

Notes, Texts, and Translations

I

Four Songs for Voice and Violin, opus 35

Gustav Holst
(1874-1934)

Gustav Holst possessed a different concept of modality than his English contemporaries, and used frequent parallel fourths and fifths, subtle polytonality, and shifting time signatures. Holst's friend, Ralph Vaughn Williams, introduced him to folk songs and plainsong. The modality and word rhythm found in these genres were carried into his *Four Songs for Voice and Violin*, composed in 1916 and 1917. The immediate inspiration was a woman he heard singing a wordless song while playing her violin after worship one Sunday. Using poems from *A Medieval Anthology*, Holst set out to create "a tune at one with the words."

The four songs are harmonically sparse, with the vocal line accompanied only by violin. All of the songs are unmetred, allowing for focus on the natural rhythm of the words. Songs I, III, and IV also display a mode change in the penultimate idea before ending in a minor mode. This shift highlights the text and reflects Holst's individual tonal idiom.

I.

Jesu Sweet, now will I sing
to thee a song of love longing;
do in my heart a quick well spring
thee to love above all thing.

Jesu Sweet, my dim heart's gleam
brighter than the sunne beam!
As thou wert born in Bethlehem
make in me thy love dream.

Jesu Sweet, my dark heart's light
thou art day withouten night;
give me strength and eke might
for to loven thee aright.

eke = also

Jesu Sweet, well may he be
that in thy bliss thyself shall see:
with love cords then draw thou me
that I may come and dwell with thee.

II.

My soul has nought but fire and ice
and my body earth and wood:
pray we all the Most High King
who is the Lord of our last doom,
that he should give us just one thing—
that we may do his will.

III.

I sing of a maiden that matchless is.
King of all Kings was her son iwis.
He came all so still where his mother was
as dew in April that falleth on grass:
he came all so still to his mother's bower
as dew in April that falleth on flower:
he came all so still where his mother lay
as dew in April that falleth on spray.
Mother and maiden was ne'er none but she:
well may such a lady God's mother be.

iwis = certainly

IV.

My Leman is so true of love and full steadfast
yet seemeth ever new. His love is on us cast.
I would that all him knew and loved him firm and fast,
they never would it rue but happy be at last.

Leman = lover, in this case, Christ

He lovingly abides although I stay full long;
he will me never chide although I choose the wrong.
He says "Behold my side and why on Rood I hung;
for my love leave thy pride and I thee underfong."

rood = cross
underfong = take back

I'll dwell with thee believe, Leman, under thy tree.
May no pain e'er me grieve nor make me from thee flee.
I will in at thy sleeve all in thine heart to be;
mine heart shall burst and cleave ere untrue thou me see.

II

from *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht*, BWV 211
Ei, wie schmeckt der Kaffee süsse

J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

It is often said that Johann Sebastian Bach composed in every genre of his day, other than opera. However, some of his cantatas might be described as one-act operas. *Schweigt stille, plaudert nicht* is one such composition. Also known as the Coffee Cantata, it is a secular work written in response to the coffee prohibition in Germany at the time. The two extreme stances on drinking coffee are represented by Lieschen, a young woman who drinks three cups of coffee each day, and her father Schlendrian (literally, "stick in the mud"), who disapproves of her habit.

Christian Friederich Henrici (1700-1764) wrote many librettos for Bach's church cantatas under the penname Picander. This cantata is strikingly different in content from his usual fare. It is, in effect, a one-act comic opera and was premiered in the local coffee house in Leipzig, performed by the *Collegium Musicum*. This aria introduces Lieschen, who expresses her ardent love for coffee above all else.

Ei! wie schmeckt der Kaffee süsse,
lieblicher als tausend Küsse,
milder als Muskatelwein.
Kaffee, Kaffee muss ich haben,
und wenn jemand mich will laben,
ach, so schenkt mir Kaffee ein!

Ah! How sweet coffee tastes!
Lovelier than a thousand kisses,
smoother than muscatel wine.
Coffee, I must have coffee,
and if anyone wants to give me a treat,
ah!, just give me some coffee!

