

THE
FOLLY
OF
DESIRE

—

BRAD MEHLDAU
& IAN BOSTRIDGE

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SFJAZZ CENTER

SFJAZZ



BRAD MEHLDAU

PIANO

—

One of the most lyrical and intimate voices of contemporary jazz piano, Brad Mehldau has forged a unique path, which embodies the essence of jazz exploration, classical romanticism and pop allure. From critical acclaim as a bandleader to major international exposure in collaborations with Pat Metheny, Renee Fleming, and Joshua Redman, Mehldau continues to garner numerous

awards and admiration from both jazz purists and music enthusiasts alike. His forays into melding musical idioms, in both trio (with Larry Grenadier on bass and Jeff Ballard on drums) and solo settings, has seen brilliant re-workings of songs by contemporary songwriters like The Beatles, Cole Porter, Radiohead, Paul Simon, Gershwin, and Nick Drake; alongside the ever evolving breath of his own significant catalogue of original compositions. With his self-proclaimed affection for popular music and classical training, “Mehldau is the most influential jazz pianist of the last 20 years” (*The New York Times*).



IAN BOSTRIDGE

TENOR

—

Ian Bostridge's international recital career takes him to the foremost concert halls of Europe, South East Asia, and North America, with regular appearances at the Salzburg, Edinburgh, Munich, Vienna, Schwarzenberg, and Aldeburgh festivals. He has had residencies at the Wiener Konzerthaus, Carnegie Hall New York, Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Luxembourg Philharmonic, Barbican Centre, Wigmore Hall, and with the Seoul Philharmonic, the first of its kind. In opera, he has performed Tamino (Mozart *Die Zauberflöte*), Jupiter (Handel *Semele*) and Aschenbach (Britten *Death in Venice*) at English National Opera, Quint (Britten *The Turn of the Screw*), Don Ottavio (Mozart *Don Giovanni*) and Caliban (*Adès The Tempest*) for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, title role Jephtha for Opera de Paris, Don Ottavio at the Wiener Staatsoper, Tom Rakewell (*Stravinsky The Rake's Progress*) at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich and Quint at Teatro alla Scala, Milan.

Highlights of the 2019–20 season include a U.S. recital tour with jazz pianist Brad Mehldau, including Mehldau's *The Folly of Desire*, written for Ian, a world premiere of a new commission by Olli Mustonen at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Wigmore Hall, Debussy's 'Livres de Baudelaire' orchestrated and conducted by John Adams with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, Aschenbach / *Death in Venice* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and *Mad Woman / Curlew River* on tour with the Britten Sinfonia.

His many recordings have won all the major international record prizes and been nominated for fifteen Grammys. He was awarded a CBE in the 2004 New Year's Honours. In 2016, he was awarded the The Pol Roger Duff Cooper Prize for non-fiction writing for his latest book, *Schubert's Winter Journey: Anatomy of an Obsession*.

THE FOLLY OF DESIRE

BRAD MEHLDAU

This work was co-commissioned by Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Wigmore Hall, Stanford Live at Stanford University, and Carnegie Hall.

—

The Sick Rose
William Blake

Leda and the Swan
William Butler Yeats

Sonnet 147
William Shakespeare

Sonnet 75
William Shakespeare

Über die Verführung von Engeln
Bertold Brecht

Ganymed
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Ganymede
W.H. Auden

the boys i mean are not refined
e.e. cummings

Excerpt from Sailing to Byzantium
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Night II, from “The Four Zoas” (The Wail of Enion)
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INTERMISSION

DICHTERLILIEBE

ROBERT SCHUMANN

—

Dein Angesicht (op. 127, 2)

Lehn' deine Wang' (op. 142, 2)

Es leuchtet meine Liebe (op. 127, 3)

Mein Wagen rollet langsam (op. 142, 4)

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai

Aus meinen Tränen sprießen

Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne

Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'

Ich will meine Seele tauchen

Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome

Ich grolle nicht

Und wüssten's die Blumen

Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen

Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen

Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen

Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet

Allnächtlich im Traume

Aus alten Märchen winkt es

Die alten bösen Lieder



THE FOLLY OF DESIRE

THE SICK ROSE

William Blake

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

LEDA AND THE SWAN

William Butler Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

SONNET 147

William Shakespeare

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.

My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve,
Desire is death, which physic did except.

Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest,
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
At random from the truth vainly express'd.
For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

SONNET 75

William Shakespeare

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet-season'd showers are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife,
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found.

