wenn die Sonn' erglüht,  
Sind sie wie die Blum' erblüht.

Und die Blümlein schau' ich an,  
Und die Äuglein küß' ich dann.,  
Und der Mutter Herz vergißt,  
Daß es draußen Frühling ist.

All is quiet in restful peace, so go to sleep too, my child. Outside only the wind is murmuring 'su su'. So go to sleep, my child.

Close your little eyes; let them be like two buds: tomorrow, when the sun starts to shine, they will open like flowers.

And I shall look at the flowers, and then I shall kiss the little eyes, and your mother's heart will forget that it is spring outside.

Hoffmann von Fallersleben's poem is dated 7 March 1827 and is the fourth of a group of seven 'cradle songs' written for Minna von Winterfeld and published for her birthday on the 20 June 1827. At the time, the poet — who should not be confused with E.T.A. Hoffmann, the writer of the famous tales — was working as a librarian in the University Library at Breslau, and it was to be many a year before he became a father himself. Sadly his one and only daughter died in infancy in 1852, and he had to wait until 1855 for his son to be born: they called him Franz after his godfather, Franz Liszt.

His rather curious name was a statement on his part. During a period of Prussian expansion he decided to add the name of his home town to his own surname: Fallersleben was a small country town in Lower Saxony, not in mighty Prussia at all! On 26 August 1841, on the island of Heligoland, this gentle, amiable man of deep scholarly interests and human warmth was to write the words of the German national anthem, words whose sentiments were later to be misrepresented by regimes that did not share his views. He had been dead for almost half a century when, in 1922, 'Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles', was made the official anthem of the German state by Friedrich Ebert, its Socialist President. It is a wry irony that a song expressing a man's love of his country and his hopes for a better future, and sung to the fine tune Haydn composed for his Austrian emperor in 1797, should have become associated with a mentality and actions of a regime which its poet and its composer would have spurned. But it is not in the least surprising that Spohr should have included a poem by Hoffmann von Fallersleben in his Op. 103 set. He shared the poet's moderate liberal views and scorned strident and sentimental expressions of patriotism, too.

August Heinrich Hoffmann was born in 1798. He studied at Göttingen, but the highpoint of his student years was a visit to Kassel in 1818. There he met the great Jakob Grimm, the famous lexicographer and collector of fairy-tales, who was the librarian. He enthused about going to Greece in pursuit of the classical past until Grimm interrupted him, saying 'Isn't your fatherland closer to you?' From that moment on, he threw himself into the study of Germany's language and literature and into a lifelong preoccupation with its current political climate. In 1830 he was appointed to a Chair of German Language and Literature at Breslau University: he was becoming a leading authority on Germany's medieval literature and rich legacy of folksong. Then, in 1842, he was dismissed for having published a collection of poems which he had ironically entitled *Unpolitische Lieder*: they were, of course, highly political, and gave voice to the aspirations of the underprivileged and the scorn he felt for the ruling classes. When their appearance was reported to Metternich, Europe's arch-reactionary, publication of his poems was forbidden, which resulted in his becoming the best-selling and most widely read satirist and political poet in the German-speaking world during the tense years leading up to the uprisings and insurrections of 1848 and the failed attempt to achieve a democratic form of national unity which followed them. Spohr must have been well aware of him as he watched these developments unfold.

In 1854 Hoffmann took up residence in Weimar. Under its new ruler, Duke Carl Alexander, the small town which Goethe's presence had made into the Athens of Germany, was undergoing a second golden age. Liszt had been appointed Kapellmeister, and round him outstanding people gathered. Soon Hoffmann, too, had found a part to play. At Princess Caroline von Sayn-Wittgenstein's Christmas and New Year's parties it was he who provided the rhyming toasts for her guests, including Wagner and Berlioz, and perhaps George Eliot, too. They were much admired and soon began to appear in print in the local Sunday newspaper. It was a happy respite in a life of disappointments bravely borne, aspirations thwarted and relentless hard work which earned this warm-hearted, convivial man a reputation as a dry-as-dust Germanic scholar. In his research he sought solace and a refuge from a world which he did all he could to make a better and happier place and which he celebrated in his now all too easily overlooked poems. Some of the most endearing are poems for children of all ages. They range from the cradle song set by Spohr to poems for the nursery and for school-children, and in them Hoffmann gave new life to the German folksong tradition. He felt he was writing them for a new generation: he had given up all hope for his own, so he said. He called one collection of them simply *Fränzchens Lieder*, a reference to his own little son. Spohr's setting of this earlier Hoffmann lullaby, sung on just three notes while the clarinet weaves its melody over two octaves, is a fitting tribute to a writer who once observed that 'writing truly lyrical poetry seems to me to be like musical composition in words', and said that his own poetry was 'inseparable from song'. By the early 1850s its merits had been discovered by Brahms, too.

