

# RICHARD STRAUSS

## Orchestral Songs for Baritone and Orchestra (1896-1897)

APPROXIMATE DURATION: 32 minutes

INSTRUMENTATION: piccolo, six flutes, three oboes, English horn, E-flat clarinet, three clarinets, three bassoons, contrabassoon, six horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, percussion, harp and strings.

The great tradition of the 19th-century German *Lied* came to its end with the songs of Richard Strauss. Though he wrote songs throughout his long life — his first piece, penned at age six, was a Christmas carol; his last was the magnificent *Four Last Songs* — he composed most of his *Lieder* before he turned from the orchestral genres to opera at the beginning of the 20th century. The best of Strauss' songs are imbued with a soaring lyricism, a textural and harmonic richness, and a sensitivity to the text that place them among the most beautiful and enduring works of their type, the culmination of the most intimate musical genre of the legacy of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms.

Strauss composed the Four Songs of his Op. 33, his first with orchestra, between the summer of 1896 and the following January, the time when he completed *Also sprach Zarathustra* and assumed his new duties as chief conductor of the Munich Opera. *Hymnus*, a soaring paean to the muse of artistic creativity that closes on a somber note, sets a text by the prolific German poet, playwright and novelist Friedrich Gustav Schilling (1766-1839). The poem first appeared in 1789 in the literary journal *Thalia* (named for the ancient muse of poetry) that Friedrich Schiller published during the time he was resident playwright at Mannheim; *Hymnus* has often been mistakenly attributed (even by Strauss) to him.

Dass du mein Auge wecktest  
zu diesem goldenen Lichte,  
Dass mich dein Äther umfließt;

Dass ich zu deinem Äther  
Hinauf einen Menschenblick richte,  
Der ihn edler genießt;  
Dass du einen unsterblichen Geist,

Der dich, Göttliche, denket  
und in die schlagend Brust,  
Gütige, mir des Schmerzes  
wohlhät'ge Warnung

Geschenket und die belohnende Lust;  
Dass du des Geistes Gedanken,  
Des Herzens Gefühle zu tönen  
Mir ein Saitenspiel gabst,  
Kränze des Ruhms  
und das buhlende Glück

Deinen stolzeren Söhnen,  
Mir ein Saitenspiel gabst;  
Dass dem trunkenen Sinn,  
von hoher Begeisterung beflügelt,  
Schöner das Leben sich malt,  
Schöner in der Dichtung  
Krystall die Wahrheit sich spiegelt,  
Heller die dämmernde strahlt:  
Grosse Göttin, dafür soll,  
Bis die Parzen mich fodern,  
Dieses Herzens Gefühl,  
Zarter Kindlichkeit voll,  
In dankbarem Strahle dir lodern,

That you have awakened my eyes  
to this golden light,  
and that your ether — the clear air of heaven —  
is flowing round me;

that I direct a human gaze  
aloft to your ethereal heights,  
which my gaze then enjoys more nobly;  
that you have bestowed upon me  
an immortal spirit  
that, divine one, thinks of you,  
and, having instilled into my breast,  
kindly one, the salutary warning of pain

and the reward of pleasure,  
that to intone the thoughts of the spirit  
and the feelings of the heart  
you have given me a lyre.  
You have given wreaths of fame and luck  
in wooing

to other poets, your prouder sons,  
but to me you gave a lyre;  
that to my intoxicated senses,  
winged as they are by sublime inspiration,  
life is painted as more beautiful,  
truth is mirrored more beautifully  
in the crystal of poetry,  
twilit truth gleams more brightly:  
great goddess, for all that  
my heart's emotion,  
full of tender, child-like feeling,  
shall — till the Fates claim my life —  
blaze for you, radiating gratitude;

Soll aus dem goldenen Spiel  
Unerschöpflich dein Preis,  
Erhabne Bidnerin, fließen,  
Soll dieser denkende Geist  
An dein mütterlich Herz  
In reiner Umarmung sich schliessen,  
Bis der Tod sie zerreisst!

for all that  
shall your praise,  
sublime sculptress, flow,  
inexhaustibly from the golden lyre,  
shall this thinking spirit press himself  
to your motherly heart in pure embrace  
until death tears us apart!

