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A black and white portrait of Max Kowalski, an elderly man with glasses, wearing a suit and bow tie. The background is a textured, golden-brown color.

Lieder by
Max Kowalski

Wolfgang Holzmaier **Thérèse Lindquist**
baritone **piano**

Lieder by Max Kowalski

Wolfgang Holzmail, baritone • Thérèse Lindquist, piano

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Hochschule für Musik und Theater München
Großer Konzertsaal

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| Acht Lieder auf Gedichte von Hafis | (12:21) |
| 1) Solange wir im Licht sind | (1:36) |
| 2) Bülbül singt im Rosengarten | (1:17) |
| 3) In meinen Schläfen jagt das Blut | (0:51) |
| 4) Mein Auge ist nur dazu da | (1:41) |
| 5) Allah lächelt mir | (2:23) |
| 6) Mein Wille ist so schwach | (1:32) |
| 7) Alles was geschieht | (1:02) |
| 8) Nun bin ich ohn Beschwerde | (2:00) |
|
 | |
| 9) Ein schöner Stern geht auf in meiner Nacht
(Heinrich Heine) | (1:58) |
|
 | |
| 10) Der Frühling
(Friedrich Hölderlin) | (2:30) |
|
 | |
| 11) Nachtgeräusche
(Conrad Ferdinand Meyer) | (2:53) |

Pianist **Thérèse Lindquist** studied chamber music and Lied accompaniment with Dorothy Irving in her native Sweden before accepting an invitation from the noted Austrian pianist Paul Schilhawsky to join the faculty of the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, where she is Professor of Lied and Oratorio. The prize-winning accompanist (1st Prize in Accompanying, International Jenny Lind Competition) has given concerts and master classes in Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, and the United States. She has collaborated with great artists such as Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Sena Jurinac, Helena Lazarska, and Robert Holl in master classes, and was invited to be an official accompanist for the International Mozart Competition and the International Robert Schumann Competition. Lindquist has performed at prestigious international music festivals including Heidelberger Frühling, Musikfestival Siljan, Musikwoche Lienz, Carinthian Summer Festival, and Allegro Vivo. A specialist in the fields of chamber music and Lied accompaniment, Lindquist has accompanied Wolfgang Holzmail, Camilla Nylund, Christiane Karg, and Christian Altenburger in recital. As assistant to the British counter-tenor Paul Esswood, she focused on Baroque performance practice. Lindquist has also championed the performance of women composers. Her collaboration with the American soprano Dana McKay resulted in a prize-winning CD of the Lieder of Josephine Lang. Lindquist can also be heard accompanying the Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmail on a CD of Anton Webern Lieder performed live at the festival “Webern pur” which also featured the Hagen Quartett.

Wolfgang Holzmair was born in Vöcklabruck, Austria, and studied at the Vienna Academy of Music and Dramatic Art with Hilde Rössel-Majdan (voice) and Erik Werba (Lied). The singer performs in recital throughout the world, including London, Lisbon, Moscow, New York, Seoul, Washington, at the Risør Festival (Norway), Bath, Belfast and Edinburgh festivals (UK), Menuhin Festival (Switzerland), Bregenz and Carinthian Summer festivals (Austria), in collaboration with leading accompanists and pianists of our time. Holzmair is also active in the opera world. His roles include Masino in Haydn's *La vera costanza*, Papageno and Speaker of the Temple (*Magic Flute*), Don Alfonso (*Cosi*), Faninal (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Music Master (*Ariadne*), Wolfram (*Tannhäuser*), the Father (*Hansel and Gretel* by Humperdinck), Eduard (*Neues vom Tage* by Hindemith), and Demetrius (*A Midsummernight's Dream* by Britten). Equally in demand on the concert platform, he has sung with leading European and American orchestras, such as the Israel Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Budapest Festival, Vienna Symphony, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, Cleveland and Concertgebouw Orchestras, and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, under eminent conductors including Blomstedt, Boulez, Chailly, Frühbeck de Burgos, Iván Fischer, Haitink, Harnoncourt, Norrington, Ozawa. Mr. Holzmair has an extensive discography of operas, concerts, and songs ranging from Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Brahms, and Wolf to contemporary composers. His recordings have met with critical acclaim. For years he has also been a committed advocate of works, especially Lieder, by formerly persecuted composers as is evidenced by his Krenek, Mittler, Zeisl, Schreker and Terezin/Theresienstadt CDs. Since 1998 he has taught Lied and oratorio at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and given master classes in Europe, Japan, and North America. He is a visiting professor of the Royal Academy of Music (London), a fellow of the Royal College of Music (London), and currently Director of the International Summer Academy at the Mozarteum, Salzburg.

12) Reifefreuden (3:08)
(Stefan George)

Pierrot Lunaire (Albert Giraud) (24:15)

13) Gebet an Pierrot (1:42)

14) Raub (2:05)

15) Die Estrade (1:35)

16) Der Dandy (2:00)

17) Moquerie (2:08)

18) Sonnen Ende (2:14)

19) Nordpolfahrt (1:46)

20) Colombine (1:58)

21) Der Mondfleck (2:39)

22) Die Laterne (1:31)

23) Abend (2:12)

24) Heimfahrt (2:20)

25) Ernste Stunde (Rainer Maria Rilke) (3:38)

26) Immer wieder (R. M. Rilke) (2:34)

27) Der Panther (R. M. Rilke) (4:02)

28) Liebeslied (R. M. Rilke) (3:45)

A Concert of Lieder by Max Kowalski from the Perspective of the Interpreter

It was nearly five years ago that a singer-colleague put Kowalski's Pierrot Lieder in my hand and said that this would be something for me. On looking through the score I responded at once to the poetry and the music—yet, for lack of an opportunity to fit them into a program in the foreseeable future, I laid them on the pile of provisionally unsung songs. Later, when I received an invitation to give a Lieder recital as part of the Max Kowalski Symposium in November 2011 at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München, which would feature prominently or even exclusively Lieder by this composer, I did not long hesitate, even if I could not quite envisage an evening consisting entirely of Kowalski songs.

