



Introduction

The 48 lieder contained here are only a sampling of the wonderful world of German art songs. I hope that this book is a *Gateway to German Lieder* in the sense of giving access to a realm of imagination and expression created by some of the greatest composers ever known.

This book brings together various kinds of information that would otherwise require research in various books. The commentary pages that precede the songs will help the singer especially with the preparatory steps that should precede actual singing: translating the text, analyzing its meaning, reciting it with correct and expressive diction, and researching the relevant historical background. The goal is artistic communication with an audience, based on the singer's clear understanding of the message and meaning of the song.

German tempo and style markings are translated on the pages where they are used. Tempos in Romantic style are never absolute and never metronomic, but metronome markings are provided as a starting point. Where the composer did not give a metronome marking, I have given one in a footnote, clearly designated as a suggestion and marked with "ca." to indicate that it is approximate at best.

Composers seldom provided full instructions for phrasing and breathing. Aside from breathing at rests, most songs contain situations where the singer must cut a note short in order to breathe and begin the next phrase on time. We must take in air for physical reasons, but from the singer's point of view it is even more important to make the poem and the musical line clear and expressive, in other words, to articulate the musical line.

Some written punctuation signs stand for breaths but others do not. One must read the poem aloud to sense the differentiation. I have inserted two kinds of phrase markings above the vocal line:

- 1) V, where the musical line must be interrupted in order to articulate the text correctly;
- 2) ♪, where a breath may be taken if it is needed for physical comfort.

Most of the songs contained here were thoroughly researched when they appeared in editions of great composers' complete works in the late 1800s. Many such editions were published by Breitkopf und Haertel in Leipzig and are available in modern reprints in major libraries. In view of this, I did not feel that it was necessary for me to travel to see all of the manuscripts and first editions that are listed in this book as "Sources." The same is true of the listed sources of poems, which are either the first editions or later editions that I have been able to consult or both. Many poems were published in periodicals before they appeared in books; only a few of these sources were available to me.

As we prepare to interpret these beautiful songs for our audiences, our two best guides are accurate information, such as described above, and our own honest musical impulses. Some singers believe that there is a "tradition" of performance that they must learn, but this is only partly true. A comparison of recordings made of any particular song by German singers since 1900 will reveal that performance styles have changed considerably with the generations. Furthermore, great singers have always put their individual stamp onto whatever they sang.



Most students benefit from listening to recordings made by established artists, but some recorded performances contain interpretive effects, even distortions, that are effective only when done by the particular artist who originated them. The best safeguard against this problem is to listen to multiple recordings of the same songs, not accepting any one recording as a final authority. By hearing several interpretations, the singer is set free to discover a personal one that is not an imitation of another singer.

Coordinated with this book are two CDs containing all of the piano accompaniments, artistically recorded by Joan Thompson, pianist, under my close supervision. We aimed to record the accompaniments both expressively and faithfully to the composers' wishes. We tried to avoid expressive choices that would mislead a singer to adopt any extremes of interpretation.

The biographical notes about composers include references to books that contain enlightening information about those individuals. In addition, several books contain invaluable information about many composers and their lieder. To the singer who wants to research other songs, I recommend these books and acknowledge my indebtedness to them:

Singer and Accompanist: The Performance of Fifty Songs by Gerald Moore. New York: Macmillan, 1954.

The Ring of Words by Philip L. Miller. Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.

The German Lied and Its Poetry by Elaine Brody and Robert A. Fowkes. New York: New York University, 1971.

Reclams Liedführer by Werner Oehlmann. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1973.

The Nineteenth-Century German Lied by Lorraine Gorrell. Portland: Amadeus, 1993.

Poetry into Song: Performance and Analysis of Lieder by Deborah Stein and Robert Spillman. Oxford: Oxford University, 1996.

Few authors can say that they write a book alone. I gratefully acknowledge constant support, encouragement and editorial contributions from Joan Thompson, my wife. Dr. Ann Paton, my sister, also made valuable suggestions. Among the talented professionals at the Alfred Publishing Company, I would like to acknowledge editorial assistance from Sonya Sardon, as well as the skillful engraving by Greg Plumblee, masterful layout design by Bruce Goldes, and art direction by Holly Fraser.

If this *Gateway* is successful, it will awaken young singers' curiosity and provide some of the necessary tools to explore more songs in German, for instance: pre-Romantic songs by Albert, Haydn, Schulz, Mozart and Zelter; other Romantic composers, including Wagner; and post-Romantic songs by Mahler, Reger, Pfitzner, Hindemith and Reutter. The rewards will be great.

