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Goethe's *Kennst du das Land* and the Stylistic Development of the Post-18th Century German Lieder

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Abstract

By studying the historical stylistic evolution of German poetry, examining the development of musical styles, and analyzing several settings of Goethe's "Mignon's Song" (*Kennst du das Land*), this study will probe the relationship between music and poem, to reveal the stylistic development of German Lieder, thereby providing a practical overview of the style.

Several factors affected the stylistic development of German Lieder, including the changing social structure and the social function of the Lied, the rapid development of new instruments (such as –piano), the variant of audiences' tastes, and the rise of German Nationalism.

Keywords：German Lieder, Goethe, *Kennst du das Land*

Introduction

In order to properly interpret German poetry and to establish an appropriate German Lied performance style, it is necessary for performers to learn composers' compositional styles, composers' intentions and poetic interpretations, poets' original thoughts, the structures of poetry, and the relationships between music and text in different periods. German Lieder lovers also need an effective resource to guide them in their appreciation. By studying the historical stylistic evolution of German poetry, examining the development of musical styles, and analyzing several settings of Goethe's "Mignon's Song" (*Kennst du das Land*), this study will probe the relationship between music and poem, to reveal the stylistic development of German Lieder, thereby providing a practical overview of the style.

Several factors affected the stylistic development of German Lieder, including the changing social structure and the social function of the Lied, the rapid development of new instruments (such as –piano), the variant of audiences' tastes, and the rise of German Nationalism.

Because of the nationalistic sentiments, German-speaking people were inspired to pay attention to their own arts, such as folk poetry, folk music, and myths. Hundreds of Lieder have been written, especially during and after Schubert's lifetime. Moreover, during the time of Goethe, the aristocracy gradually collapsed; hence, there was no longer a system of patronage for musicians. It is true that lacking such patronage from nobility, many musicians struggled with poverty; however, they had more freedom to compose the music of their own preference. Music is no longer a privilege of the noble class; instead, the wealthy bourgeoisie replaced the nobility to become the supporter of musical events. Such a circumstance also affected the development of classical music, including German Lieder. After that, the German Lied served merely as an entertainment in private salons and was the last of the musical genres to be received in the concert hall in the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

Considered to be *Hausmusik*, German Lieder first served as entertainment for private family life or for entertaining relatives and friends. In addition, as Gorrell mentioned, "Throughout Europe, accomplished young ladies hoped to improve their

marital prospects by distinguishing themselves as amateur musicians and artists."[1] As a result, in its early stages German Lieder did not require professional performers – singers and pianists – to perform it. It might be considered as conforming of the abilities and needs of its amateur performers and the market of music. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the German Lieder composers kept accompaniments quite simple when they composed songs.

Moreover, the Lied was generally thought of as music for one voice and piano. Once the pianoforte was invented and players' keyboard skills became more developed, composers tended to involve more and more colorful piano accompaniment in their songs. In Mozart's and Haydn's songs, the piano is on equal terms with the voice. Schubert's piano parts add descriptive and colorful effects. Going further, Schumann was often thought of as writing piano pieces first, with vocal parts added afterward. Wolf often used the piano as orchestral accompaniment to his songs; sometimes in his music, the piano section plays the melody while the voice becomes an accessory. Of course, the continual change of musical styles also affected the style of Lieder's musical setting. I will discuss this aspect in more detail in the section of musical analyses.

Furthermore, the development of the nineteenth-century German Lied is considered to be closely linked with the evolution of German Romantic Poetry. When the style of German poetry transformed from the simplified classical figure to a Romantic sentimental character, the style of German songs also changed, especially during Goethe's time. Composers were affected by the text, and were drawn to so-called text illustration. The typical example is Schubert's *Gretchen am Spinnrade*, with its continuative sixteenth-note melody on the right hand that resembles the spinning sound of a spinner. Therefore, many experts talk and write about such poetry inspiring composers to translate words into music, a concept that should especially be taken into consideration to understand Goethe's influence.[2] Seelig, for example, believes,

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[1] Lorraine Gorrell, *The NineteenthCentury German Lied* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1993), 12.