As a result of my consent I received more than half of the over two hundred songs to be examined. They exhibited an astonishing breadth with respect to the poets, themes, and moods. Confronted with such a wealth of material one is sorely tempted to select a song from now one, now another of the cycles, and put them together in a kind of survey. This I was not inclined to do. To me one of the most rewarding tasks of the Lieder singer is to devise intelligent, well-arranged programs so as to make it possible to enter into the world of the composer and serve its comprehension in the best possible way.

The rules and criteria which have guided me over the years in setting up programs would also hold good in this case: variety in themes and moods; in keys; in choice of poets; lyrical Lieder beside dramatic or parlando Lieder, and so forth. In general, to work out the differences and gather them into a kind of logical whole which the audience need not "understand" but only apprehend. If upon a declamatory Lied, a legato Lied suddenly follows, if voice and piano present the poems colorfully enough to avoid monotony, this will be felt by the audience. To be sure, we cannot entirely explain why some programs

enden: immer wieder gehn wir
zu zweien hinaus
unter die alten Bäume,
lagern uns immer wieder
zwischen die Blumen,
gegenüber dem Himmel.

27. Der Panther

Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe
so müd geworden, daß er nichts mehr hält.
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.
Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte,
der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte,
in der betäubt ein großer Wille steht.
Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille
sich lautlos auf – dann geht ein Bild hinein,
geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille –
und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.

28. Liebeslied

Wie soll ich meine Seele halten, daß
sie nicht an deine rührt? Wie soll ich sie
hinheben über dich zu andern Dingen?
Ach gerne möcht ich sie bei irgendwas
Verlorenem im Dunkel unterbringen
an einer fremden stillen Stelle, die
nicht weiterschwingt, wenn deine Tiefen schwingen.
Doch alles, was uns anrührt, dich und mich,
nimmt uns zusammen wie ein Bogenstrich,
der aus zwei Saiten eine Stimme zieht.
Auf welches Instrument sind wir gespannt?
Und welcher Geiger hat uns in der Hand?
O süßes Lied.

Again and again we walk out,
two together,
under the old trees,
lie down again and again
among the flowers,
in view of the sky.

27. The Panther

His gaze from the passing bars has grown so weary,
that it can hold nothing more.
To him it seems there were a thousand bars,
and behind a thousand bars, no world.
The soft tread, supple in its strong stride,
turning within the smallest compass,
is like a dance of strength around a center,
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.
Only at times the pupil's curtain slides dumbly open;
Then an image enters,
goes through the tense stillness of the limbs,
and in the heart ceases to be.

28. Love Song

How shall I hold my soul, that
it does not touch yours? How shall I lift it
beyond you to other things?
Oh, I would gladly store it with something
lost in darkness,
in an unfamiliar quiet place that
does not vibrate when your depths vibrate.
Yet everything that touches us, you and me,
Brings us together like a violin bow,
Which draws one voice from two strings.
On what instrument are our strings spanned?
And what player holds us in his hand?
Oh sweet song!

24. Heimfahrt

Der Mondstrahl ist das Ruder,
Seerose dient als Boot: drauf fährt Pierrot
gen Süden mit gutem Reisewind.
Der Strom summt tiefe Skalen
und wiegt den leichten Kahn.
Der Mondstrahl ist das Ruder,
Seerose dient als Boot.
Nach Bergamo, zur Heimat,
kehrt nun Pierrot zurück.
Schwach dämmert schon im Osten
der grüne Horizont.
Der Mondstrahl ist das Ruder.

25. Ernste Stunde

Wer jetzt weint irgendwo in der Welt,
ohne Grund weint in der Welt,
weint über mich.
Wer jetzt lacht irgendwo in der Nacht,
ohne Grund lacht in der Nacht,
lacht mich aus.
Wer jetzt geht irgendwo in der Welt,
ohne Grund geht in der Welt,
geht zu mir.
Wer jetzt stirbt irgendwo in der Welt,
ohne Grund stirbt in der Welt,
sieht mich an.

26. Immer wieder

Immer wieder, ob wir der Liebe
Landschaft auch kennen
und den kleinen Kirchhof
mit seinen klagenden Namen
und die furchtbar verschweigende
Schlucht, in welcher die anderen

24. Journey Home

The moonbeam is the oar,
water-lily serves as the boat in which Pierrot
is carried south, driven by favoring wind.
The current murmurs deep scales
and rocks the light skiff.
The moonbeam is the oar;
Water-lily serves as boat,
To Bergamo, his home,
Pierrot is now returning.
Already in the east,
the green horizon is faint with dawn.
The moonbeam is the oar.

25. Solemn Hour

Whoever weeps now somewhere in the world,
weeps for no reason in the world,
weeps over me;
Whoever laughs now somewhere in the night,
for no reason laughs in the night,
laughs at me;
Whoever goes now somewhere in the world,
for no reason goes in the world,
goes to me;
Whoever dies now somewhere in the world,
for no reason dies in the world,
looks at me.

26. Again and Again

Again and again, although acquainted
with love's landscape,
and the little churchyard
with its lamenting names,
and the terrible gulf of silence
in which the others end;

"come across" while others, equally well-conceived, leave us cold. Many factors must combine for a program to succeed. In the end not only the interpreter but the hearers have to do some work.

The Program

In my reflections on the choice of Lieder, the center as a fixed point would be the *Pierrot Lieder*. Diverse as they are, they nevertheless form a whole. The poems, written by Albert Giraud (1860-1929) in 1884 and situated somewhere between Symbolism and Art Nouveau, were translated congenially into German eight years later by Otto Erich Hartleben (1864-1905). Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) and Max Kowalski used these translations for their Pierrot cycles, although they chose partly the same, partly different poems. As we know, Schoenberg went entirely new ways in his *Pierrot Lunaire* with the introduction of the Sprech-Stimme, whereas Kowalski remained faithful to his "conventional" late Romantic style of composition. With a sure hand and an unerring sense for all the linguistic nuances, he gives each poem a distinct color and also avails himself musically of the rondo-like form of the verse. For him as a trained singer, melody and singability were matters of course. The piano part, at once foundation and commentary, is rich in hues and paints at times in strong colors, then again in pastel. Grotesque, capricious, weary or frivolous, nervous, mondain, gay or dreamy, Pierrot, this melancholy clown, has many aspects, and Kowalski shows them to us.