Now proud as an enjoyer and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure,
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then better'd that the world may see my pleasure,

Sometime all full with feasting on your sight,
And by and by clean starved for a look,
Possessing or pursuing no delight
Save what is had or must from you be took.

Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

ÜBER DIE VERFÜHRUNG VON ENGELN

Bertold Brecht

Engel verführt man gar nicht oder schnell.
Verzieh ihn einfach in den Hauseingang
Steck ihm die Zunge in den Mund und lang
Ihm untern Rock, bis er sich naß macht, stell
Ihm das Gesicht zur Wand, heb ihm den Rock
Und fick ihn. Stöhnt er irgendwie beklommen
Dann halt ihn fest und laß ihn zweimal kommen
Sonst hat er dir am Ende einen Schock.
Ermahn ihn, dass er gut den Hintern schwenkt
Heiß ihn dir ruhig an die Hoden fassen
Sag ihm, er darf sich furchtlos fallen lassen
Dieweil er zwischen Erd und Himmel hängt -
Doch schau ihm nicht beim Ficken ins Gesicht
Und seine Flügel, Mensch, zerdrück sie nicht.

GANYMED

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Wie im Morgenglanze
Du rings mich anglühst
Frühling, Geliebter!
Mit tausendfacher Liebeswonne
Sich an mein Herz drängt
Deiner ewigen Wärme
Heilig Gefühl,
Unendliche Schöne!

Daß ich dich fassen möchte'
In diesen Arm!

Ach, an deinem Busen
Lieg' ich, schmachte,
Und deine Blumen, dein Gras
Drängen sich an mein Herz.
Du kühlst den brennenden

Durst meines Busens,
Lieblicher Morgenwind!
Ruft drein die Nachtigall
Liebend nach mir aus dem Nebelthal.
Ich komm', ich komme!
Wohin? Ach, wohin?

Hinauf! Hinauf strebt's.
Es schweben die Wolken
Abwärts, die Wolken
Neigen sich der sehrenden Liebe.
Mir! Mir!

In eurem Schosse
Aufwärts!
Umfangend umfängen!
Aufwärts an deinen Busen,
Allliebender Vater!

GANYMEDE

W.H. Auden

He looked in all His wisdom from the throne
Down on that humble boy who kept the sheep,
And sent a dove; the dove returned alone:
Youth liked the music, but soon fell asleep.

But He had planned such future for the youth:
Surely, His duty now was to compel.
For later he would come to love the truth,
And own his gratitude. His eagle fell.

It did not work. His conversation bored
The boy who yawned and whistled and made faces,
And wriggled free from fatherly embraces;

But with the eagle he was always willing
To go where it suggested, and adored
And learnt from it so many ways of killing.

THE BOYS I MEAN ARE NOT REFINED

e.e. cummings

the boys i mean are not refined
they go with girls who buck and bite
they do not give a fuck for luck
they hump them thirteen times a night

one hangs a hat upon her tit
one carves a cross on her behind
they do not give a shit for wit
the boys i mean are not refined

they come with girls who bite and buck
who cannot read and cannot write
who laugh like they would fall apart
and masturbate with dynamite

the boys i mean are not refined
they cannot chat of that and this
they do not give a fart for art
they kill like you would take a piss

they speak whatever's on their mind
they do whatever's in their pants
the boys i mean are not refined
they shake the mountains when they dance

EXCERPT FROM SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

William Butler Yeats

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

NIGHT II, FROM "THE FOUR ZOAS" (THE WAIL OF ENION)

William Blake

I am made to sow the thistle for wheat; the nettle for a nourishing dainty
I have planted a false oath in the earth, it has brought forth a Poison Tree
I have chosen the serpent for a counsellor and the dog
For a schoolmaster to my children

I have blotted out from light and living the dove and nightingale
And I have caused the earthworm to beg from door to door
I have taught the thief a secret path into the house of the just
I have taught pale Artifice to spread his nets upon the morning
My heavens are brass, my earth is iron, my moon a clod of clay
My sun a pestilence burning at noon, and a vapour of death in night.

What is the price of Experience? Do men buy it for a song
Or Wisdom for a dance in the street? No - it is bought with the price
Of all that a man hath - his house, his wife, his children.

Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy
And in the wither'd field where the farmer ploughs for bread in vain.