[2] Those authors such as, "[Goethe] wrote some two hundred books: plays, novels, novelettes, poetry, science, travel. His lyrical poems have attracted the best composers; there are about three thousand musical settings of Goethe's poems by Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Schumann, Wolf, and scores of others." (Elaine Brody and Robert A. Fowkes, 13); "The nineteenth –century German lied owes much of its origin and inspiration to German poetry. The lyric outpourings of the great Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and other poets of his age acted as a stimulus to song composers from Mozart in his 'Das Veilchen' (The Violet) to Wolf in his over fifty settings of Goethe poetry." (Lorrain Gorrell, 15).

"A history of the German Lied might be written on the basis of Goethe's poems alone, so influential on composers and so diverse in content, style, and form were they (Abert 1922, 107; Forbes 1972, 59)."[3] One of the central questions of this essay, however, is whether the style of poem really affects composers' thoughts and their musical style. Or, going further into the subject, whether the style of Goethe's poetry dominated the stylistic development of German Lieder.

It is true that a poem is often presented in different figures and tastes, especially when the composers setting it resided in several periods in which the dominant musical styles varied. Obviously, the music in the classical period, for example, is simpler in musical structure and more tonal than the music of the late-twentieth century. In such circumstances, can we still consider that the style of poem is the strongest influence affecting the style of Lieder, or in contrast, should we say that the changing musical style played a more dominant role in the stylistic development of Lieder? This concern is based on an examination of Goethe's poem, or, in his own term – Lied, and eight various musical settings of one of his poems – *Kennst du das Land.*

As is well known, Johan Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), a widely respected German writer, played a very important role in the evolution of German literature, contributing much to the development of the German Lied. It is said that Goethe is to German Literature what Shakespeare is to English. As Fischer-Dieskau puts it:

> *Epoch-making, and dominant in all directions, was the effect of Goethe who, in his lyric poetry, allowed unequivocal intelligibility of image to retire behind the conception of divine nature. No outward exuberance, but great inner intensity predominates. Just as he himself called his poems 'songs', so music became the basic element of his poetry. It is not only in the lyric poem but also in the ballad and the verse drama that there is much of lyrical quality, calling for music and often, too, conceived for music. His rhythm is varied and variable, and allows freedom for shaping. Goethe stands at the beginning and at the end of the art of the Lied, being set effectively by Beethoven as well as by Busoni.*[4]

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[3] Harry Seelig, "The Literary Context: Goethe as Source and Catalyst," from *German Lieder: In the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rufus Hallmark (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 12.

[4] Dietrich Fischer-Diskau, chosen & Introduction to *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*, trans. George Bird and Richard Stokes (New York: Proscenium Publishers Inc., 1998), 17.

It is true that from Goethe's time to the present, many composers adored his literary works, setting them to music (chiefly as operas and Lieder) from the 1770s onwards. Examination of various German Lieder anthologies, and also Philip L. Miller's *The Ring of Words: An Anthology of Song Texts*[5] and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's *The Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder*[6], shows that composers were interested in several famous poems and set them with those composers' own musical styles. Hence, it sometimes happened that a single poem was set to multiple musical interpretations, each of which demonstrates the various tastes and stylistic nuances of its contemporary audience. One of the most conspicuous examples is *Kennst du das Land*, a poem from Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lahrjahre*. It was set to music by several famous German and Austrian composers through the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, including C. Friedrich Zelter, J. Friedrich Reichardt, Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven, Louis Spohr, Robert Schumann, Hugo Wolf, and Alban Berg. Non-German composers, such as Anton Rubinstein, P. I. Tchaikovsky, Franz Liszt, and Ambroise Thomas also set this poem to music.

Studying these composers' musical settings of this poem can provide a clear understanding of the stylistic development of the German Lied, which evolved from the simple classical form to the more complicated romantic or modern form. At first, we must learn the role of music and poem in German Lieder. The relationship between music and poetry is deeply complex. Some authorities argue that poetry contains its own music, and it is unnecessary to attempt to combine the two arts. For example, Jacques Barzun claims the following: "Music's same power to present the sensations missing from the verbal signs of an experience explains why as a general rule the text of the best songs and operas is inferior in its kind to the musical setting. A great poem is complete in itself and needs no additions from another art. Great music is complete in itself, and only a disagreeable overlap of intentions can result from its being harnessed to great literature."[7] Northrup Frye also adds: "These elements of pitch, accent and quality of assonance are a part of chanting, and singing and chanting are, in modern times, radically different methods of associating melos and lexis. When a poem is set to music

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[5] Philip L. Miller, trans., introduction to *The Ring of Words: An Anthology of Song Texts* (New York: W.W. North & Company, 1973), 76.