Christian Morgenstern's bizarre verses are not far off, nor the literary cabaret or the musical revue (*Üeberbrettel*). Putting them in a different context I could envision Kowalski's *Pierrot Lieder* beside Schoenberg's cabaret songs. They did not fail in their effect either with the public or the singers. It is therefore easy to understand why such important interpreters as Paul Bender, Heinrich Schlusnus or Hans Hotter had them in

their repertory. For the very reason that this early opus 4, which originated more or less contemporaneously with Schoenberg's cycle, has remained Kowalski's perhaps best-known work, I did not want to end the recital with it.

The question then became, which of the Lieder could stand on the same level. My choice fell on the relatively late (1951) settings of the poems of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), which in style, mood, and sonority are situated in an entirely different world. *Ernstes Stunde* (Solemn Hour) should be declaimed with great vocal emphasis and therefore could not be further removed from Pierrot's self-pitying melancholy. *Immer wieder* (Again and Again), as a tender love song, has nothing of the frivolous dandy; the tenseness of *The Panther*, with its dancelike tread of the fixed will, nothing of the extravagance of the clown. With the love song *Liebeslied*, to be sung, according to Kowalski, with deep emotion, the evening ends on a thoughtful, measured note, full of tenderness and reassurance.

Rilke's poems are in themselves music, rich in melodious language and imagery. The poet himself was against their being set to music. Reading his poems or reciting them aloud one understands what makes it so difficult to interpret them musically: their own musical language! Few composers have succeeded with Rilke Lieder. Kowalski belongs in this charmed circle. In the best of the in all seven settings of the the poems he achieves a depth of emotion and with it a broadening of expression that are a real climax in this already impressive life-work.

The program ends with songs about love; it begins with songs about life, death, all things human. To the worldly wisdom of the greatest lyric poet in the Persian tongue, Hafis (ca. 1320-1389), as translated by the modern German poet Klabund (1890-1928), Kowalski lends his creative talent to disclose, by the sparsest means, a West-eastern

wischt und wischt, doch bringt ihn nicht herunter!
Und so geht er giftgeschwollen weiter,
reibt und reibt bis an den frühen Morgen
einen weißen Fleck des Mondes.

22. Die Laterne

Eine fröhlich leuchtende Laterne,
drin ein windgesichert Flämmchen züngelt,
trägt Pierrot an einem langen Stabe,
daß er ja nicht in den Brunnen purzle!
Und in jedem Winkel hält er stille.
Sorgsam stellt er auf das Pflaster nieder
seine fröhlich leuchtende Laterne,
drin ein windgesichert Flämmchen züngelt.
Plötzlich schreit er wie
von Wut besessen:
Weh der Welt!
die Leuchte ist erloschen!
Rasend wirft er sich zur Erde nieder
und mit einem Schwefelholze
sucht er seine fröhlich leuchtende Laterne.

23. Abend

Melancholisch ernste Störche,
weiß, auf schwarzem Hintergrunde,
klappern mit den langen Schnäbeln monoton
des Abends Rhythmen.
Eine hoffnungsleere Sonne trifft mit matten,
schrägen Strahlen melancholisch ernste Störche,
weiß, auf schwarzem Hintergrunde.
Und der Sumpf, verträumt und müde,
mit metallisch grünen Augen,
drin des Tages letzte Lichter
scheidend blinken, spiegelt wieder
melancholisch ernste Störche.

Rubs and rubs, but cannot get it off!
And so he goes on, swollen with venom,
rubs and rubs till early morning
a white spot of the moon.

22. The Lantern

A cheerfully shining lantern,
in which a small covered flame darts,
Pierrot carries on a long pole,
so as not to tumble into the fountain!
And he stops in every corner.
carefully placing upon the pavement
his cheerfully shining lantern,
in which a small covered flame darts
Suddenly, he cries,
as though possessed with fury:
Woe to the world!
The lamp is extinguished!
Raging, he throws himself upon the ground
and, match in hand, goes
in search of his cheerfully shining lantern.

23. Evening

Melancholy earnest storks,
white, against a black background,
rattle monotonously with their long bills
the evening's rhythms.
A vacant sun strikes with dull, slanting rays
melancholy earnest storks,
white against a black background.
And the swamp, dreamy and tired,
with metallic green eyes,
in which the day's last departing lights flicker,
reflects once more
melancholy earnest storks.

19. Nordpolfahrt

Einen Eisblock, schillernd weiß,
scharf gewetzt vom Licht der Nächte,
trifft Pierrot, als er verzweifelt fühlt,
wie schon sein Schiff versinkt.
Frischbelebten Auges starrt er auf den Retter,
ungeahnt: einen Eisblock, schillernd weiß,
scharf gewetzt vom Licht der Nächte.
Und er scheint ihm ein Kollege, ein Pierrot mit
bleichen Ärmeln.
Und mit feierlichen Gesten grüßt er seinen
treuen Bruder, einen Eisblock, schillernd weiß.

20. Colombine

Des Mondlichts bleiche Blüten,
die weißen Wunderrosen,
blühen in den Julinächten,
o bräuch ich eine nur!
Mein banges Leid zu lindern,
such ich am dunklen Strome des Mondlichts
bleiche Blüten, die weißen Wunderrosen.
Gestillt wär' all' mein Sehnen, dürft' ich so
märchenheimlich, so selig leis entblättern auf
deine braunen Haare des Mondlichts bleiche Blüten!

21. Der Mondfleck

Einen weißen Fleck des hellen Mondes
auf dem Rücken seines schwarzen Rockes,
so spaziert Pierrot im lauen Abend
aufzusuchen Glück und Abenteuer.
Plötzlich stört ihn was an seinem Anzug,
er beschaut sich rings und findet richtig
einen weißen Fleck des hellen mondes
auf dem Rücken seines schwarzen Rockes.
Warte! denkt er: das ist so ein Gipsfleck!

