

**Summary of Dissertation Recitals:
Three Programs of Collaborative Music**

by

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ABSTRACT

Three collaborative piano recitals were performed in lieu of a written dissertation. The three recitals contained music written by a single composer whose compositional output is stylistically distinct. The particularities of each composer demand unique approaches to collaboration from the pianist, reflecting the changing role of the collaborative pianist through the 19th and 20th centuries. In Hugo Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*, showcased in the first recital, the counterpoint between pianist and singer bespeaks equal partnership, a co-inhabiting of the same musical spirit and voice. Wolf's modernistic approach to the German *lied* stands alone, though it owes much to Schubert, whose music was the subject of the second dissertation recital. Franz Schubert's *Schwanengesang* and his sonata for arpeggione and piano thrive on a deftly nuanced supportive engine created by the pianist; in this second recital, words and the beauty of sung melody are paramount. In stark relief to these two styles is the music of the third recital by Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, whose first violin sonata is a clamorous discord of adrenalized folk music clothed in a labyrinthine post-tonality. This third recital included a lecture which explored motivic chromaticism in Bartók's first violin sonata and his "expressionist" period.

Tuesday, March 30, 2021, 7:00 p.m.; Online Video. Lucia Helgren, Soprano; Christine Amon, Mezzo-soprano; Nick Music, Tenor; Logan Dell'Acqua, Baritone. Hugo Wolf, *Italienisches Liederbuch* (1890-1896).

Friday, April 16, 2021, 7:30 p.m.; Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium, University of Michigan. Alan Williams, Bass-Baritone; Benjamin Penzner, Viola. Franz Schubert, from *Schwanengesang*, D. 957 (1828): I. Liebesbotschaft, II. Kriegers Ahnung, III. Frühlingssehnsucht, IV. Ständchen, V. Aufenthalt, VI. In der Ferne, VII. Abschied; Sonata in A minor for Arpeggione and Piano, D. 821 (1824).

Tuesday, April 20, 2021, 8:00 p.m.; Moore Building, Watkins Lecture Hall, University of Michigan. Brian Allen, violin. Lecture Recital: Béla Bartók. Béla Bartók, Violin Sonata no. 1, Sz. 75/BB 84 (1921).

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM

Lucia Helgren, Soprano
Christine Amon, Mezzo-soprano
Nick Music, Tenor
Logan Dell'Acqua, Baritone

Tuesday, March 30, 2021

Online Video

7:00 pm

Italienisches Liederbuch (1890–1896)

Hugo Wolf
(1860–1903)

Auch kleine Dinge können uns entzücken
Was für ein Lied soll dir gesungen werden
Ihr seid die Allerschönste
Wenn du, mein Liebster, steigst zum Himmel auf
Geselle, woll'n wir uns in Kutten hüllen
Nein, junger Herr
Nicht länger kann ich singen
Schweig' einmal still
Du denkst mit einem Fädchen mich zu fangen
Gesegnet sei, durch den die Welt entstand
Gesegnet sei das Grün
Wir haben Beide lange Zeit geschwiegen
Wie lange schon war immer mein Verlangen
Sterb' ich, so hüllt in Blumen meine Glieder

Mein Liebster ist so klein
Heut Nacht erhob ich mich um Mitternacht
Wer rief dich denn?
Schon streckt' ich aus im Bett die müden Glieder
Ich esse nun mein Brot nicht trocken mehr
Nun lass uns Frieden schliessen
Man sagt mir, deine Mutter woll es nicht
Ein Ständchen Euch zu bringen
Mein Liebster singt am Haus
Selig ihr Blinden
Wohl kenn' ich Euren Stand
Dass doch gemalt all' deine Reize wären
O wüsstest du, wie viel ich deinetwegen
Ihr jungen Leute
Mein Liebster hat zu Tische mich geladen
Benedeit die sel'ge Mutter
Wenn du mich mit den Augen streifst
Der Mond hat eine schwere Klag' erhoben
Mir ward gesagt, du reisest in die Ferne
Und steht Ihr früh am Morgen auf
Wie viele Zeit verlor ich
Was soll der Zorn, mein Schatz
Wie soll ich fröhlich sein
Verschling' der Abgrund meines Liebsten Hütte
Und willst du deinen Liebsten sterben sehen
O wär dein Haus durchsichtig wie ein Glas
Heb' auf dein blondes Haupt
Ich ließ mir sagen
Hoffärtig seid Ihr, schönes Kind
Du sagst mir, daß ich keine Fürstin
Laß sie nur gehn
Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten wohnen