Even the happy Weimar period passed. In 1860 he moved again, this time to the monastery-castle of Corvey near Hamelin, where a vast library needed cataloguing. Before the year was out, his wife gave birth to a stillborn child and died shortly after: it was the anniversary of their wedding-day. In his solitude he began to write some much-admired memoirs. He still felt he had a part to play, because Germany was entering another critical phase in its modern history with the Schleswig-Holstein crisis and the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866. By the time the Franco-Prussian War had been won and Germany unified in 1870-71

Hoffmann von Fallersleben found himself cast in the role of national poet despite his mistrust of Bismarck and his misgivings about Germany's growing industrial and military might. He wrote patriotic poetry, but it contained many a warning note. But his voice was now a voice from the past, when dreams of national unity were more idealistic and warmer-hearted. Germany had achieved its unity in circumstances which pointed in a very different direction from the one Hoffmann von Fallersleben had so eloquently championed. He died in 1874. By then Spohr, too, seemed out of date.

### 5. Ernst Koch (1808-1858)

#### *Das heimliche Leid*

Es gibt geheime Schmerzen, sie klaget nie der Mund,  
Getragen tief im Herzen sind sie der Welt nicht kund.  
Es gibt ein heimlich Sehnen, das scheuet stets das Licht,  
Es gibt verborgne Tränen, der Fremde sieht sie nicht.  
Es gibt ein still Versinken in eine innre Welt,  
Wo Friedensauen winken, von Sternenglanz erhellt,  
Wo auf gefallen Schranken die Seele Himmel baut,  
Und jubelnd den Gedanken, den Lippen anvertraut.

Es gibt ein still Vergehen in stummen, öden Schmerz,  
Und Niemand darf es sehen, das schwergespreste Herz;  
Es sagt nicht was ihm fehlet, und wenn's im Grame bricht,  
Verblutend und zerquälet, der Fremde sieht es nicht.  
Es gibt einen sanften Schlummer, wo süsser Frieden weilt,  
Wo stille Ruh' den Kummer der müden Seele heilt.  
Doch gibt's ein schöner Hoffen, das Welten überfliegt,  
Da wo am Herzen offen, das Herz voll Liebe liegt.

#### *Secret Suffering*

There are secret pains that are never complained about in words;  
Borne deep in the heart, the world never knows about them.  
There is a secret longing that always shuns the light,  
And there are hidden tears the outsider never sees;  
There is a quiet sinking into an inner world  
Where peaceful meadows beckon, lit up by the gleam of stars,  
And where on top of fallen barriers the soul constructs its heavens  
And joyfully entrusts its thoughts to its lips.

There is a quiet pining into bleak unspoken grief  
But nobody must see the heavily laden heart:  
It doesn't say what it is pining for, and when in its misery it breaks,  
The stranger doesn't see it, bleeding away and crushed.  
There is a gentle slumber where sweet peace dwells  
And quiet repose heals the grief of a tired soul.  
And, yes, there's a more lovely hoping that far transcends these worlds  
That, full of love, the heart may openly rest upon another heart.

Ernst Koch was born on 3 June 1808 in a small town in Hesse, the German Grand Duchy in which Spohr spent most of his career. In 1821 his father took up a post as a senior civil servant in the Grand Duchy's capital, Kassel, where his mother had family connections. The Kochs arrived there just ahead of Spohr, whose appointment as Court Kapellmeister took effect on 1 January 1822. Koch's secondary education took place in Kassel. Then, in 1821, he set off for Marburg to study law, in due course proceeding, as was the

German custom in those days, to complete his studies: at another famous university: Göttingen, in the Kingdom of Hanover, whose new ruler was Britain's George IV. Koch took his doctorate in 1831, but the political events of 1830, and the failure of the young generation of intellectual liberals and democrats to achieve the aims, made him abandon all idea of an academic career. Instead he obtained a position as an articled clerk in the high court at Kassel in the hope of making a mark in liberal politics. In 1831 he was promoted to a post in the Hessian Ministry of the Interior under Ludwig Hassenpflug, a career politician who was to play a part in Koch's career again, much later, and whose dreaded presence and harmful policies are described in Marianne Spohr's continuation of her husband's autobiography. The composer was familiar with what the young poet was going through. Like him, Koch had not really changed his colours or abandoned his liberal ideals. Instead, like some character in a tale by E.T.A. Hoffmann, he led a double life, toiling in his Ministry office all day, and at night composing his *Vigils*, witty and sometimes scurrilous satires which he published under the pseudonym 'Leonard Emil Hubert', and in which he sent up the powers that be, to the delight of the readers of the constitutional paper, *Der Verfassungsfreund*. But this could not go on. Koch's professional position and connections were losing him the favour of his readers, while he for his part tried in vain to distance himself from his readership so as not to forfeit his career in the service of the state.

He was a free spirit leading a double life. He did not want to lose his job because he had become engaged to a young lady called Henriette von Bosse. Their happy conversations and love for one another inspired the work for which he is still remembered, if only dimly: *Prinz Rosa-Stramin*, published in 1834 under another pseudonym: 'Eduard Helmer'. It is a kaleidoscope of atmospheric, often autobiographical images interspersed with elegies and idylls, jokes, comic anecdotes and aphorisms, and with what he described as political, literary and religious 'expectorations' — in a word it was a flight from the realities of a harsh, humdrum and uncomprehending world into the idiosyncratic make-believe of art and the elusive joys of nature, full of originality in the manner of Jean Paul, a writer whose works and attitude to life meant so much to early nineteenth-century readers.