The poems of Richard Dehmel (1863-1920), one of the most distinguished German poets at the turn of the 20th century, form a bridge between the sensuous Impressionism of the preceding generation and the intense spirituality of encroaching Expressionism. His verses matched well the *fin-de-siècle* temperament of northern European composers: Strauss, Webern, Szymanowski and others made settings of his poems, and Schoenberg was inspired to write an opulent tone poem for string sextet by Dehmel's *Verklärte Nacht* ("Transfigured Night"). In the summer of 1899, at exactly the same time Schoenberg was composing *Verklärte Nacht*, Strauss made an extraordinary setting of *Notturmo*, Dehmel's chilling vision of a dream-like encounter with Death, whose grieving song is cast upon "the breath of his violin." *Notturmo*, unique in Strauss' song output in its length (eighteen minutes) and its unflinching modernity, uses some of the same avant-garde harmonic techniques later exploited in his headline-grabbing operas *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), but their effect here is even more disturbing. In reviewing a performance by Thomas Hampson in 2003, Joshua Kosman wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "*Salome* is entertainment, but thirty seconds into *Notturmo* and your blood runs cold."

Hoch hing der Mond; das Schneegefild  
lag bleich und öde um uns her,  
wie meine Seele bleich und leer,  
denn neben mir, so stumm und wild,  
so stumm und kalt wie meine Not,  
als wollt' er weichen nimmermehr,  
sass starr und wartete der Tod.

The moon hung high; the snowy field  
lay drear and desolate about us,  
as drear and empty as my soul,  
for by my side, as mute and fierce,  
as mute and cold as my anguish,  
as if nevermore wishing to move,  
sat Death, motionless and waiting.

Da kam es her wie einst so mild,  
so müd' und sacht  
aus ferner Nacht,  
so kummerschwer  
kam seiner Geige Hauch daher,  
und vor mir stand sein stilles Bild.

As once before there came so soft,  
so weary and gentle  
from distant night,  
so laden with grief  
came thence the breath of his violin,  
and his silent image stood before me.

Der mich umflochten wie ein Band,  
dass meine Blüte nicht zerfiel,  
und dass mein Herz die Sehnsucht fand,  
die grosse Sehnsucht ohne Ziel:  
da stand er nun im öden Land  
und stand so trüb und feierlich  
und sah nicht auf noch grüsste mich,  
nur seine Töne liess er irr'n  
und weinen durch die kühle Flur,  
und mir entgegen starrte nur  
aus seiner Stirn,  
als wär's ein Auge hohl und fahl,  
der tiefen Wunde dunkles Mal.

Who entwined me like a ribbon,  
that my flowering not wither,  
and that my heart find desire,  
great, all-embracing desire:  
he stood there now in the desolate land,  
stood so sad and solemn,  
and looked not up nor greeted me,  
only let his music drift  
and weep through the chill meadow,  
and all that stared at me  
from his brow,  
as if it were an empty, livid eye,  
the deep wound's darksome stain.

Und trüber quoll das trübe Lied  
und quoll so heiss  
und wuchs und schwoll,  
so heiss und voll,  
wie Leben, das nach Liebe glüht,

And the sad song flowed more sadly  
and flowed so ardent  
and grew and swelled  
so ardent and full,  
like life on fire for love,

wie Liebe, die nach Leben schreit,  
nach ungenossener Seligkeit,  
so wehevoll,  
so wühlend quoll  
das strömende Lied  
und flutete  
und leise, leise blutete  
und strömte mit  
in's bleiche Schneefeld rot und fahl  
der tiefen Wunde dunkles Mal.