–translation by Francis Browne

III

Wiegenlied im Sommer, 6L, 4
Wiegenlied im Winter, 6L, 5
Du milchjunger Knabe, K3

Hugo Wolf
(1860-1903)

Austrian composer Hugo Wolf is best known for his *Lieder*, which expanded the chromaticism and tonal range of German song. He was influenced by Schubert and Schumann, as well as by opera composer Richard Wagner. The blend of these influences, combined with Wolf's profound understanding and love of poetry, set his *Lieder* apart from those of other composers of his time.

Wolf was known for devoting himself to setting the works of one poet or source at a time. Prominent among these were Goethe, Eichendorff, and Mörike. Early in his career he set six poems by Robert Reinick, whose works Schumann set frequently. Known as a painter, Reinick (1805-1852) created literary works primarily for children, as reflected in these lullabies. "Wiegenlied im Sommer" is strophic, with a lyrical melody and gentle chromaticism that highlight the simplicity of the text. "Wiegenlied im Winter" is a similarly tender tune paired with images in the accompaniment that depict a winter wind promised to be gone by springtime.

Wiegenlied im Sommer

Vom Berg hinabgestiegen
ist nun des Tages Rest;
mein Kind liegt in der Wiegen,
die Vögel all' im Nest,
nu rein ganz klein Singvögelein
ruft weit daher im Dämmerchein:
"Gut' Nacht! Gut' Nacht!
Lieb' Kindlein, gute Nacht!"

Down from the mountain
steals the day's end
my child lies in the cradle,
the little birds are nesting,
one little songbird only
sings in the twilight:
"Good night! Good night!
My dear child, good night!"

Die Wiege geht im Gleise,
die Uhr tick thin und her,
die Fliegen nur ganz liese
sie summen noch daher.
Ihr Fliegen, lasst mein Kind in Ruh!
Was summt ihr ihm so Heimlich zu?
"Gut' Nacht! Gut' Nacht!
Lieb' Kindlein gute Nacht!"

The cradle rocks on its rail,
the clock ticks back and forth,
the flies still buzz,
softly in the distance.
You flies, leave my child in peace!
Why come buzzing into his room?
"Good night! Good night!
My dear child, good night!"

Der Vogel und die Sterne
und alle rings umher,
sie haben mein Kind so gerne,
die Engel noch viel mehr.
Sie decken's mit den Flügeln zu
und singen leise: Schlaf' in Ruh!
Gut' Nacht! Gut' Nacht!
Lieb' Kindlein, gute Nacht!

The bird and the stars
and all who are all about,
surely love my child,
the angels even more.
They shield him with their wings
and softly sing "Sleep in peace!"
"Good night! Good night!"
My dear child, good night!"

—translation by Emily Ezust

Wiegenlied im Winter

Schlaf' ein, mein süßes Kind,
da draßen geht der Wind,
er pocht ans Fenster und schaut hinein,
und hört er wo ein Kind-lein schrei'n,
da schilt und summt und brummt er sehr,
holt gleich sein Bett voll Schnee daher
und deckt es auf die Wiegen,
wenn's Kind nicht still will liegen.

Go to sleep, my sweet child;
outside the wind is blowing;
it knocks at the window and looks in,
and if it hears a little child crying somewhere,
then it will scold and growl and grumble a lot,
right away bring its own bed of snow here,
and dump it on the cradle,
if the child won't lie there quietly.

Schlaf' ein, mein süßes Kind,
da draussen geht der Wind,
er rüttelt an dem Tannenbaum,
da fliegt heraus ein schooner Traum,
der fliegt durch Schnee und Nacht und Wind
geschwind, geschwind zum lieben Kind
und singt von Licht und Kränzen,
die bald am Christbaum glänzen.

Go to sleep, my sweet child;
outside the wind is blowing;
it shakes at the fir-tree,
then flies out a lovely dream,
which flies through snow and night and wind
quickly, quickly to the dear child
and sings of lights and garlands
that will soon be on the Christmas tree.