LULLABY

W.H. Auden

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm:
Time and fevers burn away
Individual beauty from
Thoughtful children, and the grave
Proves the child ephemeral:
But in my arms till break of day
Let the living creature lie,
Mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Soul and body have no bounds:
To lovers as they lie upon
Her tolerant enchanted slope
In their ordinary swoon,
Grave the vision Venus sends
Of supernatural sympathy,
Universal love and hope
While an abstract insight wakes
Among the glaciers and the rocks
The hermit's carnal ecstasy.

Certainty, fidelity
On the stroke of midnight pass
Like vibrations of a bell
And fashionable madmen raise
Their pedantic boring cry:
Every farthing of the cost.
All the dreaded cards foretell.
Shall be paid, but from this night
Not a whisper, not a thought.
Not a kiss nor look be lost.

Beauty, midnight, vision dies:
Let the winds of dawn that blow
Softly round your dreaming head
Such a day of welcome show
Eye and knocking heart may bless,
Find our mortal world enough;
Noons of dryness find you fed
By the involuntary powers,
Nights of insult let you pass
Watched by every human love.

CREDITS

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DICHTERLILIEBE

DEIN ANGESICHT

Dein Angesicht so lieb und schön,
Das hab ich jüngst im Traum gesehn,
Es ist so mild und engelgleich,
Und doch so bleich, so schmerzensreich.
Und nur die Lippen, die sind rot;
Bald aber küsst sie bleich der Tod.
Erlöschen wird das Himmelslicht,
Das aus den frommen Augen bricht.

LEHN' DEINE WANG'

Lehn' deine Wang' an meine Wang',
Dann fließen die Tränen zusammen;
Und an mein Herz drück fest dein Herz,
Dann schlagen zusammen die Flammen!
Und wenn in die große Flamme fließt
Der Strom von unsern Tränen,
Und wenn dich mein Arm gewaltig umschließt
Sterb ich vor Liebesehnen!

ES LEUCHTET MEINE LIEBE

Es leuchtet meine Liebe,
In ihrer dunkeln Pracht,
Wie'n Märchen traurig und trübe,
Erzählt in der Sommernacht.
»Im Zaubergarten wallen
Zwei Buhlen, stumm und allein;
Es singen die Nachtigallen,
Es flimmert der Mondenschein.
Die Jungfrau steht still wie ein Bildnis,
Der Ritter vor ihr kniet.
Da kommt der Riese der Wildnis,
Die bange Jungfrau flieht.
Der Ritter sinkt blutend zur Erde,
Es stolpert der Riese nach Haus.«
Wenn ich begraben werde,
Dann ist das Märchen aus.

YOUR FACE

Your face so lovely and fair
appeared to me in a recent dream,
so mild, it looks, and angel-like,
and yet so pale, so full of pain.
And your lips alone are red;
but death shall soon kiss them pale.
The heavenly light will be extinguished
that gleams from your innocent eyes.

REST YOUR CHEEK AGAINST MY CHEEK

Rest you cheek against my cheek,
together our tears shall flow;
and against my heart press firm your heart,
together the flames shall leap!
And when into that great flame
our river of tears shall flow,
and when I clasp you wildly in my arms -
I shall die of love's desire!

THE GLEAM OF MY LOVE

The gleam of my love
in its dark splendor
is like a tale, sad and gloomy,
told on a summer night.
In the magic garden wander
two lovers, silent and alone;
the nightingales are singing,
the moon is shimmering.
The maiden stands as silent as a picture,
the knight kneels down before her.
Suddenly the wild giant appears,
the frightened maiden flees.
The knight sinks bleeding to the ground,
the giant stumbles home;
and when I'm dead and buried;
this story shall be done.

MEIN WAGEN ROLLET LANGSAM

Mein Wagen rollet langsam
Durch lustiges Waldesgrün,
Durch blumige Täler, die zaubrisch
Im Sonnenglanze blühn.
Ich sitze und sinne und träume,
Und denk an die Liebste mein;
Da grüßen drei Schattengestalten
Kopfnickend zum Wagen herein.
Sie hüpfen und schneiden Gesichter,
So spöttisch und doch so scheu,
Und quirlen wie Nebel zusammen,
Und kichern und huschen vorbei.

IM WUNDERSCHÖNEN MONAT MAI

Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
Als alle Knospen sprangen,
Da ist in meinem Herzen
Die Liebe aufgegangen.
Im wunderschönen Monat Mai,
Als alle Vögel sangen,
Da hab' ich ihr gestanden
Mein Sehnen und Verlangen.