[6] Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, 270-1.

[7] Philip L. Miller, selected, trans. and introduction, *The Ring of Words* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1966), xxi.

and sung, its rhythm is taken over by music. When it is chanted, all musical elements are subordinated to the words."[8] According to these two authors, it seems that the balance between music and poetry, therefore, becomes one of the important issues when studying the stylistic development of German Lieder.

Yet, considering that the poem in question, Goethe's *Kennst du das Land*, inspired multiple different styles of Lieder, it is improbable that the poem itself should be held responsible for the variations found when composers set it to music. Goethe himself is often cited as an example of a great musical poet. His favorite composers were his friends Reichardt and Zelter, whose music is so modest it did not interfere with Goethe's verse.

The sad story about Goethe's returning Schubert's songs without any comment has been often told. Some authors argue that Goethe might not even have a chance to look at or listen to Schubert's compositions. As Miller comments, "In justice it should be remembered that Goethe was now sixty-seven, and that a group of friends around him watched very carefully over the things he got to see."[9] Fischer-Dieskau also claims, "Goethe, in a conversation with his school-friend Löwenthal on 20th October, said that he could not recall the arrival of a packet from Vienna some time before. It is likely that he had not been able to study the many other Schubert settings of his poems either."[10]

However, as we know, not long before his death in 1832, Goethe finally had a chance to hear Schubert's *Erlkönig* sung by the young soprano, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient. "He kissed her on the forehead, saying, 'I heard the composition once before and did not particularly like it, but, when sung like that, the whole work becomes a visible picture.'"[11] Examining Goethe's own words, it seems that, in his final stage, Goethe was affected by the development of musical style and changed his musical taste. He eventually agreed that such dramatic music, like Schubert's *Erlkönig* would not destroy the beauty of his poems but depict them appropriately. Instead of being destructive, music becomes an auxiliary to help audiences to appreciate Lieder in depth.

Therefore, it is hard to say who is right and who is wrong, although many composers seek a balance between poem and music when composing a song. As Whitton states, "The problem of the balance of the text and the music in a Lied has

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[8] Ibid., xxii.

[9] Ibid., xxiii.

[10] Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Schubert – A Biographical Study of his Songs*, Trans. and ed. Kenneth S. Whitton (London: Cassell & Company Limited, 1971), 156.

[11] Ibid., 156.

caused endless heart-searching among German composers. They have even given the 'problem' a name: *Das Wort-Ton-Problem*, the problem of word and music. The various ages of music have 'solved' the problem in their very different ways, producing various types of Lieder."[12] Donald Tovey also adds, "No modern musical criterion is shallower than that which regards as lazy and primitive the setting of different stanzas of a poem to the same melody."[13]

However, it is questionable about the "problem" that these authors brought up. When listening to an art song, for audiences, is it really a matter of considering a composer's musical interpretation of a poem, of the poem bringing music an imaginable scene, or a fusion of both arts as a Lied? In my opinion, no matter what kind of feelings is shared with audiences, any emotion can work effectively in interpreting poems in the development of German Lieder. As we know, the Lied is a miniature *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or fusion of two arts: poetry and music. Is it necessary to reserve every space for "correctly" interpreting poems and, like Reichardt and Zelter to treat music as a servant? Considering that German Lieder originated from the traditions of both *Minnesingers* and *Volkslied* (folk song) (*Minnesiner* as poet-musicians and *Volkslied* recognized for its folk tune), it seems unnecessary to emphasize the balance of poetry and music when interpreting a Lied.

To observe Lieder of different periods, there are many factors affecting the growth of the Lied's style, and also of developing a wide appreciation. Therefore, it seems redundant to emphasize the problem of balance between music and text, as Stein laments, "In lieder before Schubert, the texture of the music is seldom so rich that the primacy of the poem is threatened. From Schubert on, however, the listener who wants to hear the song as a potential synthesis of poem and music must overcome formidable obstacles. The chief difficulty is the simple fact that the words often do not come distinctly through the complex of musical sounds."[14]

The poem, *Kennst du das Land*, was set by many composers over more than two hundred years; the varieties of setting resents the different styles and features

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[12] Kenneth Whitton, *Lieder – An Introduction to German Song* (London: Julia MacRae Books, 1984), 5.

[13] Donald Tovey, "Words and Music," *The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 212.

