

German Lieder

Lecture March 8th 2010 by Julia Nafisi

In the German language, “Lied” means simply “song” and refers to all kinds of songs

The term “German Lied” is a linguistic hybrid derived from “*deutsches Kunstlied*” and refers to the German Art Song, i.e. compositions for solo voice and piano (later also solo voice and orchestra)

Although the genre encompasses songs by Mozart and Beethoven (late 18th, early 19th century) and stretches well into the 20th century (e.g. Pfitzner, Schoeck), the term is usually specifically associated with the Romantic Era

Formal distinctions

- Strophic Song: the exact same melody and accompaniment is used for all verses of a poem irrespective of mood changes.
- Strophic song with variation: there are some changes in melody, harmony and accompaniment in some verses
- Through composed song: the ‘plot’ and mood of a poem is followed with an always new melody and accompaniment

The German Art Song (Lied) genre

- Blossoms in the 19th century
- Inspired by Classical and Romantic Poetry
- Political tensions encourage introspection

Literary and musical gatherings in a newly emerging art loving bourgeois middleclass (the “salon

Main Lieder composers

- Franz Schubert (1797, Vienna/Austria – 1828, Vienna/Austria)
- Robert Schumann (1810, Zwickau/Germany – 1856 Bonn/Germany)
- Johannes Brahms (1833, Hamburg/Germany – 1897 Vienna/Austria)
- Hugo Wolf (1860 Windischgrätz/Slovenia – 1903 Vienna/Austria)

Other important Lieder composers

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)
- Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)
- Carl Loewe (1796 – 1869)
- Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy (1809 – 1847)
- Robert Franz (1815 – 1892)
- Gustav Mahler (1860 – 1911)
- Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949)
- Hans Pitzner (1869 – 1949)
- Max Reger (1873 – 1916)
- Joseph Marx (1882 – 1964)
- Arnold Schönberg (1874 – 1951)
- Alban Berg (1885 – 1935)
- Othmar Schoeck (1886 – 1957)

Important poets whose texts have been composed in Lieder

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832)
- Matthias Claudius (1740 – 1814)
- Friedrich Schiller (1759 – 1805)
- Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838)
- Joseph von Eichendorff (1788 – 1857)
- Ludwig Uhland (1787 – 1862)
- Friedrich Rückert (1788 – 1866)
- Heinrich Heine (1797 – 1856)
- Eduard Möricke (1804 – 1857)
- Paul Heyse (1830 – 1914)
- Richard Dehmel (1863 – 1920)

Examples

Franz Schubert

- I. *Gretchen am Spinnrade* (Gretchen at the spinning wheel).

Text by Goethe

Composed in 1814, sometimes referred to as the “first Lied”, opening new dimensions of piano involvement and expression. Published as op.2.

- II. *Erlkönig* (Erlking).

Text by Goethe

Composed in 1815, Schubert’s first published song (op.1)

Robert Schumann

- III. *Lehn’ deine Wang’ an meine Wang’* (Rest your cheek against my cheek)

Text from H. Heine’s *Buch der Lieder* (book of songs)

- IV. *Mondnacht* (Moon-night)

Text by J.v. Eichendorff, No 6 of the song cycle op.39

Johannes Brahms

- V. *Vergebliches Ständchen* (Futile serenade)

Folksong after Zuccamaglio

- VI. *Von ewiger Liebe* (Of Eternal Love)

Text by Wentzig

Hugo Wolf

- VII. *Begegnung* (The meeting)

- VIII. *Auf ein altes Bild* (On gazing on an old painting)

Text by Mörike (both)

Gustav Mahler

- IX. *Relvege*

Text from the Youths Magic Horn (*Des Knaben Wunderhorn*)

Written as both piano and orchestra song

Richard Strauss

- X. *Ständchen* (Serenade)

Text by A.F.v. Schack

Written as both piano and orchestra song

