

Select Songs

Franz Schubert and Richard Strauss

In the refined, jewel-like genre of the *Lied*, the German art song, the name of Franz Schubert stands indisputably at the top of a list that would wend through the 19th century and into the 20th, encompassing such eminences as Schumann, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Wolf, Mahler, and Richard Strauss. Matthias Goerne has assembled a set of songs by the first and last of those figures, who, in the classic tradition of the *Lied*, originally crafted their songs for voice with piano.

Songs with full orchestral accompaniment flourished in the later 19th century, the contributions of Strauss and Mahler being exemplary — but already in Schu-

bert's lifetime a few composers were creating symphonic arrangements of songs originally written for voice and piano. Most of these early arrangers are little known today, but by the 1860s famous names such as Berlioz, Liszt, and Brahms were adding to the repertoire. The set of songs heard in this concert affords a glimpse of how gifted composers paid tribute to Schubert and Strauss by adapting their songs to the evolving orchestral aesthetics of their own times, as well as to how Strauss crafted symphonic versions of some songs he had originally composed with accompaniments by piano alone.

An Silvia, D.891

Des Fischers Liebesglück, D.933

Greisengesang, D.788

Franz Schubert

Born: January 31, 1797, in Liechtenthal, then a suburb of Vienna, Austria, now part of the city

Died: November 19, 1828, in Vienna

Works composed and premiered: *An Silvia* was composed in early July 1826, and *Des Fischers Liebesglück* in November 1827; premieres unknown, as Schubert songs were typically unveiled at private gatherings in Vienna, with the composer as piano accompanist to solo vocalists; Alexander Schmalcz's orchestrations were introduced on April 25, 2015, at the Great Hall of the Vienna Musikverein, by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Philippe Jordan, conductor, Matthias Goerne, baritone. *Greisengesang* was composed in 1823; Johannes Brahms's orchestration was premiered October 11, 1867, in Hamburg, at a Philharmonic Concert, Julius Stockhausen, baritone.

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances:

An Sylvia, voice and piano version premiered February 5, 1897, David Scull Bispham, baritone, Victor Harris, piano; most recently performed on December 30, 2011, orchestrator unknown, Alan Gilbert, conductor, Anne Sophie von Otter, mezzo-soprano. These performances mark the New York Philharmonic premieres of *Des Fischers Liebesglück* and *Greisengesang*.

Estimated durations: *An Silvia*, ca. 3 minutes; *Des Fischers Liebesglück*, ca. 7 minutes; *Greisengesang*, ca. 3 minutes

Schubert, in an 1825 portrait by Wilhelm August Rieder



Franz Schubert was the first important composer to dedicate himself deeply to the composition of *Lieder*, and between his first effort, in 1811, and his last, perhaps a month before his death 17 years later, he produced approximately 600 songs, dozens of which have remained essential repertoire. They range from miniatures hardly more than a minute long to vast, half-hour ballads. Some were cast in relatively simple strophic forms, while others displayed more complicated, carefully engineered structures. Some were grouped into large-scale, semi-narrative cycles, but most were conceived as stand-alone works, depicting a complete atmosphere in the course of only three or four minutes.

The five Schubert songs performed here all date from the last five years of his short life. Among the most famous is ***An Silvia (To Silvia)***. Schubert was going through a brief Shakespeare phase in July 1826 when he composed what he titled simply “Gesang” (“Song”), but to which, on his manuscript copy, another hand added “An Silvia.” A notable German-language “Vienna Edition” of Shakespeare that had appeared in 1825 included some translations by his friend Eduard von Bauernfeld. From these volumes Schubert seized on two Shakespeare songs, from *Cymbeline* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and while he was at it he also set a song from *Antony and Cleopatra* that was not

Traum durch die Dämmerung, Op. 29, No. 1
Das Rosenband, Op. 36, No. 1
Freundliche Vision, Op. 48, No. 1

Richard Strauss

Born: June 11, 1864, in Munich, Bavaria (Germany)

Died: September 8, 1949, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany

Works composed and premiered: *Traum durch die Dämmerung* was composed May 4, 1895; Robert Heger created this orchestration in 1929. *Das Rosenband* was composed on September 22, 1897 and was orchestrated by the composer on the same day. *Freundliche Vision* was composed on October 5, 1900 and Strauss completed his orchestration on July 1, 1918. Premieres unknown.