AUS MEINEN TRÄNEN SPRIESSEN

Aus meinen Tränen sprießen
Viel blühende Blumen hervor,
Und meine Seufzer werden
Ein Nachtigallenchor.
Und wenn du mich lieb hast, Kindchen,
Schenk' ich dir die Blumen all',
Und vor deinem Fenster soll klingen
Das Lied der Nachtigall.

MY CARRIAGE ROLLS SLOWLY

My carriage rolls slowly
through the cheerful green woodlands,
through flowery valleys
magically blooming in sun.
I sit and muse and dream,
and think of my dear love;
three shadowy forms nod at me
through the carriage window.
They hop and pull faces,
so mocking yet so shy,
and whirl together like mist
and flit chuckling by.

IN THE WONDROUS MONTH OF MAY

In the wondrous month of May,
when all the buds were bursting into bloom,
then it was that in my heart
love began to blossom.
In the wondrous month of May,
when all the birds were singing,
then it was I confessed to her
my longing and desire.

FROM MY TEARS WILL SPRING

From my tears will spring
many blossoming flowers,
and my sighs will become
a choir of nightingales.
And if you love me, child,
I'll give you all the flowers,
and at your window shall sound
the nightingale's song.

DIE ROSE, DIE LILIE, DIE TAUBE, DIE SONNE

Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne,
Die liebt' ich einst alle in Liebeswonne.
Ich lieb' sie nicht mehr, ich liebe alleine
Die Kleine, die Feine, die Reine, die Eine;
Sie selber, aller Liebe Wonne,
Ist Rose und Lilie und Taube und Sonne.

WENN ICH IN DEINE AUGEN SEH'

Wenn ich in deine Augen seh',
So schwindet all' mein Leid und Weh;
Doch wenn ich küsse deinen Mund,
So werd' ich ganz und gar gesund.
Wenn ich mich lehn' an deine Brust,
Kommt's über mich wie Himmelslust;
Doch wenn du sprichst: ich liebe dich!
So muss ich weinen bitterlich.

ICH WILL MEINE SEELE TAUCHEN

Ich will meine Seele tauchen
In den Kelch der Lilie hinein;
Die Lilie soll klingend hauchen
Ein Lied von der Liebsten mein.
Das Lied soll schauern und beben
Wie der Kuss von ihrem Mund,
Den sie mir einst gegeben
In wunderbar süßer Stund'.

IM RHEIN, IM HEILIGEN STROME

Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome,
Da spiegelt sich in den Well'n
Mit seinem großen Dome
Das große, heil'ge Köln.
Im Dom da steht ein Bildnis,
Auf gold'nem Leder gemalt;
In meines Lebens Wildnis
Hat's freundlich hineingestrahlt.
Es schweben Blumen und Eng'lein
Um unsre liebe Frau;
Die Augen, die Lippen, die Wänglein,
Die gleichen der Liebsten genau.

ROSE, LILY, DOVE

Rose, lily, dove, sun,
I loved them all once in the bliss of love.
I love them no more, I only love
she who is small, fine, pure, rare;
she, most blissful of all loves,
is rose and lily and dove and sun.

WHEN I LOOK INTO YOUR EYES

When I look into your eyes,
all my pain and sorrow vanish;
but when I kiss your lips,
then I am wholly healed.
When I lay my head against your breast,
heavenly bliss steals over me;
but when you say: I love you!
I must weep bitter tears.

LET ME BATHE MY SOUL

Let me bathe my soul
in the lily's chalice;
the lily shall resound
with a song of my love.
The songs shall tremble and quiver
like the kiss her lips
once gave me
in a sweet and wondrous hour.

IN THE RHINE, THE HOLY RIVER

In the Rhine, the holy river,
there is reflected in the waves,
with its great cathedral,
great and holy Cologne.
In the cathedral hangs a picture,
painted on gilded leather;
into my life's wilderness
it has cast its friendly rays.
Flowers and cherubs hover
around Our beloved Lady;
her eyes, her lips, her little cheeks
are the image of my love's.

ICH GROLLE NICHT

Ich grolle nicht,
Und wenn das Herz auch bricht,
Ewig verlor'nes Lieb! Ich grolle nicht.
Wie du auch strahlst in Diamantenpracht,
Es fällt kein Strahl in deines Herzens Nacht.
Das weiß ich längst. Ich sah dich ja im Traume,
Und sah die Nacht in deines Herzens Raume,
Und sah die Schlang', die dir am Herzen frisst,
Ich sah, mein Lieb, wie sehr du elend bist.