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM NOTES

Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*: How Far Can a Song Go?

There are few instances where a work of art defies description no matter how skillful the writer. The video presentation of Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch* (1890-1896) which accompanies these notes is such an instance. The unmatched fertility of Wolf's imagination, the detail of his compositions, the power of his musical expression, and the scope of a book containing 46 songs might leave first-time listeners overwhelmed and exhausted. One reviewer of a recent full performance of the *Italienisches Liederbuch* lamented how "terribly common" it is these days to perform the book in its entirety. One reason such a complaint might be voiced is that Wolf's song writing, rife with hundreds of precise characterizations, creates distinct personas, moods, and emotions so spontaneously by way of chromatic harmony that it could be said to efface tonality. In this regard Wolf (1860-1903) resembles Wagner more than Brahms (1833-1897), the latter being Wolf's most direct forebear in lieder composition. Ernest Newman, Wolf's original biographer, claimed that "Wolf is the Wagner of the song."¹ Moreover, Wolf's melodies tend to not be imminently hummable, for he was generally more interested in radiant character portraits than beautiful melodies (though his music does not lack the latter).

Where Wagner unleashed his harmonic experiments upon canvases of four-hour-long monolithic narratives, Wolf harnessed Wagner's orchestra through the

¹ Ernest Newman, *Hugo Wolf* (New York: Dover, 1966), 176.

piano to create two-minute-long miniature psychodramas. A scolding from a lover takes but forty-five seconds in “Nein, junger Herr” (No. 12), while listing four endearing attributes of another takes less than two minutes in “Heb’ auf dein blondes Haupt” (No. 18). The longest song, “Benedeit die sel’ge Mutter” (No. 35), is no longer than four minutes in length, while most of the forty-five others hover around the 1:30 mark. While it is true, as the first song in the book states, that “even little things can delight us,” and these short songs are indeed delightful, what is found inside them is anything but small. Rather, in these big-hearted morsels Wolf musters an intensity of emotion, an incisive view of interpersonal relationships, and a feeling of spontaneous, genuine creation which will likely never be equaled. Wolf rather liked these Italian songs himself, calling them “the most original and artistically consummate” of his output.²

The translator of the poems, Paul Heyse (1830-1914), is said to have intensified the affections already present in the Italian source poetry, an impressive achievement given their already red-blooded fervor.³ Where Heyse’s German heightens the Italian, Wolf’s musical treatment refines the poems even further. The witticisms of the playful “Mein Liebster ist so klein” (No. 15), the wry humor of “Wie lange schon war immer mein Verlangen” (No. 11), and the lascivious fantasies of a college-aged rabble-rouser in “Geselle, woll’n wir uns in Kutten hüllen” (No. 14) each receive such careful treatment that one might think Wolf mistook these poems for his own children. Not one word of a song as beautiful as “Sterb’ ich, so hüllt in Blumen meine Glieder” (No. 33), or as ugly as “Verschling’ der Abgrund meines Liebsten Hütte” (No. 45), is less than bursting with compositional design.

² Frank Walker, *Hugo Wolf: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 295-296.

³ *Ibid.*, 296.