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances: The Philharmonic’s only previous presentation of *Traum durch die Dämmerung* was in its piano version, on February 9, 1906, with Louise Kirkby-Lunn, soloist, and Ernst Kunwald as pianist. These are the orchestra’s first performances of *Das Rosenband*. The only previous performance of *Freundliche Vision* was on November 29, 1921, with soprano Claire Dux and the composer as conductor.

Estimated durations: *Traum durch die Dämmerung*, ca. 3 minutes; *Das Rosenband*, ca. 2 minutes; *Freundliche Vision*, ca. 4 minutes

Richard Strauss and his wife, soprano Pauline de Ahna, a frequent performer of his songs, soon after their marriage in 1894



included in that Vienna Edition. These were the only times Schubert grappled with Shakespeare, but the selection from *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (the song sung here, from that play's Act IV, Scene 2) is a winning distillation of the formalized charm inherent in the Bard's love poem. **Des Fischers Liebesglück**, an 1827 setting of a poem by Karl Gottfried von Leitner that had been written in 1821, is a barcarolle in which the text is set in strophic structure. And yet, within this straightforward plan, Schubert evokes considerable dramatic distance, moving from the glimpse of a light shining out from the beloved's bedroom to an assignation in the fisherman's boat. These two *Lieder* are heard here in recently created orchestrations by pianist Alexander Schmalcz, who has collaborated closely with many leading interpreters of art song, including Matthias Goerne.

Greisengesang is, again, a strophic song, this one a rumination on aging. Schubert used only part of Friedrich Rückert's poem, so his setting expresses that old age is given over to memories, whereas the poem had also suggested that art might provide consolation in advancing years. The result combines nostalgia and hopelessness in a way reminiscent of Schubert's song cycle *Die Winterreise*. Such an atmosphere naturally attracted Johannes Brahms. He was a Schubert aficionado who collected a number of the composer's manuscripts, added his editing talents to the first collected edition of Schubert's music, and created orchestrations for no fewer than six Schubert songs.

After **Im Abendrot**, set to a poem by Karl Lappe, was sung in January 1827 at a Schubertiad — a musical gathering of the composer's friends — attendee Franz von Hartmann wrote in his diary:

An especially beautiful one, "Sunset Glow" [*Im Abendrot*] by Lappe, was sung twice by [Johann Michael] Vogl, who happened to

be in an exceptionally good mood. Then we had a delicious repast, and several toasts were drunk.

It is a quintessential Schubert song, apparently simple in its substance (rather like a hymn), drawing on the familiar Romantic image of a sunset, yet conveying something profound about humanity and the sense of oneness with nature. Orchestrator Max Reger was one of the most esteemed composers at the turn of the 20th century. Apart from a large catalogue of original compositions, he produced numerous symphonic arrangements of songs by Brahms, Grieg, Wolf, Schumann, and Schubert, 15 of whose *Lieder* he provided with orchestral accompaniments.

Tränenregen, to a poem by Wilhelm Müller, is the tenth piece in *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schubert's cycle of 20 songs that plot a course from amorous infatuation to jealousy, rejection, and, ultimately, suicide by drowning. At this midpoint of the tale, the hero reminisces about the happiness and hopefulness he experienced with his sweetheart and reveals a vision of the moon and stars reflected — or, as he ominously expresses it, sunken — in the brook, which beckons to him as the sweetheart leaves unceremoniously. In 1903, the year before he began studying with Schoenberg, Anton Webern produced orchestrations of five Schubert songs and four movements from that composer's piano sonatas. One does not find here the evanescent, pointillistic style that would become so distinctive in Webern's oeuvre. That does not make his Schubert arrangements the less admirable or imaginative — as, for example, in the coda of *Tränenregen*, where the phrase is begun, *pianississimo*, by two clarinets and horn, and then completed by muted strings.

In the course of his long career, **Richard Strauss's** attention tended to rove sequen-

tially from genre to genre. He would delve exhaustively into the possibilities of each until, feeling he had mastered its challenges, he would shift focus to a new compositional arena. However, his more than 200 *Lieder* were a more continuous strand, weaving through his entire life. His first composition, as a child of six, was a Christmas carol, and he died at the age of 85 leaving his supernal *Vier letzte Lieder* (*Four Last Songs*) as a valedictory statement, and one final song — “Malven” — to be rediscovered and performed 36 years after his death.