UND WÜSSTEN'S DIE BLUMEN

Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen,
Wie tief verwundet mein Herz,
Sie würden mit mir weinen,
Zu heilen meinen Schmerz.
Und wüssten's die Nachtigallen,
Wie ich so traurig und krank,
Sie ließen fröhlich erschallen
Erquickenden Gesang.
Und wüssten sie mein Wehe,
Die goldenen Sternelein,
Die kämen aus ihrer Höhe,
Und sprächen Trost mir ein.
Sie alle können's nicht wissen,
Nur eine kennt meinen Schmerz;
Sie hat ja selbst zerrissen,
Zerrissen mir das Herz.

DAS IST EIN FLÖTEN UND GEIGEN

Das ist ein Flöten und Geigen,
Trompeten schmettern darein;
Da tanzt wohl den Hochzeitsreigen
Die Herzallerliebste mein.
Das ist ein Klingen und Dröhnen,
Ein Pauken und ein Schalmei'n;
Dazwischen schluchzen und stöhnen
Die lieblichen Engelein.

HÖR' ICH DAS LIEDCHEN KLINGEN

Hör' ich das Liedchen klingen,
Das einst die Liebste sang,
So will mir die Brust zerspringen
Von wildem Schmerzdrang.
Es treibt mich ein dunkles Sehnen
Hinauf zur Waldeshöh',
Dort löst sich auf in Tränen
Mein übergroßes Weh'.

I BEAR NO GRUDGE

I bear no grudge,
though my heart is breaking,
O love forever lost! I bear no grudge.
However you gleam in diamond splendor,
no ray falls in the night of your heart.
I've known that long. For I saw you in my dreams,
and saw the night within your heart,
and saw the serpent gnawing your heart -
I saw, my love, how pitiful you are.

IF THE LITTLE FLOWERS KNEW

If the little flowers knew
how deeply my heart is hurt,
they would weep with me
to heal my pain.
If the nightingales knew
how sad I am and sick,
they would joyfully make the air resound
with refreshing song.
And if they knew of my grief,
those little golden stars,
they would come down from the sky
and console me with their words.
But none of them can know,
my pain is known to one alone;
for she it was who broke
broke my heart in two.

WHAT A FLUTING AND FIDDLING

What a fluting and fiddling,
what a blaring of trumpets;
that must be my dearest love
dancing at her wedding feast.
What a booming and ringing,
what a drumming and piping;
with lovely little angels
sobbing and groaning between.

WHEN I HEAR THE LITTLE SONG

When I hear the little song
my beloved once sang,
my heart almost bursts
with the wild rush of pain.
A dark longing drives me
up to the wooded heights,
where my overwhelming grief
dissolves into tears.

EIN JÜNGLING LIEBT EIN MÄDCHEN

Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen,
Die hat einen andern erwählt;
Der and're liebt eine and're,
Und hat sich mit dieser vermählt.
Das Mädchen nimmt aus Ärger
Den ersten besten Mann,
Der ihr in den Weg gelaufen;
Der Jüngling ist übel dran.
Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
Und wem sie just passiert,
Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

AM LEUCHTENDEN SOMMERMORGEN

Am leuchtenden Sommermorgen
Geh' ich im Garten herum.
Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen,
Ich aber wandle stumm.
Es flüstern und sprechen die Blumen
Und schau'n mitleidig mich an:
Sei uns'rer Schwester nicht böse,
Du trauriger blasser Mann.

ICH HAB' IM TRAUM GEWEINET

Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du lägest im Grab.
Ich wachte auf, und die Träne
Floss noch von der Wange herab.
Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumt', du verliebest mich.
Ich wachte auf, und ich weinte
Noch lange bitterlich.
Ich hab' im Traum geweinet,
Mir träumte, du wär'st mir noch gut
Ich wachte auf, und noch immer
Strömt meine Tränenflut.

ALLNÄCHTLICH IM TRAUME

Allnächtlich im Traume seh' ich dich
Und sehe dich freundlich grüßen,
Und laut aufweinend stürz' ich mich
Zu deinen süßen Füßen.
Du siehest mich an wehmütiglich
Und schüttelst das blonde Köpfchen;
Aus deinen Augen schleichen sich
Die Perletränenröpfchen.
Du sagst mir heimlich ein leises Wort
Und gibst mir den Strauß von Zypressen.
Ich wache auf, und der Strauß ist fort,
Und's Wort hab' ich vergessen.