Schlaf' ein, mein süßes Kind,
da draussen bläst der Wind,
doch die Sonne" "Grüss euch Gott!"
bläst er dem Kind die Backen rot,
und sagt der Frühling: "Guten Tag!"
bläst er die ganze Erde wach,
und was erst still gelegen,
springt lustig allerwegen.

Go to sleep, my sweet child;
outside the wind is blowing;
but it will blow my child's cheeks red
when the sun calls: "God greet you!"
and it will blow the whole earth awake
when the spring says: "Good day!"
and whatever has lain quietly till then
will leap up merrily, everywhere.

—translation by Beaumont Glass

Du milchjunger Knabe, K3

This song was written later in Wolf's life and demonstrates increasing chromaticism and tonal ambiguity. It features a text by Swiss poet Gottfried Keller (1819-1890) and differs significantly from the setting by Brahms. Again, Wolf's music reflects the text: The complex chromaticism echoes the woman's mocking rebuke of the young man who dares to look at her.

Du milchjunger Knabe,
wie siehst du mich an?
was haben deine Augen
für eine Frage getan!

Alle Ratsherrn in der Stadt
und alle Weisen der Welt
bleiben stumm auf die Frage,
die deine Augen gestellt!

Ein leeres Schneckhäusel,
schau, liegt dort im Gras;
da halte dein Ohr, dran,
drin brümmelt dir was!

You baby-faced boy,
how are you looking at me?
What a question
your eyes have asked!

All the councilors in the town,
and all the wise men of the world
remain mute at the question
that your eyes have asked!

An empty snail-shell
– look! – is lying there in the grass;
hold it next to your ear,
inside, something will murmur a message for you!

–translation by Beaumont Glass

IV

from *Eraclea*

Deh, più à me non v'ascondete

**Giovanni Bononcini
(1670-1747)**

Giovanni Bononcini is known for brief *da capo* arias characterized by great expression and text painting. His early works, in particular, highlight his skill with *basso continuo*. Bononcini's success began when he moved to Rome in 1691 and began working with librettist Silvio Stampaglia. Stampaglia (1664-1747) was from the *Accademia dell'Arcadia*, and his pastoral, sighing themes worked well with Bononcini's expressive musical ideas.

This aria comes from *Eraclea*, an opera about the kidnapping of the Sabine women by the early Romans. The composer and librettist of the original work in 1674 had been Antonio Draghi and Nicolò Minato. When the work was revived in Rome in 1692, the producers decided more arias were needed. Bononcini and Stampaglia provided these.

In this scene Mirena, one of the abducted women, searches for her husband, who has come in disguise to rescue her. She thinks she recognizes him, but cannot be sure, and longs for him to make himself known and restore her happiness.

Deh, più à me non v'ascondete
luci vaghe del mio sol.
Con svelarvi, se voi siete,
voi potete
trar quest'alma fuor di duol.

Hide yourself from me no longer,
elusive light of my sun.
By revealing yourself,
if you please,
you could bring this soul out of sorrow.

– translation by Paul J.
Everett

from *Messiah*, HWV 56
Thou art gone up on high

George Frederic Handel
(1685-1759)

Messiah is Handel's best-known choral work. It uses only biblical texts, which were compiled by librettist and friend Charles Jennens. Jennens (1700-1773), a wealthy literary scholar and editor by trade, published all his librettos anonymously and at no charge. He conceived the idea for *Messiah*, originally titled "A Sacred Oratorio," and asked Handel to set the text. Handel completed the work in 24 days, which frustrated Jennens, who felt Handel had not spent enough time on the work.

"Thou art gone up on high" is from the second of the work's three parts. It is often omitted in an effort to shorten the work for modern performance. Its hemiolas and chromatic alterations are similar to the style of Bach. The form is rounded binary, with many alterations in the return of A. The text from Psalm 68:18 is placed in the libretto immediately after Jesus has ascended into Heaven.