[14] Jack M. Stein, *Poem and Music in the German Lied from Gluck to Hugo Wolf* (Massachusetts: Harverd University Press, 1971), 3.

mentioned in the former discussion. These considerations can be appreciated by analyzing the poem and comparing its musical settings.

Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre

Goethe started his novel, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung*, in early 1777, but he wrote it at very slow pace and eventually abandoned the project when he left for Italy in 1786. In early 1794, he returned to the novel. With Schiller's encouragement and advice, the text finally appeared in installments from January 1795 to October 1796 under the new name of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*.[15] It is described as a revolution in the history of German literature and is often considered analogous to the French Revolution, because it did not simply demonstrate rhetoric but served as a *Bildung* – a work developing the national literary character, an education of moral integrity; it is also regarded as a symbolic work, which contrasts to, in Williams' term, "the anti-Latin spirit of the *Sturm und Drang*."[16]

Sturm und Drang, or storm and stress, is a movement in German literature that flourished in the 1770s. The young Goethe was the leading figure, with his play *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773) on a medieval German subject. Although parallel movements to the musical *Sturm und Drang* can be discerned in many places, even within German-speaking lands the appeal of *Sturm und Drang* was limited to a span of just a few years. Shocked by the French Revolution (1789), novelists, poets, and musicians, including Goethe, returned to the humanitarianism of the classical literature. Nonetheless, Goethe's technique of inserting lyrical poems or songs into the narrative of *Wilhelm Meisters Lahrjahre* influenced subsequent Romantic novels.

In order to appreciate the musical analyses, a basic understanding of the novel's plot is necessary. What follows is a brief summary. Wilhelm Meister, the protagonist of Goethe's novel – *Wilhelm Meisters Lahrjahre*, is a wealthy middle-class young man, who is very attracted to theatrical play, and who has a passionate relationship with Mariane, a second-rate but good-hearted actress. Wilhelm was sent by his father on a commercial journey, as his father's words explain: "Let him see the world"

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[15] Irmgard Wagner, *Goethe*, ed. David O'Connell (New York: Twayne Publishers), 96-7.

[16] John R. Williams, *The Life Goethe – A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998), 10.

on one hand, and "do some business"[17] on the other hand. However, through this business journey, Wilhelm has more opportunities to approach theatrical work, and also encounters several memorable women, including Philine, Therese, and, of course, Mignon, a mysterious, unworldly character.

He meets Mignon in Hochdorf, where she is performing as a dancing girl in a group of acrobats and dancers. She speaks in broken German and acts in a strangely formal manner. She does not know her own age, where she came from, or other details about her past. However, "Wilhelm could not take his eyes off of her; her whole appearance and the mystery that surrounded her completely absorbed his mind and feelings."[18]

Later, he discovers that Mignon is being mistreated, and buys her from the acrobats to protect her. She becomes his servant, and travels with Wilhelm. Both her desire for Wilhelm's love and her yearning for her southern homeland bring her extreme suffering and eventually cause her serious sickness. One day, when she learns of the passion between Wilhelm and his fiancée, Therese, and sees their intimate embrace, her body convulses and she dies. After her death, her uncle Marchese explains Mignon's lot. She is the daughter of his brother, the Harper Augustin, and Augustin's sister, Sperata. Because their parents gave birth to Sperata in their later years and they were afraid of incurring ridicule, Sperata was secretly taken to her father's old friend to raise as his own daughter. After her father's friend died, she was taken care of by an old woman.

Unfortunately, Sperata's love of singing and music attracted her own brother's (Augustin's) attention, and soon they fell in love. When Augustin learned that Sperata was his sister, she was already carrying a child by him. She never knew that her lover was her brother because he was compelled to stay in a monastery and she was sent away and protected by a priest. After the child, Mignon, was born, she was taken away from her mother and given to someone living by a lake.

One day, Mignon disappeared and her hat was found floating on the water. It was assumed that she was drowned. Saperata died soon after she heard of the 'death' of Mignon. Augustin escaped from the monastery and came to the chapel where his beloved's body was resting. After visiting Saperata's body, he led a vagrant life

[17] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship,* ed. & trans. Eric A. Blackall (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers New York, Inc., 1989), 20.

