



HEBBEL LIEDER

Nachtlied
Herbstbild
Erleuchtung
Abendgefühl

*Four Songs
for Baritone and Piano*

By
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(b. 1954)

*On Poems by
Friedrich Hebbel*
(1813-1863)

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Preface

RECENTLY as I was rummaging through bins of old documents, I stumbled across manuscripts of four songs I composed in 1984. Those four songs were *Nachtlied*, *Herbstbild*, *Erleuchtung*, and *Abendgefühl* on poems by Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863). I was a doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin then and the impetus for these compositions was a final project for a course I was taking on nineteenth-century harmony. Friedrich Hebbel’s poems obviously resonated with me back then, as they do today, and my intent was to set them in the musical language of Romantic composers.

I am happy that, at the time of their composition, I was unaware of Robert Schumann’s setting of Hebbel’s *Nachtlied* which resulted in Schumann’s Opus 108 for choir and orchestra. Schumann’s genius surely would have stymied my creative endeavors. Schumann’s setting, like a dramatic and extended tone poem, contrasts with my version which is more like a gentle and understated lullaby. Hebbel’s brief three-stanza poem starts out innocently enough with a description of the night sky (“Quellende, schwellende Nacht, voll von Lichtern und Sternen” Flowing and growing night, full of lights and stars), before alluding to some anxiety (“Herz in der Brust wird beengt” My heart feels cramped in my chest) which sleep eventually pacifies (“Schlaf, da nahst du dich leis” Sleep, you come gently).

Herbstbild is the only poem of the four whose images and concepts are not metaphorical. This is a pure description of an autumn day: beautiful leaves, mild rays of sun, the celebration of nature. No hidden meanings, no questions about mortality or life’s purpose. The happily rustling piano accompaniment and song’s brevity, just over one minute, contribute to this experience of simple pleasure.

Then we come to *Erleuchtung*, as deep and painful a reflection on life’s meaning as ever articulated. The first stanza pretty much sums it up:

In unermesslich tiefen Stunden
Hast du, in ahnungsvollem Schmerz,
Den Geist des Weltalls nie empfunden,
Der niederflamte in dein Herz?

In immeasurably deep hours,
Have you never felt, with ominous pain,
The spirit of the universe
Burning in your heart?

Of course mortality, *Sterblichkeit*, literally translated as the ability to die, also appears as a main theme (leave it to the nineteenth-century Germans to cheer us up). Thankfully, there is a glimmer of hope later on, “ein leuchtend Bild der Welt” (a bright image of the world), that counterbalances our doom. The musical language of *Erleuchtung* — the changing meters, chromatic mediant harmonies, and octatonic scale — transcends nineteenth-century norms, pointing more toward early twentieth-century compositional techniques. But *fin de siècle* angst and existential dread existed in both centuries and are surely just as relevant in 2018. *Erleuchtung* speaks to all people of all eras.

As with Schumann’s setting of *Nachtlied*, I am glad I was ignorant of Johannes Brahms’ setting of Hebbel’s poem *Abendgefühl* when I wrote my own version. Brahms renamed the poem *Abendlied* and it became the third song in his Op. 92 set for SATB choir and piano. His genius would have surely obstructed my initiative. My setting is slightly more intimate and less bouncily happy than Brahms’ rendition.

Abendgefühl is a fitting close to the set. There is an assuaging quality to the music that relieves

Preface

any anxiety lingering from the previous song. One of nature's most beautiful moments, dusk, is the first image described in the poem. Night and day are "peacefully" at war ("friedlich bekämpfen") but, unlike the natural images in *Herbstbild*, these earthly phenomena become metaphors for the human emotions of joy and sorrow. Ultimately,

both lead to the peace of sleep and life seems like a lullaby ("Schlummerlied").

So these *Hebbel Lieder* begin with a lullaby and end with a lullaby. Happy sleeping!

John Salmon
30 June 2018

The Poems

Nachtlied

Quellende, schwellende Nacht,
Voll von Lichtern und Sternen:
In den ewigen Fernen,
Sage, was ist da erwacht!

Herz in der Brust wird beengt,
Steigendes, neigendes Leben,
Riesenhaft fühle ich's weben,
Welches das meine verdrängt.

Schlaf, da nahst du dich leis,
Wie dem Kinde die Amme,
Und um die dürftige Flamme
Ziehst du den schützenden Kreis.

— *Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863)*

Herbstbild

Dies ist ein Herbsttag, wie ich keinen sah!
Die Luft ist still, als atmete man kaum,
Und dennoch fallen raschelnd, fern und nah,
Die schönsten Früchte ab, von jedem Baum.

O stört sie nicht, die Feier der Natur!
Dies ist die Lese, die sie selber hält,
Denn heute löst sich von den Zweigen nur,
Was vor dem milden Strahl der Sonne fällt.

— *Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863)*

Night Song

The flowing and growing night,
Full of lights and stars:
In the endless distance,
Tell me, what has awakened there?

My heart feels cramped in my chest;
I feel the ebb and flow of life,
Weaving gigantically through my soul,
Ultimately crushing it.