Thou art gone up on high,
thou hast led captivity captive,
and received gifts for men:
yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among them.

V

La courte paille, FP 178

Frances Poulenc
(1899-1963)

Poulenc was largely a self-taught composer, who attributed his style to his heritage. French music critic Claude Rostand described him as "something of the monk and something of the rascal." Influenced by such innovators as Debussy, Satie, and Stravinsky, Poulenc in his twenties became a member of *Les six*, a group of young composers with flippant styles and melodies patterned after those of Parisian music halls.

Though he composed in nearly every genre, Poulenc is now best known for *mélodies* (French art songs). Romantic lyricism and jazz influence became increasingly evident in his later works. This set, his last, was composed in 1960 for soprano Denise Duval to sing to her six-year-old son Richard. The seven songs are short and simple, and the poems are taken from two different sets by Maurice Carême (1899-1978), a teacher who wrote much children's poetry. Poulenc asked Carême to title the song set, and he chose *La courte paille* (The short straw) to capture the theme: childhood.

Le sommeil (Sleep)

"Le sommeil" presents a mother rocking her sobbing child. Chromatic harmonies convey her exasperation, while a consistent eighth-note pattern gives the sound of frustrated rocking.

Le sommeil est en voyage,
Mon dieu! où est-il parti?
J'ai beau bercer mon petit,
il pleure dans son lit-cage,

Sleep has gone off on a journey,
Gracious me! Where can it have got to?
I have rocked my little one in vain,
he is crying in his cot,

il pleure depuis midi.
Où le sommeil a-t'il mis
son sable et ses rêves sages?
J'ai beau bercer mon petit,
il se tourne tout en nage,
il sanglote dans son lit.

he has been crying ever since noon.
Where has sleep put
its sand and its gentle dreams?
I have rocked my little one in vain,
he tosses and turns perspiring,
he sobs in his bed.

Ah! reviens, reviens, sommeil,
sur ton beau cheval de course!
Dans le ciel noir, la Grande Ourse
a enterré le soleil
et rallumé ses abeilles.

Ah! Come back, come back, sleep,
on your fine race-horse!
In the dark sky, the Great Bear
has buried the sun
and rekindled his bees.

Si l'enfant ne dort pas bien,
il ne dira pas bonjour,
il ne dira rien demain
à ses doigts, au lait, au pain
qui l'accueillent dans le jour.

If baby does not sleep well
he will not say good day,
he will have nothing to say
to his fingers, to the milk, to the bread
that greet him in the morning.

Quelle aventure! (What Goings-on!)

This playful text speaks from a child's perspective and is the first of three nonsense poems in the set. It is chromatic and fast, with a recurring octave leap expressing the child's shock at the incredibly "true" story she's telling.

Une puce, dans sa voiture,
Tirait un petit éléphant
En regardant les devantures,
Où scintillaient les diamants.

A flea, in its carriage
was pulling a little elephant along
gazing at the shop windows,
where diamonds were sparkling.

–Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Quelle aventure!

Good gracious! Good gracious! What goings-on!

Qui va me croire, s'il m'entend?

Who will believe me if I tell them?

L'éléphanteau, d'un air absent,
Suçait un pot de confiture.
Mais la puce n'en avait cure
Elle tirait en souriant.

The little elephant was absentmindedly
sucking on a pot of jam.
But the flea took no notice,
and went on pulling with a smile.

–Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Que cela
dure,
Et je vais me croire dément!

Good gracious! Good gracious! If this
goes on,
I shall really think I am mad!

Soudain, le long d'une clôture,
La puce fondit dans le vent
Et je vis le jenne, elephant
Se sauver en fendant les murs.

Suddenly, along by a fence,
the flea disappeared in the wind
and I saw the young elephant
make off, breaking through the walls.

Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! La chose est sûre,

Good gracious! Good gracious! It is perfectly
true,

Mais comment la dire à maman?

but how shall I tell Mommy?

La reine de cœur (The Queen of Hearts)

This slow, bluesy song is a lullaby for the child in “Quelle aventure!” It remains in a minor key until the last measure, when it decrescendos as the mother slips quietly out of the room.

