

cycle is almost unremitting in its anguish and darkness, relieved only twice by way of consolation.

"Nun will die Sonn' so hell aufgeh'n" (Now Will the Sun Rise as Brightly). This deeply moving and bleak song tells of a sunrise that can no longer bring comfort. The barren and chromatic lines perfectly capture stunned grief, the interplay between minor and major offers only irony.

"Nun seh'ich wohl, warum so dunkle Flammen" (Now I See Well Why Such Dark Flames). Here, the grief-stricken father remembers his children's eyes as premonitions of their death. The bitter sadness of the opening is offset by the gentle consolation of the lush accompaniment of the central phrase, only to return to the opening music at the end.

"Wenn dein Mütterlein" (When Your Dear Mother). Set in an ironic imitation of folk song style, the large intervals and repetitive patterns of the vocal line portray the painful memories that habitual actions provoke.

"Oft denk' ich, sie sind nur ausgegangen" (Often I Think They Have Only Gone Out). Mahler uses the subtle interplay between major and minor to illustrate the illusion that the children have only gone out for a walk. The final stanza, set to stunningly beautiful music, offers the consolation that they have gone to another place, where they will one day be reunited with their parents.

"In diesem Wetter, in diesem Braus" (In This Weather, in This Torrent). Here in the final song, the father recalls the storm on the day of the funeral, set to the only fast and aggressive music of the set. This turbulence gives way in the final stanza to the realization that the children have found rest, set to the only really gentle music in the entire cycle.



# Christa Ludwig sings Mahler

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**Philharmonia Orchestra**  
**Sir Adrian Boult**  
**André Vandernoot**  
**Otto Klemperer**

This is Mahler's first completely mature work. It is also his first full-fledged orchestral song cycle, a genre Mahler was eventually to bring to its height. Unlike its two predecessors, Berlioz's *Nuits d'été* (Summer Nights) and Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder* (Wesendonck Songs), Mahler's cycle was intended from the beginning as orchestral. Despite the fact that it was first sketched with piano and published this way as an alternative, the orchestral version is clearly superior. The texts are all by Mahler, although they were inspired by the collection of German folk poetry entitled *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Young Boy's Magic Horn); they depict a "Spring Journey" of a young man who has lost his love to a rival. Stylistically, all the elements of Mahler's early work are present: folklike melodies, the invocation of nature through bird calls and open textures, an intensely dramatic and dark *Allegro*, and a grim military march. Also present is Mahler's lifelong juxtaposition of the love of life and nature with despair, emptiness, and death. Anticipating his later harmonic complexities, none of these songs end in the same key as they began -- a procedure called "progressive tonality."

In "Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht" (When My Sweetheart Has Her Wedding), the protagonist mourns the loss of his love to a rival and attempts to find solace in nature. The first part, in which the lover mourns, is written in a simple and moving folk-Slavic style. This gives way in a central, faster section to the invocation of nature through imitation bird calls, always incorporated into the musical fabric of the accompaniment. A return to the opening mournful music ends the song bleakly.

In "Ging heut' morgens übers Feld" (I Went Out This Morning Through the Fields), the protagonist sets out on a cheerful walk in the country, only to eventually remind himself of his lost love. This is also in a folkish style, with scale-derived melodies and hints of Austrian yodeling. The accompaniment begins with simple open textures, only to give way to a flowing and contra-

puntally rich texture. Towards the end, the almost ecstatic quality of much of the song gives way to a wistful melancholy.

"Ich hab' ein glühend Messer" (I Have a Glowing Knife) describes the metaphorical knife the sweetheart plunged into the lover's breast with her betrayal. In what would become Mahler's typical diabolical style, the song features muted trumpets, tremolo strings, and snarling brass. The tortured and aggressive quality of the music perfectly depicts the lover's angst.

In "Die zwei blauen Augen" (The Two Blue Eyes), finally, the protagonist goes out in the night to find peace under the linden tree (a durable Romantic metaphor for death), to the accompaniment of a funeral march the likes of which only Mahler could compose. This march eventually fades into a more folklike style, but it remains colored by its original harmonies. A poignant and grim return to a single repeated phrase of the march concludes the song.

The heartbreaking poems that Mahler used here were written by Friedrich Rückert out of grief after the loss of his own two children. Although one of Mahler's own daughters died three years after their completion, it is absurd to make any connection. The songs were more likely set in memory of Mahler's beloved younger brother (lost in childhood), who shared the same name as Rückert's son -- Ernst.

These songs, unconditionally specified as a set to be performed together, are a far cry from the *Wunderhorn* songs of the previous decade. In anticipation of his later style, Mahler reduced the orchestral texture to thin, solo, contrapuntal lines, only rarely combining for dynamic effect. The voice part is no longer the scalar and triadic folk style, but now has become part of the contrapuntal fabric. The range of emotion is extreme, as before, but now it is distilled, becoming all the more poignant and effective. The entire

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## **Lieder Eines Fahrenden Gesellen**

1 I: Wenn Mein Schatz Hochzeit Macht 4:23

2 II: Ging Heut' Morgen Übers Feld 4:49

3 III: Ich Hab' Ein Gluhend Messer 3:08

4 IV. Die Zwei Blauen Augen 5:11

## **Kindertotenlieder (Rückert)**

5 I. Nun Will Die Sonn' So Hell Aufgeh'n 5:55

6 II. Nun Seh' Ich Wohl, Warum So Dunkle Flammen 4:52

7 III. Wenn Dein Mütterlein Tritt Zur Tür Herein 5:07

8 IV. Oft Denk' Ich, Sie Sind Nur Ausgegangen! 4:08

9 V. In Diesem Wetter, In Diesem Braus 6:20

## **3 Lieder**

10 Das Irdische Leben (From "Des Knaben Wunderhorn") 3:07

11 Ich Atmet' Einen Linden Duft (From "Des Knaben Wunderhorn") 2:47

12 Wo Die Schönen Trompeten Blasen (From "Des Knaben Wunderhorn") 6:02

Conductors – Sir Adrian Boult (tracks: 1 to 4) André Vandernoot (tracks: 5 to 9), Otto Klemperer (tracks: 10 to 12)  
Tracks 1–9 recorded 1958, Abbey Road Studios, London Tracks 10–12 recorded 1964, Kingsway Hall, London by EMI



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