One way to help the audience process such a varied program is to order the 46 songs creatively as to suggest a series of mini-dramas. Wolf's own ordering is generally chronological, but the ordering chosen especially for this performance wraps complex music in easy-to-grasp packages. In my ordering, for example, you will hear a man complaining that he has been left to waste away out in the rain, only to be countered by his lover telling her friends that her man should not have to sleep outside because he is too *tender* ("er ist so zart"). She then doubles down on her rejoinder, singing that she once went to his house for dinner, and was greeted with sub-par wine, a rusty pot, and rock-hard bread. He knows how to win her back, however, and he sings a song heaping blessing upon her, claiming that madness seizes him when he contemplates her beauty.

Understanding the origin of these songs is perhaps the most important prerequisite to enjoying them. The poems are largely in the form of the *rispetto*, an eight- or ten-line poem in iambic pentameter (or tetrameter) which Frank Walker calls an "intellectual exercise for lovers in verse."⁴ The Italian *rispetto* typically carries the rhyming scheme abab cdd, and Heyse's German translation retains this. These ordinary blue-collar lovers are the stock of the Italian countryside, and singing their songs comes as naturally to them as doing their work in the field or at the mill. Wolf scholar Eric Sams informs us that the *rispetto* carries with it a sung tradition inherited from the renaissance, suggesting that the *rispetti* were conceived as *songs*.⁵ Of course, the journey which these songs have taken is a lengthy one, from a rural oral tradition of Italy to printed metropolitan German bourgeois art, to finely wrought imaginative musical miniatures. Wolf conceived as Heyse's translations as not too far-gone from the Italians themselves, as he wrote of the

⁴ Ibid., 296.

⁵ Eric Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 314.

rispetti poets, “their hearts beat in German, even if the sun shines in Italian.”⁶ At the pinnacle, though, stands the master Hugo Wolf, who, in the words of Newman, “seems to be bent on proving to the poet that there is more wisdom in his verses than he knew.”⁷ May every listener find wit, wisdom, and joy in these musical verses.

⁶ Walker, 296.

⁷ Newman, 216.

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RECITAL 2 PROGRAM

Alan Williams, Bass-Baritone
Benjamin Penzner, Viola

Friday, April 16, 2021
Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium
7:30 pm

From **Schwanengesang., D. 957** (1828)

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

- I. Liebesbotschaft
- II. Kriegers Ahnung
- III. Frühlingssehnsucht
- IV. Ständchen
- V. Aufenthalt
- VI. In der Ferne
- VII. Abschied

Alan Williams, bass-baritone

Sonata in A Minor for Arpeggione and Piano, D. 821 (1824)

Franz Schubert
(1797–1828)

- Allegro moderato
- Adagio
- Allegretto

Benjamin Penzner, viola

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM NOTES

Franz Schubert, Ludwig Rellstab, and the Arpeggione

From *Schwanengesang*: Poems of Ludwig Rellstab

Franz Schubert's final year, 1828, was a remarkable one. In the throes of death, he managed to complete his Grand Symphony in C, *Mirjams Siegesgesang*, the E-flat Mass, his last three piano sonatas, the String Quintet in C, *Winterreise* (completed in October 1827 and published in 1828) and *Schwanengesang* (D. 957). Even while plagued with debilitating disease, Schubert aimed to give back to the world.

Schwanengesang is not a song cycle like *Winterreise* or *Die schöne Müllerin*. After Schubert's death, his brother Ferdinand sent seven songs with texts by Ludwig Rellstab, six with texts by Heinrich Heine, and one with a text by Johann Gabriel Seidl to the publisher Tobias Haslinger. Today *Schwanengesang* is commonly thought of as a cohesive 14-song set. This conception can be traced to Ferdinand's expectation of a generous reward for a larger number of songs than those which would demonstrably constitute a set. Haslinger eventually published the 14 songs in two volumes. The first volume contained the first six Rellstab settings, and the second volume contained the last of the Rellstab, the Heine settings, and the Seidl setting. Given this unique history, it is entirely appropriate to perform a sub-set of what we call *Schwanengesang* (Haslinger's title).