[18] Ibid., 54.

somewhere in Germany. He never knew Mignon was his daughter until Mignon's death. When Augustin learned this, he poisoned himself fatally.[19]

Poetic Analysis

It is to this Mignon that Goethe gives four of his finest poems, *Kennst du das Land* (Do you know the land), *Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt* (Only he who knows longing), *Heiß' mich nicht redden* (Bid me not speak), and *So laßt mich scheinen* (So let me seem). Among these four poems, *Kennst du das Land*, appears in book III, chapter I. In a previous chapter, Wilhelm starts to consider, "It was not right, because of his friendship with Laertes, his attraction to Philine and his concern for Mignon, he should stay longer than was reasonable with these people in a place where he could foster his prime desire, fulfil it, so to speak, on the side, and still go on dreaming as before, without really setting himself a definite goal."[20] Although he still has a business deal with Melina and is anxious to discover the secret of the mysterious Harper, he decides to leave – to seek his own dream.

When Mignon learns of Wilhelm's desire to leave her, she becomes very sad, clutches her heart, and falls into convulsions. Therefore, with fear and confusion, Wilhelm promises her that he will never leave her. In the next day morning, she sings the song, *Kennst du das Land*, with the Harper's accompaniment. The melody and the expression please Wilhelm greatly, he asks her to repeat it and to explain it. Then he writes it down and translates it into German.

Kennst du das land, wo die Zitronen blühn,
Im dunkeln Laub die Gold-Orangen glühn,
Ein sanfter Wind vom blauen Himmel weht,
Die Myrte still und hoch der Lorbeer steht,
Kennst du es whohl? – Dahin! Dahin!
Möcht' ich mit dir, O mein Geliebter, ziehn.
Kennst du das Haus? Auf Säulen ruht sein Dach,
Es glänzt der Saal, es schimmert das Gemach,
Und Marmorbilder stehn und sehn mich an:
Was hat man dir, du armes Kind, getan?
Kennst du es whohl? – Dahin! Dahin!
Möcht' ich mit dir, O mein beschützer, ziehn.
Kennst du den Berg und seinen Wolkensteg?
Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg;
In Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut;

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., 81.

Es stürzt der Fels und über ihn die Flut.
Kennst du ihn whohl? – Dahin! Dahin!
Geht unser Weg! O Vater, lass uns ziehn!
Know you the land where lemon blossoms blow,
And through dark leaves the golden oranges glow,
A gentle breeze wafts from an azure sky,
The myrtle's still, the laurel tree grows high –
You know it, yes? Oh there, oh there
With you, O my beloved, would I fare.
Know you the house? Roof pillars over it,
The chambers shining and the hall bright-lit,
The marble figures gaze at me in rue:
"You poor poor child, what have they done to you?"
You know it, yes? Oh there, oh there,
With you, O my protector, would I fare.
Know you the mountain and its cloudy trails?
The mule picks out its path through misty veils,
The dragon's ancient brood haunts caverns here,
The cliff drops straight, the stream above falls
sheer.
You know it, yes? Oh there, oh there
Our path goes! There, Father, let us fare!
(Translated by Eric A. Blackall)

Some studies discuss the sexual implications and meanings of several objects in this poem, for example, Jin-Tae Ahn's *Mignons Lied in Goethes "Wilhelm Meister."* However, the sexual implications and meanings are not the main point of this study. This poem is an expression of Mignon's aching nostalgia for her homeland, a vivid but distant vision of a landscape (*Land*), home *(Haus*), and the Alps (*Berg*). Moreover, Mignon's complex feelings about Wilhelm are revealed in the refrain, in which she addresses him as her lord and master (*Gebieter*) in the *Sendung* version, and more interesting, in the *Lehrjahre* version as a lover (*Geliebter*), a protector (*Beschützer*), and a father (*Vater*).

How can a person be addressed as a lover and a protector as well as a father? Goethe displays the complicated relationship between Wilhelm and Mignon in the end of Book Two, "There is nothing more moving than when a secretly nourished love and silently strengthened devotion suddenly finds itself face to face with the object that has hitherto been unworthy of its affection, but now at least realizes it. The bud that had been tightly closed for so long was ready to open, and Wilhelm's heart was ready to receive it."[21] Considering Goethe intended to create a complicated situation in this point, some authors seem to suggest Mignon's seducing Wilhelm. However, Whitton

[21] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 81.

disagrees with this opinion and argues, "[Mignon] is, on the contrary, a little girl, a waif, and any setting and any performance should underline the puzzled naivety of a child who is pathetically grateful to Wilhelm, her benefactor, and, at the same time, confused and home-sick for her native Italy."[22] It is true that Mignon apparently is such a character as Whitton's description; however, examining closely Goethe's statement about Mignon's acting, indeed, Mignon has intricate feelings for Wilhelm.