19. Journey to the North Pole

An ice-block, gleaming white,
whetted sharp by the light of the nights,
Pierrot encounters as, despairing,
he realizes how his ship is already sinking.
With an eye freshly revived he stares at his rescuer,
unsuspecting: an ice-block, gleaming white,
whetted sharp by the light of the nights.
And it seems to him a colleague, a Pierrot with
blanched sleeves.
And with a solemn gesture, he greets
his devoted brother, an ice-block, gleaming white.

20. Columбина

The pale blossoms of the moonlight,
The white magical roses,
bloom in the July nights.
If only I could break one off!
To soothe my anxious sorrow,
I seek beside the dark stream of the moonlight's
pale blossoms the white magical roses.
All my longing could be stilled, so might I,
in fabled secrecy, in gentle bliss, scatter upon
your brown hair the moonlight's pale blossoms!

21. The Moonspot

A white spot of the bright moon
on the back of his black frockcoat,
Pierrot strolls on a balmy evening,
eager to seek luck and adventure.
Suddenly, something about his dress
bothers him; he looks around and finds
indeed a white spot of the bright moon
on the back of his black frockcoat.
Stay! He thinks, that is only a spot of whitewash!

Divan in eight short Lieder, almost all in minor keys. Above the whole collection the words of the seventh song might stand as an epigraph: "Everything that happens is but sorrow and song." Man will be happy only when he casts away his sinful behavior and overcomes (self) love. Then will Allah smile upon him "so sweetly."

In the group of Lieder connecting the two cycles I wanted to pay homage with one poem each to four important poets in the German language:

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), the poet set countless times, is given an ascending cantilena, as in a popular song, in A flat major, *Ein schöner Stern geht auf in meiner Nacht* (A beautiful star rises in my night), which remains long in the ear, and then, with the words, "So flutet meine Seele froh und wild" (So glad and wild my soul streams upward) is clarified in E major.

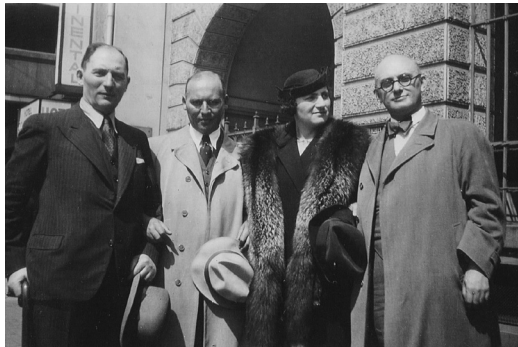
Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843), To whose poem *Der Frühling* (Spring) the same yet so very different key of A flat major brings, with a gentle ascending motion, "neues Entzücken" (new delight) to man and nature.

Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825-1898), who with his *Nachtgeräusche* (Noises of the Night) escorts us softly into sleep or somewhat spookily scares us. Kowalski lets the song waver between C minor and E major, to end in suspense.

Stefan George (1868-1933), who with *Reifefreuden* (Latesummer Joys) succeeds in giving us a rarely beautiful love poem. Against the background of a late summer day drenched in glowing sunshine, the lovers have less and less need of speech and grow silent in the happiness of love.

In a time when it is increasingly difficult for Lieder to maintain their place in the concert hall, no possibilities should be left untried. Whether new ways of presenting Lieder must be discovered, in other words, away with the ritual of the "traditional Lieder recital"; or that a new young audience must be found for lyric poetry, led to it by more intense instruction in schools and colleges; or that the teaching of music, wherever it occurs, should once again promote individual music-making, which would include singing; one thing can never hurt: to open up the conventional repertoire and extend it. In such a repertoire someone like Max Kowalski should have a firm place. Of this, I am more convinced today than ever. Many programs containing his music are conceivable, for example one which would focus on his predilection for Arabic or far eastern poets.

–Wolfgang Holzmair



Reunion in Hamburg, June 1936

Bernhard Kowalski, Oskar Kowalski, Marta Kowalski (Bernhard's wife), Max Kowalski

sinnend und denkt:
wie er heute sich schminkt?
Fort schiebt er das Rot und des Orients Grün
und bemalt sein Gesicht in erhabenem Stil
mit einem phantastischen Mondstrahl.

17. Moquerie

Der Mond gleicht einem blassen Horn
am duftig blauen Himmelszelt.
Cassander mit dem Kahlkopf schaut
mißtrauisch zu ihm auf.
Verstimmt schiebt er im Weitergehn
sein letztes Haar mehr in die Stirne.
Der Mond gleicht einem blassen Horn
im duftgen himmelsblau.
Mit ängstlich scheuem
Aug"bewacht er Columbine,
seine Frau, die neben ihm an seinem
Arm oft nach Pierrot zur Seite schielt.
Der Mond gleicht einem Horn.

18. Sonnen Ende

Die sieche Sonne läßt ihr Blut
entströmen auf rotem Wolkenbett,
es träufelt aus den Wunden
nieder und färbt das Land.
Es rieselt auf der Eichen bang
zitterndes Laub.
Die sieche Sonne läßt ihr Blut entströmen
auf roten Wolkenbett.
So öffnet sich ein müder Lüstling,
von ekel vor dem Tage übermannt,
die Adern, daß das kranke Leben
in Straub verrinnt.
Die sieche Sonne läßt ihr Blut entströmen.

and considers,
what make-up shall he wear today?
He pushes the red and the Orient's green
aside and paints his face in sublime style
with a fantastic beam of moonlight.

17. Mockery

The Moon resembles a pale horn against
the airy blue of the celestial vault.
Cassander with his bald head peers
mistrustfully up at it.
Vexed, he pushes, as he proceeds, a last
hair further on his forehead.
The moon resembles a pale horn against
the airy blue of the celestial vault.
With anxiously suspicious gaze
he watches over Columбина,
his wife, who arm in arm beside him
often casts sidewise glances at Pierrot.
The moon resembles a horn.