Ludwig Rellstab (1799-1860) was a musician himself, learning piano from his father, who was a successful music publisher and composer. After a brief stint in the military, Ludwig quit and devoted himself to the study of literature, though his biography suggests that throughout his life he was more at home in the world of music than in that of literature.⁸ In 1821, Rellstab wrote the poems which we will hear tonight, though Rellstab intended for Ludwig von Beethoven to set them.⁹ Rellstab sent ten poems to Beethoven in 1825, accompanied by a letter calling these poems a “connected series” in want of musical setting. Sadly, Beethoven died in 1827 before fulfilling this request. The responsibility was literally passed to Schubert when Beethoven’s literary secretary gave him the poems in 1827. Out of the ten poems, pencil marks were found on seven of them, coincidentally the seven which Schubert ended up setting. Some hypothesize that the marks were Beethoven’s, and Schubert took the late composer’s suggestions.¹⁰

Formally, the Rellstab settings are traditional by comparison to the Heine settings which follow. “Frühlingssehnsucht,” “Abschied,” “In der Ferne,” and “Ständchen” each contain some sort of strophic repetition. “Liebestbotschaft” contains what theorist Edward Cone calls a “functional recapitulation,” as does “Aufenthalt.” “Kriegers Ahnung” is the only entirely through-composed setting here (considered to be Schubert’s last “operatic scena”).¹¹ Cone finds that Rellstab’s habitual use of stanzaic parallelism justifies Schubert’s construction of

⁸ Goethe reportedly snubbed his nose at Rellstab’s poetry. Martin Chusid, “The Poets of *Schwanengesang*: Rellstab, Heine, and Seidl,” in *A Companion to Schubert’s Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 17.

⁹ Rellstab actually disliked Schubert’s music purely on the basis of formal critiques. *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁰ H.G. Fiedler, “Schubert’s Poets. I,” *Music and Letters* 6, no. 1 (January 1925): 76. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/726616>.

¹¹ Edward T. Cone, “Repetition and Correspondence in *Schwanengesang*,” in *A Companion to Schubert’s Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 60.

songs where strophic repetition becomes a theme in itself.¹² For example, in “Abschied,” the refrain “Ade” is stated at the start and end of each stanza, and in “Frühlingssehnsucht,” each stanza closes with a single word or phrase. We see in these examples that Schubert’s use of the strophic form emphasizes not only poetic parallelism, but also the uniformity of emotional tenor present in Rellstab’s work. The dark Heine settings of *Schwanengesang* contain some of the most word-specific settings ever to flow from Schubert’s pen, while the Rellstab settings rely more on emotional atmosphere to accomplish their expression of the text.

Schubert creates such an atmosphere in “Liebesbotschaft,” which submerges the listener in pastoral reverie. Thirty-second notes in the piano depict a murmuring brook, pairs of horns are heard in the piano, double pedal points in the piano recall the drones of the bagpipe, and echoes of the voice part in the piano refer to a characteristically outdoor phenomenon. The piano simulates a guitar accompaniment in “Ständchen,” while suggesting the eager pawing of horses’ hooves throughout “Abschied.” The piano suggests a funereal progression accented by “muffled drum beats” in “Kriegers Ahnung.”¹³ Schubert’s choice of strophic form thus is not for lack of care, but rather out of respect for Rellstab’s own structural choices, commentators agree. Nevertheless, we know that Rellstab was not a fan of Schubert’s style, nor his settings of these poems, later calling Schubert an “insufferable Dummkopf.”¹⁴

We will choose, rather, to agree with a kinder reviewer of Schubert’s songs, who wrote in 1829, “[Schubert’s] stylistic traits derive here far more from the

¹² Ibid., 61.

¹³ Martin Chusid, “Texts and Commentary,” in *A Companion to Schubert’s Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 95.