Und müder glitt die müde Hand,  
und vor mir stand  
ein bleicher Tag,  
ein ferner, bleicher Jugendtag,  
da starr im Sand  
zerfallen seine Blüte lag,  
da seine Sehnsucht sich vergass,  
in ihrer Schwermut Übermass  
und ihrer Traurigkeiten müd  
zum Ziele schritt;  
und laut aufschrie das weinende Lied,  
das wühlende, und flutete,  
und seiner Saiten Klage schnitt,  
und seine Stirne blutete  
und weinte mit  
in meine starre Seelennot,  
als sollt' ich hören ein Gebot,  
als müsst ich jubeln, dass ich litt,  
mitfühlen alles Leidens Schuld  
und alles Lebens warme Huld;  
und weinend, blutend wandt' er sich  
ins bleiche Dunkel und verblich.

Und bebend hört' ich mir entgehn,  
entfliehn sein Lied.  
Und wie so zart,  
so zitternd ward  
der langen Töne fernes Flehn,  
da fühlt' ich kalt ein Rausches Wehn  
und grauenschwer  
die Luft sich rühren um mich her,  
und wollte bebend nun ihn sehn,  
ihn lauschen sehn,  
der wartend sass bei meiner Not,  
und wandte mich:  
da lag es kahl,  
das bleiche Feld,  
und fern und fahl  
entwich ins Dunkel auch der Tod.

Hoch hing der Mond,  
und mild und müd'  
hin schwand es in die leere Nacht,  
das flehende Lied,  
und schwand und schied,

like love crying out for life,  
for bliss untasted,  
so woefully,  
so achingly  
the song's outpouring flowed  
and overflowed,  
and gently, gently bled  
and streamed,  
red and livid into the pale, snowy field,  
the deep wound's darksome stain.

And the weary hand moved more wearily,  
and before me stood  
a pale day,  
a far-off, pale day of youth,  
when his flowering lay motionless,  
withered in the sand,  
when his longing forgot itself,  
and overburdened by its melancholy  
and tired of its sadness,  
proceeded to its goal;  
and the weeping song cried out loud,  
the aching song, and overflowed,  
and his strings etched a lament,  
and his brow bled  
and wept with me  
in my paralyzed soul's affliction,  
as though I should hear a commandment,  
as though I had to rejoice in my suffering,  
feel all suffering's guilt,  
and all life's warming grace;  
and weeping, bleeding, he turned towards  
the pale darkness, and faded.

And trembling I heard his song  
slip away from me and flee.  
And so tender,  
so tremulous were  
the long-held notes of distant entreaty;  
I felt the chill of delirium's breath  
and the dread-laden air  
stir about me,  
and trembling now desired to see him,  
see him listen  
who sat waiting in my affliction,  
and I turned:  
it lay deserted,  
the drear field,  
and distant and pale  
Death too vanished into darkness.

The moon hung on high,  
and softly, wearily,  
it vanished into the empty night,  
the imploring song,  
and vanished and dissolved,

des toten Freundes flehendes Lied.

the dead friend's imploring song.

*Pilgers Morgenlied* ("Pilgrim's Morning Song") is a passionate setting of the poem that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) dedicated to Luise Henriette von Ziegler, a lady-in-waiting at court and one of the circle of "sensitive souls," as he called them, with whom he associated in Darmstadt in 1772, a time when the 23-year-old writer, having fled Frankfurt after a failed attempt to practice law, referred to himself as a "pilgrim" and "wanderer." After he left Darmstadt to try practicing law again in Wetzlar, Goethe sent poems back to Darmstadt addressed to three ladies in his group, including the *Pilgers Morgenlied*, which was for "Lila," Luise's nickname to her friends. Two years later Goethe established himself among the foremost European authors with the publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

Morgennebel, Lila,  
Hüllen deinen Turm ein.  
Soll ich ihn zum  
Letztenmal nicht sehn!  
Doch mir schweben  
Tausend Bilder  
Seliger Erinn' rung  
Heilig warm um's Herz.  
Wie er da stand,  
Zeuge meiner Wonne,  
Als zum erstmal  
Du dem Freundling  
Ängstlich liebevoll begegnetest,  
Und mit einemmal  
Ewge Flammen  
In die Seel' ihm warfst.  
Zische, Nord,  
Tausend-schlangen-züngig  
Mir ums Haupt!  
Beugen sollst du's nicht!  
Beugen magst du  
Kind'scher Zweige Haupt,  
Von der Sonne  
Muttergegenwart geschieden.