Sleep, you come gently,
As the nursemaid to the child,
And around this small flame
You create a protective circle.

Picture of Autumn

This is an autumn day as I have never seen before!
The air is still, as if one were barely breathing,
And yet, far and near, the most beautiful fruits
Are falling with a rustle from every tree.

Do not disturb this celebration of Nature!
This is the harvest that she alone gathers;
For today the only things leaving the branches
Are those touched by the mild sunrays.

Erleuchtung

In unermesslich tiefen Stunden
Hast du, in ahnungsvollem Schmerz,
Den Geist des Weltalls nie empfunden,
Der niederflammte in dein Herz?

Jedwedes Dasein zu ergänzen
Durch ein Gefühl, das ihn umfaßt,
Schließt er sich in die engen Grenzen
Der Sterblichkeit als reichster Gast.

Da tust du in die dunkeln Risse
Des Unerforschten einen Blick
Und nimmst in deine Finsternisse
Ein leuchtend Bild der Welt zurück;

Du trinkst das allgemeinste Leben,
Nicht mehr den Tropfen, der dir floß,
Und ins Unendliche verschweben
Kann leicht, wer es im Ich genoß.

— *Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863)*

Abendgefühl

Friedlich bekämpfen
Nacht sich und Tag.
Wie das zu dämpfen,
Wie das zu lösen vermag!

Der mich bedrückte,
Schläfst du schon, Schmerz?
Was mich beglückte
Sage, was war's doch, mein Herz?

Freude wie Kummer,
Fühl' ich, zerrann,
Aber den Schlummer
Führten sie leise heran.

Und im Entschweben,
Immer empor,
Kommt mir das Leben
Ganz, wie ein Schlummerlied vor.

— *Friedrich Hebbel (1813–1863)*

Enlightenment

In immeasurably deep hours
Have you, with ominous pain,
Never felt the spirit of the universe
Burning in your heart?

Fulfilling every being
With a feeling that embraces us,
Closing in within the narrow limits
Of mortality as the richest guest.

There, in the dark cracks of the unexplored,
You catch a glimpse
And in your darkness you take back
A bright image of the world;

You drink the most common life
No longer the drop which flowed to you,
And hover about in infinity,
Easily enjoying it in the I.

Evening Feeling

Night is fighting peacefully
With day.
How can we soften
Or solve that?

That which oppressed me,
Are you already sleeping, Pain?
That which filled me with joy,
Tell me, what was it, my heart?

Happiness, like sorrow,
Has melted away,
But they have both led
Gently to slumber.

And as I float upward
Ever upward,
Life seems to me
Just like a lullaby.

Nachtlied

TEXT

Friedrich Hebbel, 1836
(1813–1863)

MUSIC

John Salmon

Andante (♩ = 120)

Baritone

Piano

p legato

con ped. *ped.*

4 *p legato* *poco cresc.*

Quel-len - de, schwel-len - de Nacht, Voll__ von Licht - ern und Ster - nen:

poco cresc.

8 *p* *pp*

In den e - wig-en Fer - nen, Sag', was ist da er - wacht?

p *p*

Nachtlied

12 *poco cresc.*

Herz in der Brust wird be -engt, Stei -gen - des,

16 *mf* *decresc.*

nei - gen -des Le - ben, Rie - sen -haft füh - le füh - le ich's, füh - le ich's

19

we - ben, Wel - ches das mei - ne ver -

23

- drängt.

loco

Nachtlied

27

mp

Schlaf, — da nahst du dich leis', Wie — dem

31

Kin - de die Am - me, Und um die dürf - ti - ge Flam - me

dolce

8va

35

Ziehst du, Ziehst du den schütz - en - den Kreis,

8va

teneramento

loco *loco*

38

den schütz - en - den Kreis.

8va

ppp
loco

8vb

Herbstbild

TEXT

Friedrich Hebbel, 1852
(1813–1863)

MUSIC

John Salmon

Allegro con brio (♩ = 72)

Baritone

Piano

f

con ped.

2

f

Die ist ein Herbst - - - tag,

3

wie ich kei - nen sah!

4

sub. pp

Die Luft ist still, als

sub. pp

Herbstbild

5

at - me - te man kaum,

6

f *cresc.*
Und den - noch fal - len rasch - elnd, fern und

7

nah, Die schön - sten

8

cresc.
Früch - te ab _____ von je - - - dem

9

ff
Baum. *cantando*

Herbstbild

10

Musical notation for measures 10-11. The system consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a more active melody in the right hand. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

11

p

O stört sie nicht, die

Musical notation for measures 11-12. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "O stört sie nicht, die". The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present at the start of the piano part.

12

Fei - - - er der Na - tur!

Musical notation for measures 12-13. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "Fei - - - er der Na - tur!". The piano accompaniment maintains the eighth-note accompaniment.

13

Dies ist die Le - - - se,

Musical notation for measures 13-14. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "Dies ist die Le - - - se,". The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note accompaniment.

14

die sie sel - ber hält,

Musical notation for measures 14-15. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "die sie sel - ber hält,". The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note accompaniment.

