

Notes on the program

Liebeslieder Waltzer By David Brodbeck

Brahms's *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Op 52, play an integral role in a kind of "Schubert project" that occupied the composer during his first decade in Vienna. Brahms edited a number of Schubert's unpublished compositions at this time, including, among other works, one book of 12 *Ländler* in 1864 (D. 790) and a second of 20 *Ländler* in May 1869 (D. 366 and 814). To each he quickly responded with a cycle of his own making—the Op. 39 Waltzes in January 1865 and the Op. 52 *Liebeslieder* (marked, tellingly, "Im Ländler-Tempo") in August 1869.

For all their Schubertian background, however, the vocal waltzes reflect a more contemporary source of influence as well. From time to time Brahms drew inspiration from the Waltz King himself, Johann Strauss Jr. Thus, "Am Donaustrande, da steht ein Haus," Op. 52, No. 9, seems indebted to the beloved "Blue Danube" Waltz, not only for its essential imagery, but perhaps for certain musical details as well.

Brahms conceived of the *Liebeslieder* as pieces of genuine *Hausmusik*—he described them as such when sending the manuscript of the first book to his publisher Simrock in the summer of 1869. The texts of the *Liebeslieder* are East European folk poems in translations by Georg Friedrich Daumer. As we might expect, Brahms's settings are hardly the "trifles" described by their self-effacing composer in a note to his publisher. True, the first piece ("Rede, Mädchen") begins simply, with "oom-pah-pah" vamping. But the music rapidly becomes more sophisticated, as Brahms eschews literal repetition—a hallmark of popular Music—in favor of continual variation. Most striking, perhaps, is the return of the original tune in free inversion twice later in the piece, with corresponding changes in the counterpoint of the accompaniment. The first waltz thus contains within itself a striking contrast between popular and art music, and throughout the rest of the work these opposing forces are played out with a sure hand.

The *Liebeslieder Walzer*, in short, are quintessential Brahms. Though their charm may derive in part from the contrast in which they stand to his work as a whole, their eternal freshness stems from technique refined in larger forms. As Ernest Newman, the British critic and Wagner biographer put it, "had Brahms never been stretched to the tension of such works as the C-minor Symphony and the Requiem, he could never have relaxed to the charm of the waltzes." This image tells a familiar story—of an uncompromising composer who brought the highest artistic sensibilities to every expression of his muse.

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Catulli Carmina By Joan O'Connor

In 1941, when Orff was searching for a companion work for *Carmina Burana*, he returned to his 1930 Catulli choral works. The "Odi et Amo" (Love and Hate) poems by Gaius Valerius Catullus (c. 84-54 B.C.) expressed invigorating, enchanting, and impulsive thoughts. For the stage work *Catulli Carmina*, subtitled *Ludi scaenici* (Plays of the Stage), the poems were dramatized and expanded with solo parts added for Catullus and Lesbia.

In the outer play of this *Rahmenspiel* (a play within a play), young boys and girls proclaim the joys of love. The old men ridicule this notion stating that love is full of sorrows; to prove this they suggest looking at the story of Catullus (Catulli Carmina), the inner play. (Act 1) Catullus loves a beautiful, married patrician named Clodia. He cannot openly declare his love for her, so he sends her subtle poems addressed to "Lesbia." Encouraged by Clodia, he declares his love to her and she responds. He falls asleep in her arms and she leaves him to dance at the inn. (Act 2) Catullus dreams of a tender moment with Lesbia

when he suddenly realizes that Lesbia is with his friend Caelus. (Act 3) Catullus sees his acquaintances Ipsitilla and Aemeana but searches among the other prostitutes for Lesbia. She is with Caelus but rushes to Catullus who rejects her and finds solace in his memories. The young and old spectators are confident that they have proven their opposing viewpoints—the old with cynicism, the young with affirmation.

Both outer movements begin with: "Eis aiona, tui sum" (In eternity, I am yours). Praelusio and Exodium are sung by young and old accompanied by the orchestra of percussionists and pianists. The instruments function symbolically: when the old men laugh derisively the maracas create a hissing effect, when the old men sing "Nihil durare" (Nothing lasts) *pp* glissandos on tenor xylophones represent emptiness. The old men ridicule the young people by mimicking "Eis aiona" at the end of the Praelusio and by applauding at the end of the first and second acts. Occasionally a solo "gridando" yells some despairing remark.

The unaccompanied inner play also repeats an opening chorus for the first and third acts: "Odi et amo" (I love and hate). This consonant choral section adds a dissonance on the word "excrucior" (torture) expressing the sorrow and the hate of Catullus. When Lesbia dances at the inn the women's voices sing "lalera-la-la-la" while Catullus deludes himself: "Nulli se dicit mulier..." (No one would she rather marry than me). The sopranos sing a lovely melodic phrase "Jucundum, mea vita" (You declare my life) preceding Lesbia's lullaby to Catullus "Dormi ancora" (Sleep still).

Following its premiere in Leipzig 6 Nov. 1943, the critic K.H. Ruppel reported in the *Kölnische Zeitung* that the audience experienced the same overflowing vitality that they found in *Carmina Burana*. In 1950-51 Orff wrote *Trionfo di Afrodite* to complete this "trittico teatrale" (theatrical triptych). *Trionfi* premiered in 1953 at La Scala.

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A note about the scoring of Catulli Carmina:

The original battery of Percussion is preserved in this performance, with a comprehensive two piano arrangement of the original four piano score (minus doublings) prepared by Paul Flight.