A BOY LOVES A GIRL

A boy loves a girl
who chooses another;
he in turn loves another
and marries her.
The girl, out of pique,
takes the very first man
to come her way;
the boy is badly hurt.
It's an old story,
yet remains ever new;
and he to whom it happens,
it breaks his heart in half.

ONE BRIGHT SUMMER MORNING

One bright summer morning
I walk round the garden.
The flowers whisper and talk,
but I move silently.
The flowers whisper and talk,
and look at me in pity:
be not angry with our sister,
you sad, pale man.

I WEPT IN MY DREAM

I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you lay in your grave.
I woke, and tears
still flowed down my cheeks.
I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you were leaving me.
I woke, and wept on
long and bitterly.
I wept in my dream,
I dreamt you loved me still.
I woke, and still
my tears stream.

NIGHTLY IN MY DREAMS

Nightly in my dreams I see you,
and see your friendly greeting,
and weeping loud, I hurl myself
down at your sweet feet.
Wistfully you look at me,
shaking your fair little head;
tiny little pearl-like tears
trickle from your eyes.
You whisper me a soft word
and hand me a wreath of cypress.
I wake up and the wreath is gone,
and I cannot remember the word.

AUS ALTEN MÄRCHEN WINKT ES

Aus alten Märchen winkt es
Hervor mit weißer Hand,
Da singt es und da klingt es
Von einem Zauberland;
Wo bunte Blumen blühen
Im gold'nen Abendlicht,
Und lieblich duftend glühen,
Mit bräutlichem Gesicht;
Und grüne Bäume singen
Uralte Melodei'n,
Die Lüfte heimlich klingen,
Und Vögel schmetter'n drein;
Und Nebelbilder steigen
Wohl aus der Erd' hervor,
Und tanzen luft'gen Reigen
Im wunderlichen Chor;
Und blaue Funken brennen
An jedem Blatt und Reis,
Und rote Lichter rennen
Im irren, wirren Kreis;
Und laute Quellen brechen
Aus wildem Marmorstein.
Und seltsam in den Bächen
Strahlt fort der Widerschein.
Ach, könnt' ich dorthin kommen,
Und dort mein Herz erfreu'n,
Und aller Qual entnommen,
Und frei und selig sein!
Ach! jenes Land der Wonne,
Das seh' ich oft im Traum,
Doch kommt die Morgensonne,
Zerfließt's wie eitel Schaum.

DIE ALTEN, BÖSEN LIEDER

Die alten, bösen Lieder,
Die Träume bö's und arg,
Die lasst uns jetzt begraben,
Holt einen großen Sarg.
Hinein leg' ich gar manches,
Doch sag' ich noch nicht, was;
Der Sarg muss sein noch größer,
Wie's Heidelberger Fass.
Und holt eine Totenbahre
Und Bretter fest und dick;
Auch muss sie sein noch länger,
Als wie zu Mainz die Brück'.
Und holt mir auch zwölf Riesen,
Die müssen noch stärker sein
Als wie der starke Christoph
Im Dom zu Köln am Rhein.
Die sollen den Sarg forttragen,
Und senken ins Meer hinab;
Denn solchem großen Sarge
Gebührt ein großes Grab.
Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg wohl
So groß und schwer mag sein?
Ich senkt' auch meine Liebe
Und meinen Schmerz hinein.

A WHITE HAND BECKONS

A white hand beckons
from fairy tales of old,
where there are sounds and songs
of a magic land;
Where brightly colored flowers
bloom in golden twilight,
and glow sweet and fragrant
with a bride-like face;
And green trees
sing primeval melodies,
mysterious breezes murmur,
and birds warble;
And misty shapes rise up
from the very ground,
and dance airy dances
in a strange throng;
And blue sparks blaze
on every leaf and twig,
and red fires race
madly round and round;
And loud springs gush
from wild marble cliffs.
And strangely in the streams
the reflection shines on.
Ah, could I but reach that land,
and there make glad my heart,
and be relieved of all pain,
and be blissful and free!
Ah, that land of delight,
I see it often in my dreams,
but with the morning sun
it melts like mere foam.

THE BAD OLD SONGS

The bad old songs,
the bad and bitter dreams,
let us now bury them,
fetch me a large coffin.
I have much to put in it,
though what I won't yet say;
the coffin must be even larger
than the Vat at Heidelberg.
And fetch a bier
made of firm thick timber:
and it must be even longer
than the bridge at Mainz
And fetch for me twelve giants,
they must be even stronger
than Saint Christopher the Strong
in Cologne cathedral on the Rhine.
They shall bear the coffin away,
and sink it deep into the sea;
for such a large coffin
deserves a large grave.
Do you know why the coffin
must be so large and heavy?
I'd like to bury there my love
and my sorrow too.