Morning mist, Lila,  
Wraps round your tower.  
Shall I not see it  
One last time!  
But a thousand images  
Float blissfully  
Through the memory,  
Warming the heart.  
Like when this  
Timid person stood there,  
A sort of witness to my own happiness,  
You, right from  
The first meeting,  
Igniting  
Eternal flames  
In the soul.  
Hiss, Northwinds,  
Like a thousand-tongued snake,  
Around my head!  
I'll not bow to you!  
May you not bow either,  
Immature twigs,  
Cut off from the presence  
Of the nurturing sun.

Allgegenwärt'ge Liebe!  
Durchglühst mich,  
Bötst dem Wetter die Stirn,  
Gefahren die Brust,  
Hast mir gegossen  
Ins früh welkende Herz  
Doppeltes Leben,  
Freude, zu leben,  
Und Mut!

All-pervading love!  
Shine through me  
To face the storm head-on,  
Danger filling the breast.  
You have poured  
Into my prematurely fading heart  
A redoubled will to live,  
A joy in living,  
And courage!

Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) was Professor of Oriental Literature at Erlangen and Privy Counselor for King Friedrich Wilhelm IV at Berlin from 1841 to 1848. Rückert was known as both a productive scholar, with many translations of texts from Persian, Arabic, Hebrew, Armenian, Ethiopian, Coptic and Sanskrit, as well as a prolific writer of poems, which inspired musical settings from such 19th-century composers as Schubert, Schumann, Marschner and Litolff. Strauss' dramatic realization of Rückert's *Nächtlicher Gang* ("Nightly March") evokes sinister, ghostly apparitions as a lover quests for his beloved beyond the grave.

Die Fahnen flattern

The flags flap

Im Mitternachtssturm,  
Die Schiefeln knattern  
Am Kirchturm:  
Ein Windzug zischt,  
Die Latern' verlischt.

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

Dies Totenkapell'  
Mit dem Knochenhaus;  
Der Mond guckt hell  
Zum Fenster heraus;  
Haussen jeder Tritt  
Geht drinnen auch mit —

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

Der Judengott'sacker  
Am Berg dort herab  
Ein weisses Geflacker  
Auf jedem Grab;  
Ein Uhu ruft  
Den andern: Schuft.

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

Drüben am Bach  
Auf dem Wintereis  
Ein Geplatz, ein Gekrach  
Als ging' dort, wer weiss;  
Jetzt wieder ganz still.  
Lass sein, was will ...

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

Am Pachthof vorbei;  
Aus dem Hundehaus  
Fahren kohlschwarz zwei  
Statt des einen heraus,  
Gähnen mich an  
Mit glührotem Zahn.

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

Dort vor dem Fenster,  
Dahinter sie ruht,  
Stehn zwei Gespenster  
Und halten die Hut;  
Drin schläft die Braut,  
Ächzt im Traume laut ...

Es muss doch zur Liebsten gehn!

In the midnight storm,  
The slates rattle  
On the church tower;  
A draft of air hisses,  
The lantern goes out —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

The chapel of the dead  
With the bone house;  
The moon looks brightly  
Out of the window;  
Every step from outside  
Can also be heard inside —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

The cemetery  
On the mountain over there;  
A white flickering  
On every grave;  
An eagle owl calls  
The other one: scoundrel —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

Over there on the creek  
On the winter ice  
There is a blubbering, a crashing  
As if I don't know who is walking there:  
Now it's quite calm again;  
Be that as it may —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

When passing the tenant farm  
Two coal-black dogs  
Rush out of the doghouse  
Instead of one,  
They yawn at me  
With glowing red teeth —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

Two ghosts are standing  
Over there in front of the window  
Behind which she rests  
And keep guard over her;  
The bride sleeps inside,  
Groans loudly in her dream —

There must be a way to the beloved one!