Herbstbild

15

Denn heu te löst sich von den Zwei gen

This system contains measures 15 and 16. The vocal line is in bass clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 7/8 time signature. The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs with the same key signature. The lyrics are: "Denn heu te löst sich von den Zwei gen".

16

nur, Was vor dem mil - den

This system contains measures 16 and 17. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "nur, Was vor dem mil - den". The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic pattern.

17

mf cresc. (colla parte) Strahl der Son - - - ne

mf cresc. *8va* *loco*

exultando *loco* *8vb*

This system contains measures 17 and 18. The vocal line has a long note for "Strahl" and a phrase "(colla parte)" above it. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with arpeggiated figures and dynamic markings: *mf cresc.*, *exultando*, *loco*, and *8vb*. Measure numbers 15, 19, and 23 are indicated in the piano part.

18

ff fällt.

cresc. *ff* *loco* *p*

This system contains measures 18 and 19. The vocal line has a long note for "fällt." with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with arpeggiated figures and dynamic markings: *cresc.*, *ff*, *loco*, and *p*.

Erleuchtung

TEXT

Friedrich Hebbel
(1813–1863)

MUSIC

John Salmon

Andante (♩ = 100) *p*

Baritone

Piano

In un - er - meß - lich tief - en Stun -

5 - den Hast du, in ah - nungs - voll - em Schmerz, _____ Den

8 Geist _____ des Welt - alls

11 nie emp - fun - den, Der nie - der - flamm - te in dein Herz?

8^{vb} loco

Erleuchtung

15

Jed-wed-es Da-sein zu er-gänz-en Durch ein Ge-fühl, das ihn um-faßt,

The musical score for measures 15-19 features a vocal line in the bass clef and a piano accompaniment in the grand staff. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 6/4. The lyrics are: "Jed-wed-es Da-sein zu er-gänz-en Durch ein Ge-fühl, das ihn um-faßt,"

20

Schließt er sich in die en-gen Gren-zen Der Sterb-lich-keit als reichs-ter

The musical score for measures 20-22 continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Schließt er sich in die en-gen Gren-zen Der Sterb-lich-keit als reichs-ter". The time signature changes to 7/4 in measure 21 and back to 6/4 in measure 22.

23

ossia
Gast.

The musical score for measures 23-25 includes an ossia section. The lyrics "ossia" and "Gast." are written above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment features trills (tr) in measures 24 and 25. The time signature is 6/4.

26

Da tust du in die

The musical score for measures 26-28 continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "Da tust du in die". The piano accompaniment features trills (tr) in measure 26 and a dense chordal texture in measures 27 and 28. The time signature is 6/4.

Erleuchtung

28 *p accel.*

dun - keln Ris - - - se Des Un - er - forsch - ten ei - nen

accel.

6/4

30 *cre* *scen*

Blick Und nimmst in dei - ne Fin - ster - nisse Ein

tr *cre* *tr* *scen*

6/4

33 *do* *ff*

leuch - tend Bild der Welt zu -

do *ff* *loco*

6/4

36 *decresc. molto rit.* **Tempo Primo** *mp*

- rück; Du trinkst das all - ge -

molto rit. *mp*

6/4

Erleuchtung

39

mein - ste Le - ben, Nicht mehr den Trop - fen,

42

der dir floss, Und ins Un_____ end - li - che

46

senza precipitare

ver - schwe_____ ben Kann leicht, wer es

poco a poco ritardando

49

(poco a poco ritardando)

im Ich_____ ge - noss.

(poco a poco ritardando)

pp

Abendgefühl

TEXT

Friedrich Hebbel
(1813–1863)

MUSIC

John Salmon

Lento (♩ = 60)

Baritone

Piano

p legato, dolce

con ped.

6

poco rit.

a tempo
p legato poco cresc.

Fried - - - lich be - kämp - fen

poco rit.

a tempo

p

Leg. *Leg.* *simile*

11

Nacht sich und Tag. Wie das zu

Abendgefühl

16 *cresc.*
dämp - fen, Wie das zu lös - en ver - mag!

21 *subito p*
Der mich be - drück - te, Schläfst du schon,

25 *cresc.* *f*
Schmerz? Was mich be - glück - te, Sa - ge,

29 *decresc.* *poco rit.*
was war's doch, mein Herz?

Abendgefühl

33 *a tempo*

p

38 *p*

Freu - - - de wie Kum - mer,

43

Fühl' ich, zer - rann,

espressivo

48 *poco cresc.* *f*

Ab - er den Schlum - mer Führ - ten sie lei - se her -

poco cresc. *f*

Abendgefühl

52 *poco rit.*

- an.

decresc.

pp

poco rit.

55 *a tempo*
pp

Und im Ent - schweb - en, Im - mer em - por, Kommt mir das

a tempo

poco cresc.

poco cresc.

60

Le - ben Ganz wie ein Schlum - mer - lied

espr.

rit.

rit.

64 *a tempo*

vor.

a tempo

68

rit.

p

pp