TACIT CONSENT

—

Lovers give themselves in a moment of trust – or they dare to take without asking. The fact that this giving and taking is without an established contract – there is risk – is what gives desire its wings, and also makes it potentially transgressive. Consent exists ideally, but it is unspoken. This tacit quality of consent makes it downright holy for poets, artists and musicians – quiet, untouched by all the prosaic discourse. Desire – unrequited, or consecrated in ecstasy – is a strong trope in music, wrapped into the game of tonality itself: tension and resolution, tension again, and resolution. In its unspoken abstraction, music can trace lucidly an intimate exchange.

In the initial idea for this song cycle, the order of the songs was to reflect a spiritual climb from pure lust all the way to lust-free love. That ascension, though, would import a moral message into the music: that carnal desire itself was base and ignoble, and love free of desire was the highest achievement. It was too simple. Music should provoke more questions, not answer them with prescriptive finality.

The next thought was to address lust only and thus confront it directly and unapologetically. Too unapologetically, though – might that serve to celebrate what one would condemn? Finally the goal was to neither condemn nor sanction, yet still probe the subject without dodging “should” and “shouldn’t” questions.

A discourse about what may and may not take place, and an attempt to find a provisional consensus, is valuable. It might focus on just how one defines consent. There should remain, though, a private space where one can just love someone and take without asking.

This privacy has been a cherished freedom of liberal societies, but is under question now. When sex enters the public forum, it becomes political, and we speak of a citizen’s right to privacy. Closely related is freedom of speech. Sexual expression, like speech, often takes place in a relatively anarchic locus in which there are no fixed rules and no policing presence nearby. If someone is asocial – forcing an unwelcome sexual advance, or inciting violence through speech – the governing body is compelled to paternalistically step in, halting the expression. Some children are misbehaving, so the whole classroom will suffer.

This point in history is unique because leaders are doing the opposite: they are goading the anti-social expression onward. A vote, as an expression of speech, has become a raised middle-finger, a malevolent gesture. The free-roaming playful kind of anarchy is threatened from the inside.

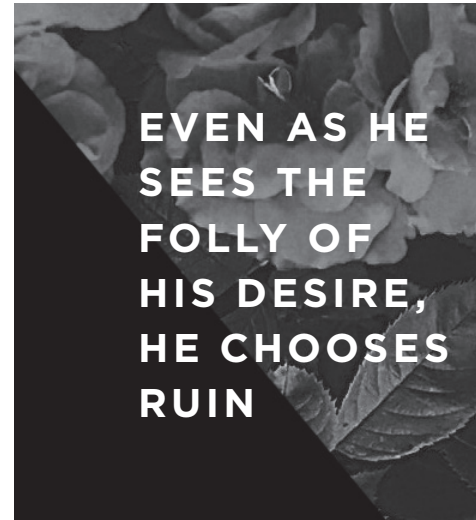
ROMANTIC IRONY AS SELF-CENSURE

—

Heinrich Heine’s title for the collection of poems that Schumann drew from was *Buch der Leider* – *Book of Songs* – proclaiming the quality of song already in the poems. When Schumann titled his song cycle *Dichterliebe* – the “poet’s

love” – he effectively returned the authority to the first-person protagonist of the poems. Authority over *himself* is the struggle of this passionate figure, who is always in danger of drowning in his rapture for a young woman, losing his common sense. Schumann conveyed masterfully that unhinged mental state in his musical expression: at turns violent, euphoric, dreamy and unreal.

Heine’s Romantic irony, as it came to be known, involved an act of self-censure from the poet, in which he would assess the folly of his own ardent feeling within the same poem. It might be a painfully jarring corrective, yet is less destructive than the folly of losing his wits completely, obsessively pining for someone he will never possess. Heine’s caustic reawakening to reality is particularly effective in Schumann’s musical dramaturgy when it is deferred until the end of the poem, as in IV, “Wenn ich in deine Augen seh” and VII, “Ich grolle nicht”.



In those two settings, Schumann’s gambit is not to change the musical fabric at all – making the abrupt mood change of the text even more tragically apparent by understating it. It’s a real German Romantic move – wearing the emotion on your sleeve and holding it in at the same time, *verklemt*. That kind of narrative dissonance also foreshadowed modern cinematic intentional incongruity – like when Scorsese sets a violent scene to cheerful doo-wop music.