Mollement acoudée
à ses vitres de lune,
la reine vous salue,
d’une fleur d’amandier.

Gently leaning on her elbow
at her moon windows,
the queen waves to you,
with a flower of the almond tree.

C’est la reine de cœur,
elle peut, s’il lui plaît,
vous mener en secret
vers d’étranges demeures.

She is the queen of hearts,
She can, if she wishes,
lead you in secret
to strange dwellings.

Où il n’est plus de portes,
de salles ni de tours
et où les jeunes mortes
viennent parler d’amour.

Where there are no more doors,
no rooms or towers
and where the young dead
come to speak of love.

La reine vous salue,
hâtez-vous de la suivre
dans son château de givre
au doux vitraux de lune.

The queen waves to you,
hasten to follow her
into her castle of hoar-frost
with the lovely moon windows.

Ba, be, bi, bo, bu

This song about Puss in Boots is based loosely on a rhyme French school children use to memorize verbs with spelling changes. The tempo is marked *follement vite* (insanely fast), and the minor seconds found in the melody mimic the sounds of children chanting as they might in school.

Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, bé!
Le chat a mis ses bottes,
il va de porte en porte
jouer, danser, chanter.

Ba, be, bi, bo, bu, bé!
The cat has put on his boots,
he goes from door to door
playing, dancing, singing.

Pou, chou, genou, hibou.*
‘Tu dois apprendre à lire,
à compter, à écrire’
lui crie-t-on de partout.

Lice, cabbage, knee, owl.
“You must learn to read,
to count, to write,”
they cry to him on all sides.

Mais rikketiketau,
le chat de s’esclaffer,
en reentrant au château:
il est le Chat botté!

But rikketiketau,
the cat bursts out laughing,
as he goes back to the castle:
He is Puss in Boots!

*This is a chant children use to memorize words that require an "x" for plural instead of an "s."

Les anges musiciens (The Angel Musicians)

This song is harmonically chromatic, like "Quelle aventure!" and "Ba, be, bi, bo, bu," but in theme and mood is more like the lullabies of the set. The text speaks of the Thursday Angels, playing Mozart in the rain. This is a reference to schoolchildren practicing piano on Thursday, a day off from school each week for French children. Marked *très lent et tendre* (very slow and tender), this song is sweet and soft, with a piano texture typical of Mozart.

Sur les fils de la pluie,
les anges de jeudi
jouent longtemps de la harpe.

On the fields of rain,
the Thursday angels
play all day upon the harp.

Et sous leurs doigts, Mozart
tinte, délicieux,
en gouttes de joie bleue.

And beneath their fingers, Mozart
tinkles deliciously,
in drops of blue joy.

Car c'est toujours Mozart
que reprennent sans fin
les anges musiciens,

For it is always Mozart
that is repeated endlessly
by the angel musicians,

Qui, au long du jeudi,
font chanter sur le harpe
la douceur de la pluie.

Who, all day Thursday,
sing on their harps
the sweetness of the rain.

Le carafon (The Baby Carafe)

The longest of the nonsensical songs in the set, this focuses on the plight of the carafe (a pitcher) in her longing for a baby carafe. Chromatic and fast, it has a melody similar to "Quelle aventure!" and a similarly ridiculous storyline.

'Pourquoi,' se plaignait la carafe,
'N'aurais je pas un carafon?
Au zoo, madame la girafe
n'atelle pas un giraffer?'
Un sorcier qui passait
par là,
a cheval sur un phonographe,
enregistra la belle voix
de soprano de la carafe
et la fit entendre à Merlin.
'Fort bien, di celui-ci, fort bien!
Il frappa trios fois dans les mains
et la dame de la maison
se demande encore pourquoi
ella trouva, ce matin-là,
un joli petit carafon
blotti tout contre la carafe

"Why," complained the carafe,
"should I not have a baby carafe?
At the zoo, Madame the giraffe
has not she a baby giraffe?"
A sorcerer who happened to be passing
by
astride a phonograph,
recorded the lovely soprano voice
of the carafe
and let Merlin hear it.
"Very good," said he, "'Very good!"
He clapped his hands three times
and the lady of the house
still asks herself why
she found that very morning
a pretty little baby carafe
nestling close to the carafe

ainsi qu'au zoo, le girafon
pose son cou fragile et long
sur le flanc clair de la giraffe.