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Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur

[die ɛ:rə ɡɔtəs aɔs der natʊ:r]

Nature's Praise of God

- die himməl rʏ:mən dəs ɛ:vɪɡən ɛ:rə
1. Die Himmel rühmen des Ewigen Ehre,
 The heavens extol the Eternal-One's honor;
- i:r ʃal pflantst zæ:nən nɑ:mən fɔrt
2. Ihr Schall pflanzt seinen Namen fort.
 their loud-sound communicates his name [forwards].
- i:n rʏmt der ɛ:rtkraes, i:n præzən di me:rə
3. Ihn rühmt der Erdkreis, ihn preisen die Meere;
 Him extols the earth-round, him praise the seas;
- fɛrnɪm o mɛnʃ i:r ɡœtliç vɔrt
4. Vernimm, o Mensch, ihr göttlich Wort!
 hear, o human, their divine word!
- ve:r trækt der himməl ʊntzɛ:lba:rə ʃtɛrnə
5. Wer trägt der Himmel unzählbare Sterne?
 Who carries the heavens' uncountable stars?
- ve:r fy:rt di zɔnn aɔs i:rəm tɛlt
6. Wer führt die Sonn' aus ihrem Zelt?
 Who leads the sun from its tent?
- zi: kɔmt ʊnt lɔçtət ʊnt laxt ʊns fɔn fɛrnə
7. Sie kommt und leuchtet und lacht uns von ferne,
 It comes and shines and laughs to-us from far-away.
- ʊnt lɔft den ve:k glæç als aen helt
8. Und läuft den Weg, gleich als ein Held.
 and runs the way same as a hero.

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–1769)
 [krɪstʲan fʏrçtəɡɔt ɡɛlɔrt]

Poetic Background

"May all humankind perceive the greatness of God as Nature shows it." A word for word translation of Gellert's title is "The Honor of God from the Nature." The initial image comes from Psalm 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork" (King James Version). Later the psalm says that "the sun. . . rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race."

Beethoven set six of Gellert's odes to music, and even more were composed by Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach and Johann Adam Hiller. This poem, the most famous of Gellert's odes, consisted of six four-line stanzas; the song uses only the first two. The odd numbered lines have eleven syllables each, the alternating lines, eight.

Line 2: *fortpflanzen* (literally, to plant forth) has several meanings including "to communicate."

Line 3: *Erdkreis* (literally, earth circle) means "the whole round earth."

Line 4: *Vernimm* comes from *vernehmen* (to hear).

Line 6: *Zelt* conveys two images: "dwelling" (in the Bible "tent" is often synonymous with "home") and "canopy." In German poetry the sky is often referred to as a *Zelt*.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
 [lu:tviç van bɛrtho:fən]

Musical Background

Beethoven's non-creedal religion was based in Nature and in ethics. His Gellert songs were not written for liturgical worship services, but for amateur singers at home. They were a memorial to Countess Anna Margarete von Browne, who with her husband had been Beethoven's strong financial supporter. She died unexpectedly on May 15, 1803; these songs were published about three months later.

The style indication is *Majestätisch und erhaben* (majestic and solemn, or sublime). The time signature is *alla breve*, two beats to a measure, and the tempo must not drag. The song demands long phrases; if possible, the first line of verse should be sung with a single breath.

Like most lieder composers, Beethoven expected singers to follow the dynamics in the piano part. Both performers must understand that *fortissimo* means "very strong." If they take it to mean "as loud as possible," the result will be too harsh. As the voice enters, the dynamic drops to the same *forte* level as will be

used for the second phrase, "*Ihr Schall. . .*" The piano must be subordinate to the voice, especially when doubling the same notes. As always in Classical style, use of the pedal should be minimal, but pedal use may be implied by the *portato* articulation from m19 and at least through m26.

This song is not long, but Beethoven filled it with grandeur and with surprises. Just after a wide leap in m4, a *diminuendo* leads to an awesome hush on the word *Ehre*. Modulations beginning in m11 depict the way the poet admires the earth, sea and starry sky in turn. As the tonic key returns in m29, the sun rises and fills the sky with God's light.

The power of Beethoven's music has made this a concert favorite in arrangements for mixed or male choruses.

Sources

Text: *Geistliche Oden und Lieder*, 1757. This version: *Gellert's Dichtungen*. Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1891.

Music, autograph lost. First edition: *Sechs Lieder von Gellert*, Opus 48, No. 4. Vienna: Artaria, August, 1803. Dedication to Count von Browne. Original key: C.

Die Ehre Gottes aus der Natur

C. F. Gellert

Ludwig van Beethoven

(Range: C4 – G5)

Majestätisch und erhaben ^(a)

Die Him - mel rüh - men des E - wi - gen Eh - re, ihr

Schall pflanzt sei - nen Na - men — fort. Ihn rühmt der Erd - kreis, ihn

prei - sen die Mee - re; ver - nimm, o Mensch, ihr gött - lich Wort!

(a) “Majestic and solemn.” *Majestätisch*, or in Italian *maestoso*, is a tempo between *moderato* and *allegro*, according to Muzio Clementi, *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Pianoforte* (London: Clementi et al., 1801, p. 13; reprint by Da Capo Press, 1974). Suggestion: ♩ = ca. 66 M.M.

(b) The three grace notes are played quickly, beginning on the downbeat, that is, simultaneously with the lower notes of the chord (Clementi, *op. cit.*, page 10).

Translation: The heavens extol God’s honor; their sound communicates his name. The whole earth extols him and the seas praise him; hear, o mankind, their divine word!