The perpetrators in the #MeToo accounts and the Catholic church sanctioned their actions through willful fantasy, essentially lying to themselves, not unlike the 19th Century personage in *Dichterliebe*. A measure of Heine-like self-critical distance might have helped them avoid a destructive path. Romantic irony introduced a potential freedom

for writers. They could momentarily escape the imposed frame of their narrative. Likewise in real life, one might escape the fictive story he repeatedly tells himself about the object of his desire. And who knows – if we censure ourselves now and then in the *polis*, we might retain our right to privacy and free speech.

The new songs here for male voice and piano are an inquiry into the limits of post-#MeToo Romantic irony. The variables are still the same: The subject is in danger of valorizing his desire precisely when he should sublimate it. He does not see clearly, and commits folly. Yet, some of this folly he welcomes – he does not want to see clearly. At what cost though?

A few words about the individual poems: The suitor in Shakespeare’s two sonnets is perpetually self-aware, a trait Harold Bloom identified in the Bard’s most famous characters. In “Sonnet 147,” the subject reasons about how he has lost his reason: “My reason, the physician to my love,/Angry that his prescriptions are not kept/Hath left me, and I desperate now approve.” Even as he sees the folly of his desire, he chooses ruin. Here, self-ironizing doesn’t help, and leads to inertia: he perpetually diagnoses the problem yet never takes the bitter medicine.

If tacit, genuine consent is the holy grail, then its most extreme, violent opposite is rape. Yeats' mythological "Leda and the Swan" is unsettling because it locates a dark Sublime in Zeus' brute overpowering of the girl, who, being so close to the god, might have "put on his knowledge with his power." In Brecht's "Über die Verführung von Engeln" the dark humor from this master of satire has a purpose: Brecht describes the duplicity and self-sanctioning of the rapist-protagonist, who mockingly instructs the reader how to say or do whatever necessary to get what he wants. Here, the roles are reversed - whereas Zeus was the perpetrator, the angel here is the one perpetrated, a sublime figure whom one may not gaze at directly, even as he takes him by force - "*Doch schau ihm nicht beim Ficken ins Gesicht.*"

Goethe's Ganymed craves the Father: "*Aufwärts an deinen Busen, Allliebender Vater.*" Zeus is less perpetrator and more pantheistic ideal - the divine expressed in eternal nature, into which Ganymed is received, ecstatically. This spiritualized Zeus is perhaps less Greek, but otherwise it was always difficult to believe that the youth would be so enchanted as he is lifted away - wouldn't he be terrified, like Leda? Ganymed's *Liebeswonne* (bliss of love) is intertwined with his *heilig Gefühl* (holy feeling). They are both *unendliche Schöne* - eternally beautiful. The poem suggests that spiritual striving and earthly desire both seek the same thing: to cool our "burning thirst" - "*Du kühlst den brennenden Durst meines Busens.*"

What is the nature of that thirst - could lust then be a kind of holy impulse? Not if we understand the Holy to be benevolent. Desire in itself is blind by nature, never giving and always seeking to possess. We would hope that the Godhead would give us eyes to see our own folly. Yet such a sharp division between holy and carnal can itself become spiritual blindness. It becomes another strategy of denial and hidden complicity, of believing what you want to believe. What else were all those priests doing?

The unsettling suggestion in Auden's "Ganymede" is that perpetration begets violence on the one perpetrated - which in turn might continue a cycle. For William Blake, lust and violence are destructive forces beyond our control, omnipresent elements that "shake the mountains", as e.e. cummings proclaims in his raucous poem here, which yokes the two together more viscerally. The prelapsarian innocence is gone; Blake's Rose is sick. Yeats calls on the holy sages to guide him in *Sailing to Byzantium*, for his heart is "sick with desire/ And fastened to a dying animal/It knows not what it is." Blake answers him from the past in *Night II*: Self-wisdom may be had, but "it is bought with the price/Of all that a man hath - his house, his wife, his children." Both poets write of "Artifice" - be it deceitful in the case of Blake, or a property of eternity itself for Yeats. The burning thirst is unquenchable, be it of flesh or spirit, or finally, both.

Auden returns once more for "Lullaby", which forms a postlude for the cycle. "Let the living creature lie," he writes, of someone who consents to him, and finally, one who is loved and loves without censure: "Mortal, guilty, but to me / The entirely beautiful."

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BRAD MEHLDAU