Most of his songs were written for, and championed by, his wife, the soprano Pauline de Ahna. He often collaborated with her in performance, either as a pianist in recital or as a conductor when the songs were given in their orchestral versions. He produced some of his orchestral settings coevally with piano versions of the songs, but in some cases he realized the symphonic versions years later.

Strauss composed *Traum durch die Dämmerung* not long after his marriage, setting a poem by Otto Julius Bierbaum. An anecdote attached to the song has his new wife walking into his study and informing him that she wanted him to accompany her on a walk. When Strauss protested that he was busy composing, she allowed him 20 minutes. There’s nothing like a deadline to get the creative juices flowing. When she returned after exactly that much time had passed, he had finished his project — this hushed song, in which a man walks across the meadow through the grey twilight to meet the loveliest of women. A couple of years later, Strauss quoted from this song in his autobiographical tone poem *Ein Heldenleben* (*A Hero’s Life*). The orchestration performed here is by Robert Heger, a conductor whose credits include leading the world premiere of Ravel’s Piano Concerto for the Left

Im Abendrot, D.799 **Tränenregen, from *Die schöne Müllerin*, D.795**

Franz Schubert

Works composed and premiered: *Im Abendrot* was composed in 1824–25, completed by February 1825; premiere unknown. *Tränenregen*, from the song cycle *Die schöne Müllerin*, was composed in 1823; Anton Webern’s orchestration was premiered October 20, 1966, in Buffalo, New York, by the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Lukas Foss, conductor, Marni Nixon, soprano.

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances: *Im Abendrot* was premiered October 2, 1985, Zubin Mehta, conductor, Hermann Prey, baritone; most recently performed December 30, 2011, Alan Gilbert, conductor, Anne Sophie von Otter, mezzo-soprano. These performances mark the Philharmonic premiere of *Tränenregen*.

Estimated durations: *Im Abendrot*, ca. 3 minutes; *Tränenregen*, ca. 5 minutes



An 1868 drawing of a Schubertiad, the popular musical gatherings of friends, by Schubert’s contemporary Moritz von Schwind, depicting the composer at the piano

Hand, in 1932, with pianist Paul Wittgenstein and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra.

For **Das Rosenband**, Strauss reached back to a text by the 18th-century writer Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock — a poem, as it happens, that was also set by Schubert. Now it is through springtime shadows that the lover spies the woman of his dreams and then wraps her in ribbons of roses. She awakens, they gaze at each other, “and about us it was at once Elysium” — their euphoria suggested by the figure of a leaping octave, which surfaces often in this brief song. It seems that Strauss penned this piece for voice with piano and then orchestrated it the same day.

The two versions of **Freundliche Vision**, in contrast, were separated by 18 years — the piano setting dating from 1900, the orchestral version from at the end of World War I. In the poem by Birnbaum the lovers stroll in full daylight, walking to a place of peace and beauty. The song perplexed some listeners when it was new, its tonality making a chromatic sidestep in a way that would increasingly become a Straussian fingerprint. In the orchestrated setting, the composer emphasizes the flavor of this harmonic legerdemain by having the strings play with mutes for several measures in the key of C-sharp major, and then instructing them to remove the mutes to blossom into fuller tone when the music shifts up to D major.

Ruhe, meine Seele resulted from a trip Strauss took to Berlin in 1894 to lead the premiere of his tone poem *Macbeth*. There he became acquainted with a group of young poets whose ideals verged sharply from the perfumed, sentimental poetry of the mid-19th century. Among them was Karl Henckell, a Socialist idealist. In Strauss’s setting of his introspective poem, a static, nearly silent opening is disturbed as a glowing ray of sunshine breaks through, and a turbulent central section resolves into a declaration that “these are momentous times.” Henckell aptly described

the song’s odd combination of emotions when he later wrote to the composer that he was “moved to hear these verses of my tempestuous youth ... interpreted in music that shivers so lightly, with hardly a wave breaking.” When Strauss created the orchestrated version 54 years later — two days before his 84th birthday — he inserted a few extra measures to refine the dramatic pace. The orchestration itself is as sensitive as one would expect from one of the great masters of the art; the large orchestra (with triple winds) never sounds bloated, notwithstanding the magnitude of its forces.