18. The Dying Sun

The languid sun lets its blood flow out
upon a bed of crimson clouds;
it trickles down from the wounds
and stains the land.
It drips upon the fearful
trembling leaves of the oak trees.
The languid sun lets its blood flow out
upon a bed of crimson clouds.
So a weary libertine,
overcome with disgust before the day,
opens his veins that his sick life
may run out into the dust.
The languid sun lets its blood flow out.

drunten in den Grabgewölben.
Nachts, mit seinen Zechkumpanen steigt Pierrot
hinab zu rauben rote, fürstliche Rubine,
blut'ge Tropfen alten Ruhmes.
Doch da sträuben sich die Haare,
bleiche Furcht nicht sie am Platze:
durch die Finsternis, wie Augen, stieren aus den
Totenschreinen rote, fürstliche Rubine.

15. Die Estrade

Auf den Marmorstufen der Estrade,
flüchtig raschelnd, wie mit seidnem Kleide,
tanzt der Staub in bläulich weißem Schimmer,
wirbelnd in den Kanten jeder Stiege.
Denn die Mondesgöttin wandelt leise,
leichten Schrittes die gewohnten Wege
auf den Marmorstufen der Estrade,
flüchtig raschelnd, wie mit seidnem Kleide.
In den Staub vor seine bleiche Fürstin
wirft Pierrot sich, im Gebet ersterbend.
Und da liegt der große, weiße Körper,
aufgerankt und in die Höh' gebreitet
auf den Marmorstufen der Estrade.

16. Der Dandy

Mit einem phantastischen
Lichtstrahl erleuchtet der Mond
die krystallinen Flacons auf dem schwarzen,
hochheiligen Waschtisch des schweigenden
Dandys von Bergamo.
In tönender, bronzener Schale lacht hell
die Fontäne, metallischen Klangs.
Mit einem phantastischen Lichtstrahl erleuchtet
der Mond die krystallinen Falcons.
Pierrot mit wächsernem Antlitz steht

in the tomb-vaults down below.
At night, with his drinking companions, Pierrot
descends to rob red, princely rubies,
bloody drops of ancient glory.
Suddenly, their hair stands on end,
pale fear holds them spellbound:
through the darkness stare, like eyes, from the
shrines of the dead, red, princely rubies.

15. The Estrade

On the marble steps of the estrade,
lightly rustling as with silken dress,
the dust, shimmering blue-white, dances,
whirling in the corners of each stair.
For the moongoddess is wandering softly,
with gentle tread on accustomed paths,
on the marble steps of the estrade,
lightly rustling, as with silken dress.
In the dust before his pale princess
Pierrot casts himself down, worshipfully dying.
And there the great white body lies,
half-upright and loftily extended
on the marble steps of the estrade.

16. The Dandy

With a fantastic beam of
light the moon illumines
the crystal flasks on the black
most sacred washstand of the silent
dandy from Bergamo.
With bright metallic ring the
fountain laughs in the echoing bronze basin.
With a fantastic beam of light the moon
illumines the crystal flasks. Pierrot,
with face of wax, stands pensive

Max Kowalski by Michael Kowal

Max Kowalski, who lived and practiced law in Frankfurt am Main, was from 1913 till 1933 a well-known, much-esteemed, and frequently performed composer. He specialized in Lieder, the setting of texts to music for voice and piano. Although he wrote a considerable number of pieces for solo piano and a few occasional works, his reputation rests on the more than two hundred art songs which constitute his oeuvre.

Kowalski was born in Poland (then Russia) on August 10th, 1882 and grew up in Germany, to which his parents emigrated when he was a year old. His father, a cantor and teacher of Hebrew, was highly musical, and in addition to synagogal chants must have acquainted his eldest son at an early age with the vocal music of such composers as Schubert, Schumann, and Mendelssohn. The family lived in Bingen am Rhein, but young Max completed the requirements for the Abitur at the Lessing Gymnasium in Frankfurt. He pursued his studies in Heidelberg and Berlin before receiving his doctorate in law at the University of Marburg in 1906. In 1910 he married Annie Meyer, the daughter of a distinguished lawyer. The couple settled in Frankfurt, where, the year before, Kowalski had established a practice as an attorney with a specialty in copyright law. A daughter, Vera, their only child, was born in 1922.

Kowalski's instruction in music took place at the same time with his legal studies. Endowed with a fine baritone voice he took singing lessons with Alexander Heinemann, a concert and oratorio singer, who presented some of Kowalski's early songs in his recitals. Thanks to his vocal training Kowalski was able to function part-time as cantor in the synagogue in Bingen after his father's early death. He had already begun to compose before enrolling in the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt in 1911, where he remained till 1914. His principal teacher was Bernhard Sekles, himself a well-known

composer, who would later become the conservatory's director. The fifteen-year-old prodigy Paul Hindemith was a fellow student, and the contact then established lasted throughout their lives.

Kowalski was clearly a natural talent. Melodies flowed from him, and between 1903 and 1907 the self-taught musician had written over forty songs along with a small number of piano pieces, a proportion that would remain constant in his work. The first three groups of songs, opus 1, 2, and 3 were variously published, but his breakthrough as a composer occurred in 1913 with his opus 4, the *Zwölf Gedichte aus Pierrot Lunaire* (*Twelve Poems from Pierrot Lunaire*) by the French poet Albert Giraud, translated into German by a popular author of the period, Otto Erich Hartleben. These, published by the firm of Simrock—the publisher of Brahms! as the young composer proudly announced to his family—constituted Kowalski's first and, in the event, most enduring success. They are the only one of his works which have remained continuously in print, in two volumes and with the same distinctive cover, with the successors of Simrock, Boosey and Hawkes.¹ By a curious coincidence they appeared in the same year 1913 as Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, which was drawn from the same source and is of course a landmark in the history of music. Yet Kowalski's version has not been superseded. Its initial success with audience and critics has led to numerous revivals; and these as well as many of his other songs, have been in the repertory of singers like Heinrich Schlusnus, Maria Ivogün, Paul Bender, Joseph Schwarz, Alexander Kipnis, Karen Branzell, and Hans Hotter. It was even scored recently by a contemporary German composer, Johannes Schöllhorn, for soprano and an ensemble with the same instrumentation as Schoenberg's, the two works having been performed conjointly to favorable response.