Lune d'Avril (April Moon)

just as in the zoo, the baby giraffe
rests its long, fragile neck
against the pale flank of the giraffe.

This quiet lullaby ends the set. It is slow and ethereal, and speaks of Heaven, where all fighting and wars will end and there will be peace. The song ends *pianissississimo*, and the piano slowly drifts off as the child finally sleeps.

Lune,
belle lune, lune d'Avril
faites-moi voir en mon dormant
le pechêr au coeur de safran,
le poisson qui rit du grésil,
l'oiseau qui, lointain comme un cor,
doucement reveille les morts
et surtout, surtout le pays
où il fait joie, où il fait clair,
où soleilleux de primevères,
On a brisé tous les fusils.

Moon
beautiful moon, April moon,
let me see in my sleep
the peach-tree with the saffron heart,
the fish who laughs at the sleet,
the bird who, distant as a hunting horn,
gently awakens the dead
and above all, above all, the land
where there is joy, where there is light,
where sunny with primroses,
all the guns have been destroyed.

—translations by Winifred Radford

VI

The Moor

**Hilary Tann
(b. 1947)**

Hilary Tann was born in southern Wales. She earned her Ph.D. in composition from Princeton University, where she studied with famed serial composer Milton Babbitt. Her music is known for its lyricism and formal balance. By her own account, Tann is inspired musically by a love of Wales, an interest in traditional Japanese music, and a strong connection with nature. "The Moor" reflects these influences with its sparse, two-part texture. The Welsh hymn tune RHEIDOL is quoted throughout the work, which ends with a quotation of the hymn text that is often set to it. It also quotes Psalms 103:1 and 3, 148:1, 7, and 9, and 150:1 and 6.

Despite its many quotations, the text for "The Moor" comes primarily from Welsh poet R. S. Thomas's *Pieta*. Thomas (1913-2000) was an Anglican priest whose poetry is characterized by a realistic picture of Welsh rural life and religious themes. His self-expressed goal was to "demonstrate that man is spiritual." The solitary, reflective nature of this text certainly accomplishes that goal: the moor described is one of quiet reverence.

Laudate, laudate Dominum.
laudate Eum.
Montes et omnes colles
laudent nomen Domini.

Praise, praise God.
Praise him.
Mountains and all hills
praise the name of God.

It was like a church to me.
I entered it on soft foot,
breath held like a cap in the hand.
It was quiet.

Ludate Eum, laudate.

Praise him, praise.

What God was there made himself felt,
not listened to in the clean colours
that brought a moistening of the eye
in movement of the wind over grass.

Laudate, laudate Dominum.

Praise, praise God.

Benedic anima mea Domino
Qui ambulat super pinnas ventorum.
Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius.

Bless the Lord, o my soul
who walketh upon the wings of the wind.
Praise God in his sanctuary.

There were no prayers said. But stillness
of the heart's passions – that was praise
enough; and the mind's cession
of its kingdom.

Laudate Dominum de caelis;
Laudate Dominum de terra.
Laudate Dominum.

Praise the Lord from the heavens;
praise the Lord from the earth.
Praise the Lord.

I walked on,
simple and poor, while the air crumbled
and broke on me generously as bread.

Montes et omnes colles
Laudent nomen Domini.

Mountains and all hills
praise the name of the Lord.

It was like a church to me.
It was quiet.
There were no prayers said
but stillness
– that was praise
enough.

Nefol Dad,
bœd mawrhad,
taena d'adain dros ein gwlad.

Heavenly Father,
be there greatness,
drape your wing over our country.

–translation by Hilary Tann