Koch's attempt to reconcile freedom of imagination with the demands and restrictions of a career were bound to fail. When he resigned his post, worse was to happen. Henriette's father seized the opportunity to end his daughter's engagement. In despair, Koch left Kassel, went to France and enlisted in the Foreign Legion. By 1837 he was involved in action. Dynastic complications had led to the so-called First Carlist War, a cruel Spanish civil war in which France became involved; the French Foreign Legion was brought into action in support of Queen Isabella and constitutional government, and was decimated. Of the seven thousand men who had gone out only 381 came home. Koch, for his part, went down with typhus in Pamplona in March 1837, but survived to write three stories based on his experiences. They are forgotten, the images they evoked obliterated by those of its even more violent replay a century later. At the end of 1837 the convalescent foreign legionary returned to Kassel. He must have been surprised when Ludwig Hassenpflug invited his former protégé to join him as his secretary and chef-de-bureau in another Grand Duchy, Luxemburg. He spent the years 1839-46 working in Hassenpflug's office. Then finally he achieved his original ambition. He entered higher education, published his collected poems in 1852, and in 1853 became Professor of German Language and Literature at the Duchy's Athenaeum. The man who has been called 'the last Romantic' had found his niche at last. He died on 24 November 1858 in the town that had given him a home and which now regards him as a son to be proud of. Eleven months later, Spohr, too, was dead.

## 6. Anon

For the sixth and last poem in the Op. 103 set, Spohr turned to that great yet mysterious poet, Anon.

Was stehst du lange und sinnest nach?  
 Ach schon so lange ist Liebe wach!  
 Hörst du das Klingen allüberall?  
 Die Vöglein singen im süßem Schall;  
 Aus Starrem spriesset Baumblätterlein weich,

Das Leben fließet um Ast und Zweig,  
Das Tröpflein schlüpfet aus Waldesschacht,  
Das Bächlein hüpfet mit Wallungsmacht;  
Der Himmel neiget in's Wellenklar,  
Die Bläue zeigt sich wunderbar,  
Ein heitres Schwingen zu Form und Klang,  
Ein ew'ges Fügen im ew'gen Drang!  
Was stehst du bange und sinnest nach?  
Ach schon so lange ist Liebe wach!

Why are you standing there, lost in your thought?  
Love has already long been awake!  
Can you hear the sounds all over the place?  
The little birds are singing their sweet-sounding songs,  
And from stiff wood tender foliage is sprouting  
As life flows round branches and twigs.  
The water is dripping from a cleft in the woods  
The brook is sent skipping by a surging force,  
The sky is bending down into the transparent waves,  
See, how wonderfully blue it is:  
A joyous upsurging into shape and sound,  
An eternal acceptance of an eternal urge!  
Why are you standing there, lost in your thoughts?  
Love has already long been awake!

This last poem, by an unknown writer (so the score tells us), was clearly written under the influence both of contemporary verse and, in its imagery and message, of Goethe himself, for whom exultant rather than stoical acceptance of the eternal cycle of existence had been a fundamental notion since his early 'Sturm und Drang' days. Its position at the end of Spohr's set of six German songs seems clearly intended to question the hopeless desperation of the poem with which it began. Instead it takes up the nature imagery of the other poems — especially poems 2 and 4 — in a way that relativizes the themes that dominate the others, namely poems 1, 3 and 5, where notions of confinement and deprivation loom large. The introspective quality of poems 1, 3 and 5 is thus interlaced with the outgoing sentiments of poems 2, 4 and 6 in such a way as to suggest that, as far as art and the artist are concerned, the sky is the limit and the imagination is free, whatever the constraints imposed on an individual by social convention, political regimentation or his own psychological make-up. The restrictions which were placed on individual travel and free speech in the period between 1815 and 1848 permeate German literature, thought and culture of the time, and can be traced back to the eighteenth-century as well as forward to the twentieth century. They were only too familiar to the poets of Op. 103 and of course Spohr, the eminent performer, composer and Kassel Kapellmeister, felt them, too. The fact that the songs were written for a female voice — maybe that of a princess — lends them a further meaningful and ironic dimension.

It is perhaps at this point that the clarinet comes in. The clarinet part was written for Spohr's old friend Johann Simon Hermstedt, who was by now court musical director at Sondershausen, and the transmitter of the invitation which encouraged Spohr to compose the set in the first place. Unlike the poets whose songs the singer sings, the clarinet is free, and its melody can transcend all restrictions. Spohr's Op. 103 may be appreciated simultaneously as settings of six poems and as melody needing no words at all. Its ultimate purpose becomes clear at the end of the last song of all. It is a 'heitres Schwingen zu Form und Klang', in which text, song and melody fuse with the harmony of nature and the universe to proclaim the supremacy of Art over everyday existence.