Very different is Henckell’s text of **Allerseelen**, which Alan Jefferson, in his book on the composer’s songs, described as “perhaps Strauss’s most purple song, redolent of dark crimson wallpaper, thick, heavy, musty curtains, chenille tablecloths and the peaceful silence of that age which could hang heavily as well.” In this Day of the Dead song, the singer hopes, from the perspective of November, that a long-lost love affair may blossom again as it did in May. Its pensive character rises to an emotive outcry (*molto espressivo*) before the singer retreats again to quiet thoughts. Strauss did orchestrate this song in 1940, for the soprano Viorica Ursuleac, but the symphonic version performed in this concert was made in 1932 by Robert Heger. Strauss obviously thought highly of it, since he conducted this version in several concerts.

Morgen! sets a rapturous love poem by John Henry Mackay, who was born in Scotland but raised in Germany. An anarchist, he belonged to the same Berlin circle of radical poets as Henckell. In Strauss’s poignant setting, the singer remains mute until well into the piece, as if lost in reverie. He joins in mid-thought: “And tomorrow the sun will shine again.” The true melody of this song is never presented in its entirety by the singer. In orchestrating the song, Strauss emphasized its nostalgic atmosphere by drawing on the

sweet tones of a solo violin to enunciate the theme — an irresistible choice, if perhaps an obvious one. Strauss published *Morgen!* along with three further songs (including *Ruhe, meine Seele*), and he presented the set to Pauline de Ahna as a wedding present — a practical one since, as husband and wife, they would perform them often in recital.

Instrumentation: In addition to the solo singer, *An Silvia* is set for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, timpani, and strings. *Traum durch die Dämmerung* calls for two flutes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, and strings. *Des Fischers Liebesglück* is performed by flute, oboe (doubling English horn), bassoon, and strings. *Das Rosenband* employs two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, two horns, and

strings. *Freundliche Vision* is set for two flutes, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two tenor trombones, and strings. *Greisengesang* calls for two flutes, two clarinets, two bassoons, three trombones, and strings (but no violins). *Ruhe, meine Seele* calls for two flutes and piccolo, two oboes and English horn, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, celeste, and strings. *Im Abendrot* utilizes flute, oboe, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, timpani, and strings. *Allerseelen* uses two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets and bass clarinet, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, trombone, timpani, harp, and strings. *Tränenregen* calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, and strings. *Morgen!* is set for solo violin, three horns, harp, and strings.

***Ruhe, meine Seele*, Op. 27, No. 1**
***Allerseelen*, Op. 10, No. 8**
***Morgen!*, Op. 27, No. 4**

Richard Strauss

Works composed and premiered: *Ruhe, meine Seele* was composed on May 17, 1894, and the composer completed his orchestrated version on June 9, 1948; premieres unknown. *Allerseelen* was composed October 31, 1885, with Robert Heger's orchestration carried out in 1932; premiered March 5, 1886, in Meiningen, by tenor Rudolf Engelhardt. *Morgen!* was composed May 21, 1894, and Strauss orchestrated it on September 20, 1897; the orchestral version was unveiled November 21, 1897, in Brussels, with soprano Pauline de Ahna as soloist, Strauss conducting.

New York Philharmonic premieres and most recent performances:

The Orchestra first performed *Ruhe, meine seele* on September 20, 1995, with soprano Jessye Norman, conducted by Kurt Masur, as an encore; the most recent performance was January 12, 2016, with soprano Heidi Melton, conducted by Alan Gilbert. The Philharmonic premiere of *Morgen!* was on November 19, 1912, with soprano Frances Alda, conducted by Josef Stransky, and the most recent performance was on February 23, 2017, with soprano Renée Fleming, conducted by Alan Gilbert. These are the first Philharmonic performances of *Allerseelen*.

Estimated durations: *Ruhe, meine Seele*, ca. 4 minutes; *Allerseelen*, ca. 3 minutes; *Morgen!*, ca. 3 minutes



Strauss, in 1904