1. They have been republished in America by Recital Publications, Huntsville, Texas, 2004.

12. Reifefreuden

Ein stolzes beben und ein reiches schallen
Durch später erde schwere fülle strich ..
Die kurzen worte waren kaum gefallen
Als tiefer rührung ruhe uns beschlich.

Sie sanken hin wo sich am fruchtgeländer
Der purpurschein im gelben schmelz verlor
Sie stiegen auf zum schmuck der hügelränder
Wo für die dunkle lust die traube gor.

Ich wagte dir nicht · du nicht mir zu nahen
Als schräger strahl um unsre häupter schoss
Noch gar mit rede störend zu bejahren
Was jetzt uns band · was jedes stumm genoss

Und was in uns bei jenes tages rüste
Auf zu den veilchenfarbnen wolken klomm:
Was mehr als unsre träume und gelüste
An diesem gluten-abend zart erglomm.

13. Gebet an Pierrot

Pierrot! mein Lachen hab ich verlernt!
Das Bild des Glanzes zerfloß, zerfloß!
Schwarz weht die Flagge mir nun vom Mast.
Pierrot, mein Lachen hab ich verlernt,
Pierrot! O gib mir wieder,
Roßarzt der Seele, Schneemann der Lyrik,
Durchlaucht vom Monde,
Pierrot, mein Lachen!

14. Raub

Rote, fürstliche Rubine,
blut'ge Tropfen alten Ruhmes,
schlummern in den Totenschreinen,

12. Latesummer Joys

A stately tremor and a rich resonance
Spread through heavy fullness of the weary earth...
A few brief words had hardly fallen
When calm of deep emotion stole upon us.

They sank down where around the fruit-hung trellis
The purple light dissolved in yellow fusion;
They rose to adorn the outline of the hills
Where for dark pleasure the grape fermented.

I did not, nor did you, dare to draw near,
As a slant ray shot about our heads;
Or interrupt with speech in order to affirm
What bound us now, what mutely each enjoyed...

And what in us at setting of that day
Ascended to the violet-colored clouds:
What more than our dreams and our desires
Glowed gently on that incandescent evening.

13. Prayer to Pierrot

Pierrot! I have forgotten my laughter!
The picture of splendor dissolved!
Now the black flag waves at me from the mast.
Pierrot, I have forgotten my laughter.
Pierrot! O give me back—
Horse-doctor of the Soul, Snowman of the Lyric,
Serene Highness of the Moon—
Pierrot, my laughter.

14. Robbery

Red, princely rubies,
bloody drops of ancient glory,
slumber in the shrines of the dead,

9. Ein schöner Stern geht auf in meiner Nacht

Ein schöner Stern geht auf in meiner Nacht,
Ein Stern, der süßen Trost herniederlacht
Und neues Leben mir verspricht –
O, lüge nicht!
Gleichwie das Meer dem Mond entgegenschwillt,
So fluthet meine Seele, froh und wild,
Empor zu deinem holden Licht –
O, lüge nicht!

10. Der Frühling

Wenn auf Gefilden neues Entzuecken keimt
Und sich die Ansicht wieder verschoent und sich
An Bergen, wo die Bäume grünen,
Hellere Luefte, Gewoelke zeigen
O! welche Freude haben die Menschen! froh
Gehn an Gestaden Einsame, Ruh' und Lust
Und Wonne der Gesundheit blühet,
Freundliches Lachen ist auch nicht ferne

11. Nachtgeräusche

Melde mir die Nachtgeräusche, Muse,
Die ans Ohr des Schlummerlosen fluten!
Erst das traute Wachtgebell der Hunde,
Dann der abgezählte Schlag der Stunde,
Dann ein Fischer-Zwiegespräch am Ufer,
Dann? Nichts weiter als der ungewisse
Geisterlaut der ungebrochenen Stille,
Wie das Atmen eines jungen Busens,
Wie das Murmeln eines tiefen Brunnens,
Wie das Schlagen eines dumpfen Ruders,
Dann der ungehörte Tritt des Schlummers.

9. A Beautiful Star Rises in my Night

A beautiful star rises in my night,
A star smiling down sweet consolation
And promising me new life –
Oh, do not lie!
Just as the sea surges up toward the moon,
So my soul, glad and wild,
Streams upward toward your gracious light –
Oh, do not lie!

10. Spring

When on fields new delight stirs,
And the prospect grows fair once again,
And on the hills, where trees are greening,
Lighter breezes, softer clouds appear;
Oh, what joy do people have! Glad
Do solitaries stroll beside lake shores,
Calm blooms and pleasure and the bliss of health,
Nor is friendly laughter distant.

11. Noises of the Night

Report the noises of the night, Oh Muse,
Which pour upon the sleepless ear!
First the familiar watchful barking of the dogs,
Then the counted striking of the hours,
Then the fishermen conversing on the bank;
Then? Nothing more than the uncertain
Ghostly sound of unbroken silence,
Like the breathing of a youthful bosom,
Like the murmur of a deep well,
Like the beating of a muffled oar,
Then the unheard tread of slumber.

Between 1913 and 1933 Kowalski published thirteen more sets of songs, and except for two pieces, op. 6, for piano solo, all settings for piano and voice. That a composer's output should be confined almost entirely to the art song was not unprecedented. The tradition of the German Lied is abundantly represented by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Richard Strauss, but it was Hugo Wolf who furnished the example of a composer whose importance rests almost entirely on his art songs. To be sure Wolf did not confine himself wholly to this genre, but it was here that his innovations in structure and harmony were most specifically effective. That Max Kowalski felt the influence of this master is evident both in the construction of his Lieder with their emphasis on strong declamation and their obedience to the unspoken rule of not repeating lines and phrases, but also in the prominence given to the piano, which no longer merely accompanies but becomes an as it were equal partner in developing the psychological and emotional unity of tone and text. This quasi-independent role of the piano, harmonically complicated and technically difficult, is the heritage Wolf bequeathed to many Lieder composers of the period, and it has left its mark throughout Kowalski's work, especially on the *Pierrot Lieder*.