¹⁴ Martin Chusid, “The Poets of *Schwanengesang*: Rellstab, Heine, and Seidl,” in *A Companion to Schubert’s Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 23.

nature of the things, from suitable feelings, so that with sincere sympathy we see the swan swimming, resting under the shadows of the Weeping Willows and on the way to the nether regions...”¹⁵

Sonata for Arpeggione and Piano in A Minor (D. 821)

Schubert was an apt composer of both art song and instrumental music, as we see in his deft writing four years earlier in 1824 for the arpeggione. While tonight’s performance makes use of the viola, Schubert intended for this sonata to be played on the six-stringed arpeggione, an instrument only known because of Schubert’s singular contribution to its repertoire. The arpeggione appeared in Vienna in 1814, but was in vogue for a short time, evidenced by the fact that the original 1871 publication of Schubert’s sonata already included an alternative cello part. Interestingly, two separate inventors claimed that they had created the arpeggione, a six-stringed fretted instrument which they both called a “bowed guitar.” We do know that both of the would-be inventors, J.G. Stauffer of Vienna and Peter Teufelsdorfer of Pest, came forward in 1823 to present their instrument to the Viennese music scene. Numerous commentators suggest that the upper register of the arpeggione has a unique speechlike quality which may have attracted Schubert to its timbre.¹⁶ The arpeggione had frets, perhaps explaining the technical feats which Schubert requires of the performer of this virtuosic sonata.

¹⁵ Walburga Litschauer, “The Origin and Early Reception of *Schwanengesang*,” in *A Companion to Schubert’s Schwanengesang: History, Poets, Analysis, Performance*, ed. Martin Chusid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 7.

¹⁶ Eszter Fontana and Gerald Hayes, “Arpeggione [guitar violoncello, bowed guitar],” *Oxford Music Online* (January 2001), <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.01328>.

Schubert composed this piece in 1824, an uncharacteristically dark year for him personally. Early in 1824, the secondary stages of syphilis were ravaging Schubert's body. His doctor had prescribed to him a diet consisting of alternating days of pork cutlets and a sort of nostrum called panada which contained flour, water, breadcrumbs, and milk. It was in late March that Schubert wrote to his friend, "I find myself to be the most unhappy and wretched creature in the world...I might as well sing every day now, for upon retiring to bed each night I hope that I may not wake again, and each morning only recalls yesterday's grief."¹⁷ We hear in such despairing words both Schubert's depressive state of mind as well as his habit of resorting to song for reprieve. Such a song took form in his Arpeggione sonata, whose preponderance of light-heartedness contrasts with the profound heaviness of other music which he composed that year, notably the A minor string quartet (No. 13, the "Rosamunde," also in A minor) and the great D minor string quartet (No. 14, "Death and the Maiden"). However, a sort of foreboding dwells both in the nine-bar A minor opening phrase of the piano and the primary theme of this sonata-form movement.

Despite the first movement's morose opening, the first and third movements each have the character of a *divertissement*, a sort of light-hearted parlor piece designed for the purpose of refreshment (or, perhaps, for distraction). While the first and third movements are in standard sonata and rondo forms, respectively, the middle Adagio movement resembles a through-composed song in its structure. This Adagio takes the form of a song without words, bearing the weight of Schubert's dire condition in its longing, protracted phrases. In an unexpected turn,

¹⁷ Historians remain uncertain whether Schubert's intense grief was propounded more by his overall physical infirmity or his wretched diet. Maurice J.E. Brown and Eric Sams, "Schubert, Franz (Peter)," *Oxford Music Online* (January 2001). <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.25109>.

a bridge into the third movement whisks us away into a more optimistic melody. In this final movement, Schubert asks us to join him in brushing away the heaviness of the previous movements.

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RECITAL 3 PROGRAM

Brian Allen, violin

Tuesday, April 20, 2021
Moore Building, Watkins Lecture Hall
8:00 pm

LECTURE RECITAL: BÉLA BARTÓK

Violin Sonata no. 1, Sz. 75/BB 84 (1921)

Béla Bartók
(1881–1945)

Allegro appassionato

Adagio

Allegro

Brian Allen, violin