In 1930, in his capacity of attorney, Kowalski had assisted Arnold Schoenberg in a legal dispute with the Frankfurter Oper over the composer's one-act opera *Von Heute auf Morgen* (*Between Today and Tomorrow*), settling the case to Schoenberg's satisfaction. This was the beginning of a friendship, carried on mainly through correspondence, which lasted till Schoenberg's death in 1951. In 1933, when because of the Nazi ban, Jews were forbidden to publish their work in Germany, Schoenberg intervened on Kowalski's behalf by recommending his Lieder to the Austrian publisher Universal. Thanks at least in part to Schoenberg's intervention a group of *Sechs Lieder from Goethe's West-östlicher Divan*, though composed in 1933, could still be published bearing the date 1934. They were the last works for which Kowalski was able to find a German-language publisher.

Though he would now be writing for the desk drawer, the changed conditions between 1933 and 1938 did not impede a surge of astonishing productivity. He turned away from German lyric poetry to a new preoccupation with the poets of the Near and Far East. A start had already been made in 1933 with a set of seven songs on the verses of the great 14th century Persian poet Hafis, whom he was to lay under contribution again in 1948. To this period belong the large cycles *Japanischer Frühling* (*Japanese Spring*), ten songs with four additional songs; twelve songs on poems by the Chinese master Li Tai Pe; and a second series of seven Chinese poems by various authors begun in 1939 and completed in 1947. In addition to his legal practice, Max Kowalski was active in the Jüdischer Kulturbund (the Jewish Cultural Alliance), an organization which enabled Jewish artists to continue to work professionally even as they were segregated from their former Aryan colleagues.² Kowalski contributed time and effort as well as Lieder on Yiddish texts translated into German; synagogue texts in Hebrew; and a cycle of six songs with several single songs on poems by Heinrich Heine. He even found time, in 1936, to compose a group of 12 (actually 14) *Kinderlieder* (*Children's Songs*) for his nephew, the present writer, then four years old, which I believe contains some of his happiest inspirations. The homely verses by Anonymous, set to deceptively simple melodies, are complemented by an harmonically sophisticated piano accompaniment, and nearly all conclude with a little dance, according a kind of playful recapitulation to the young hearer. Here, as perhaps only in his jazz-influenced piano pieces, Kowalski speaks with a directness unhedged by irony, full of sweetness and humorous sympathy. It is, in my opinion, genuine popular music in the sense of appealing to people at every level of musical intelligence, and had these miniatures been able to be published when written, they might have found their audience and enjoyed the wide spread appreciation they deserve.

2. For a description of the work of this organization, see *The Inextinguishable Symphony* by Martin Goldsmith (2000), which contains a number of—sometimes rather fanciful—references to the composer.

5. Allah lächelt mir

Allah lächelt mir so lieblich,
und es blüht der Tubabaum.
Jubelnd ach begreif ichs kaum.
Allah lächelt mir so lieblich.
Sieh, Suleika, wie er lächelt,
wie sein Hauch dein Herz umfächelt.
Allah lächelt uns so lieblich.

6. Mein Wille ist so schwach

Mein Wille ist so schwach. mein Wissen so gering.
Ich trüber Tor, ich weiss ein einzig Ding:
dass ich lebe, dass wir sterben werden,
und dass Suleika mein im Himmel und auf Erden.

7. Alles was geschieht

Alles, was geschieht, ist nur Leid und Lied.
Gott spielt auf der HarfeTrost sich zu.
Welle fällt und steigt.
Ach, wie bald schon neigt sich dein Haupt im Tod.
Dann lächle du.

8. Nun bin ich ohn Beschwerde

Nun bin ich ohn Beschwerde,
nun bin ich ohne Leid.
Tief unter mir die Erde liegt wie ein Stern so weit.
Und was ich je gelitten um dich und deinen Tod,
ist von mir abgeglitten wie Rauch im Abendrot.
Gesühnt ist meine Fehle. Gott will mir Gutes tun.
Ich darf bei meiner Seele noch heut im Brautbett ruhn.

5. Allah Smiles upon Me

Allah smiles upon me so sweetly,
And the tuba tree is in bloom.
Joyous indeed, yet scarcely comprehending:
Allah smiles upon me so sweetly.
See, Suleika, how he smiles,
How his breath fans your heart.
Allah smiles upon us so sweetly.

6. My Will is so weak

My will is so weak, my knowledge so small;
I, dreary fool, know only one thing:
That I live; that we shall die;
And that Suleika is mine in heaven and on earth.

7. All that happens

All that happens is but sorrow and song.
God plays on the harp, consoles himself;
Waves rise and fall
Ah, how soon your head is bent in death.
So then smile.

8. Now I am without complaint

Now I am without complaint,
now I am without sorrow.
Far beneath me the earth lies distant as a star.
And all that I ever suffered over you and your death
Has slipped from me like smoke in sunset.
My sins are atoned. God wishes to do good to me.
I may rest with my soul even today in the bridal bed.

1. Solange wir im Licht sind

So lange wir im Licht sind
wir werfen Schatten weit.
Erst wenn wir einmal nicht sind,
sind wir vom Leib befreit.
So lang wir auf der Welt sind,
es wechseln Nacht und Schein.
Erst wenn wir ganz erhellt sind,
wird ewig Sonne sein.

2. Bülbül singt im Rosengarten

Bülbül singt im Rosengarten,
Sonne schon erscheint.
Liebes Kind, lass mich nicht länger warten,
bis der Regen weint.
Bülbül singt.
Lass mich nicht länger warten.
Wird es nicht schon Nacht?
Siehe überm Rosengarten
ist ein Stern entfacht.

3. In meinen Schläfen jagt das Blut

In meinen Schläfen jagt das Blut.
Verdursten liess mich schier die Bürgersippe.
Es gibt nur ein Gefäss das mir Genüge tut:
Suleikas Lippe.

4. Mein Auge ist nur dazu da

Mein Auge ist nur dazu da, dass es dich spiegelt;
mein Mund, damit er deinen Mund versiegelt;
die Hand, damit sie deine Hand behalte,
mein Sinn, damit er deinen Sinn entfalte.

1. As long as we are in the light

As long as we are in the light.
We cast our shadows far.
Only when we exist no longer
Are we released from the body.
As long as we are on earth
Night and bright day alternate.
Only when we are fully illuminated
Will there be eternal sunshine.

2. Bulbul Sings in the Rosegarden

Bulbul sings in the rosegarden,
The sun has already appeared.
Dear Child, do not keep me waiting,
Till the rain begins to weep.
Bulbul sings,
Let me wait no longer,
Is night not already here?
See, over the rosegarden
A star has kindled its flame.

3. In my Temples the Blood races

In my temples the blood races.
The gang of small minds left me totally parched.
Only one vessel can slake my thirst:
Suleika's lips.

4. My Eye has but one Purpose

My eye has but one purpose: that it reflect you.
My mouth, that it may seal your mouth;
My hand, that it may hold your hand in mine;
My sense, that it may unfold yours.

It is hard to explain why Kowalski remained in Germany through 1938, when his brothers and most of his immediate family had emigrated. It may have been to protect his mother, living in Berlin, or because his Polish birth restricted the opportunities for an exit visa. In 1938 his practice was forcibly shut and after the infamous Kristallnacht in November of the same year, he was arrested and sent to the concentration camp in Buchenwald.³ Fortunately his release could be secured and a visa found for his emigration to England, where he arrived, a penniless refugee, in March 1939. His daughter Vera, his sister-in-law and her husband, and a small group of friends greeted his arrival. It was now necessary for him to earn his living for the first time as a musician, and he dedicated himself to his new profession with courage and determination. Beginning as a singer and choir director in a synagogue, he learned to tune pianos, a craft in which he was soon in demand as an expert. Despite bad eyes, bad nerves, and an unsettled life, which included nights spent in the Tube during the London Blitz, he composed in 1941 an extensive cycle based on the quatrains of Omar Khayyam, translated into German in the same meter as Fitzgerald's famous *Rubaiyat*. He tried his hand at setting English poems, single songs to texts by Landor, Walter de la Mare, W.H. Davies, and *The Cloths of Heaven* by William Butler Yeats. He played piano for a Yiddish musical, *The King of Lampedusa*, in 1943, and conducted the orchestra and contributed incidental music to a Jewish revue celebrating the end of the War in 1945, entitled *The Volunteer*.

The period of struggle and uncertainty between 1939 and 1945 came to an end in 1946 with Kowalski's marriage to Gertrud Remak, a strong-minded, practical, and efficient woman from a solid middle-class Berlin background, who supplied his restless temperament with a foundation of well-regulated domesticity. The result of this situation became apparent in the outpouring of creativity of the years that followed. From 1946

3. His wife, from whom he was separated, after several arrests and interrogations by the Gestapo, committed suicide.

until 1954 Kowalski produced eight cycles comprising fifty songs. Their sources are divided evenly between the beloved German poets of his youth and the poetry of the East which he had discovered during the trials of the 1930s. The *Acht Lieder* on texts by Hafis initiate this series of the composer's late period, composed in what may be called, borrowing a coinage of Goethe's, the style of old age (*Altersstil*). The *Hafis Lieder* undoubtedly constitute a high point among the works of this period.⁴ Their themes, love, death, and song are translated into an immediacy of utterance in which music and words undergo an almost gestural fusion, a clarity and moreover simplicity unusual for this late-romantic artist. The gravity of the first and last of these musings on the theme of death frames the six lighter ones on love and song. In the final Lied, *Nun bin ich ohn Beschwerden* (Now I am without complaint), a phrase of such peculiar poignancy occurs on the words, "Gesühnt ist meine Fehle. Gott will mir gutes tun" (My sin is atoned. God wishes to favor me), it might seem that its creator had received a premonition of his own mortality and death as a release from care and sorrow.

Perhaps it was the end of the war and the renewal of contacts with old friends and colleagues, now freed from the Nazi curse, that permitted a return to poets in the German language, though only to the greatest. Kowalski's breadth and discernment in his choice of texts had already been noted in his earliest publications. His love of language and sensitivities to lyric poetry are evident everywhere throughout his oeuvre. He once commented on this aspect of his work: "Whether my songs are good I cannot say; the texts certainly are." This exquisite tact in the handling of language was manifested once more in sets of *Sieben Lieder* on the poems of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1949); six on Friedrich Hölderlin (1950-1951); seven on Rilke (1951); and five on Stefan George (1952), all chosen from the finest examples of these writers. These cycles display again the integrity of tone and text, of emotional and musical construction noted earlier, but

now reinforced with a certain austerity, even harshness, the melodic line stripped to its essence, yet rich in expressive force and technical skill. With this severity may be contrasted the lovely freshness of the *Sieben Geisha Lieder* (1951) and the exploration of new creative sources in the *Sechs Lieder auf indische Gedichte* (1951-1952) and seven of a cycle entitled *Arabische Nächte (Arabian Nights)* (1953-1954).

Reflecting on his own work as an artist Kowalski once observed: "I am not concerned with any kind of 'principles.' I am an arch-romantic and rely wholly on feeling." And then in a turn to Goethe's *Faust*, "Feeling is all!"

The composer's last years appear to have been spent in an atmosphere of domestic calm and professional contentment. He had become a sought-after singing teacher and vocal coach, his works could once again be heard in concert and on the radio in Germany and in England, and his house, thanks to the social talents of his wife, became a center of hospitality for many visitors. He had a large circle of friends, among them prominent musicians like Artur Schnabel and Otto Klemperer, as well as others attracted by his sympathy and humor. He was, indeed, almost as celebrated for his humor as for his music, and is reported to have kept notebooks of jokes and humorous sayings, which, alas, have not survived. England suited him, his new family appreciated his abilities and indulged his not always easy nervous temperament, and his students were charmed by their knowledgeable and cosmopolitan instructor. He died in London after an operation, suddenly and unexpectedly, on June 4th, 1956.

*The introductory essay and translations of the texts are by
© Michael Kowal, nephew of the composer.*

4. They have been published by Recital Publications, Huntsville, Texas, 2009.