Mignon's complicated psychological state is also revealed by Natalie, a friend of Therese, after Mignon's serious illness. Mignon's doctor tells Wilhelm that according to what Natalie has pieced together from Mignon's songs and words, her affection for Wilhelm is very strong and Mignon "[conceives] the idea of how delightful it would be to spend a night with her beloved, without any further thought than fond, peaceful nestling."23 On a night when Mignon herself intended to visit Wilhelm, Mignon saw that a mystery woman was visiting him and making passionate love to him. As a result, Mignon's sickness is caused by "violent jealousy combined with unrecognized urgency of latent desire [which takes] its toll of her only half-developed nature."24

No matter how complicated this situation appears, as we seek an appropriate way interpreting the poem itself, we find an effective guide in Goethe's written reflections on the novel indicating his desired of interpretation of this poem. He wrote,

> *[Wilhelm] could not even approximate the originality of the phrases, and the childlike innocence of the style was lost when the broken language was smoothed over and the disconnectedness removed. The charm of the melody was also quite unique.*
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> *She intoned each verse with a certain solemn grandeur, as if she were drawing attention to something unusual and imparting something of importance. When she reached the third line, the melody became more somber; the words 'You know it, yes?' were given weightiness and mystery, the 'Oh there, oh there!' was suffused with longing, and she modified the phrase 'Let use fare!' each time it was repeated, so that one time it was entreating and urging, the next time pressing and full of promise.25*

In addition, as previously stated, Goethe changed the addresses for Wilhelm in

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[22] Kenneth Whitton, 156.
[23] Ibid., 321.
[24] Ibid., 320-1.
[25] Ibid., 83-4.

Mignon's song from *Gebieter* to the stronger wordings of *Geliebter*, *Beschützer*, and *Vater* in order to develop more complicated circumstances for his novel and also to present Mignon's innermost feelings about Wilhelm. How do these warn titles affect the composers' thoughts when setting the poem to music? Or, what kind of role does the poem play in Lieder?

Although it was commonly agreed that in the early German songs' convention, the poem should play a dominant role, examinations of the compositions of the classic period composers, including Reichardt, Zelter, and Beethoven, seem not to obey the rule, at least in this case of *Kennst du das Land*. Or, we might say, the eighteenth century tradition of extremely simple and brief settings is limited to displaying music and is not intended to support a poem. Therefore, I am afraid Goethe might be disappointed that none of these composers musically emphasized the three conflicting titles. Alternately, he might even not notice it; the limits of his musical appreciation abilities are common knowledge.

Generally speaking, the basic form of the Lied falls into one of three categories: strophic, modified strophic, and *durchkomponiert* or through-composed form. The strophic form follows the common pattern of folk songs, in which the stanzas are set in a repeated melody. So-called *Volkstümliches Lied*, these art songs in the folk style frequently involve *Volklied* (folk song) as the foundation of music making. Schubert's *Heidenröslein* and Brahms' German Folk songs sets are notable examples. Modified strophic is in the same structure, and the music in each stanza is similar, but the voice is modified. Such a form can be seen in Schubert's *Der Lindenbaum*, in which the middle section is modified in terms of key.

Quite different from the two strophic forms, in *durchkomponiert*, the music and accompaniment follow the meaning and mood of the text, often generating several contrasting sections. Because it gives composers the opportunity to be more meticulous in their musical delineation of textural detail, this form is always thought to potentially represent a more precise way of blending poem and music. Famous through-composed Lieder include Schubert's *Erlkönig* and *Gretchen am Spinnrade*.

This poem, *Kennst du das Land*, contains three six-line stanzas and is simply in an end-rhythm pattern of aabbcc. The three similar refrains frequently direct composers to set the poem to music in strophic form. Examining the musical settings of *Kennst du das Land*, five of the eight settings are in strophic form. The exceptions are Berg's, which only involves the first verse of the poem, and Spohr's

and Wolf's, whose settings are on a modified strophic form.

Obviously, as many authors suggest, there are some problems with the strophic form. Hall, for example, indicates:

> *Such a form is most frequently summoned by a lyric poem in which essentially a single mood or emotion is maintained. The crystallization of this mood in music must be broad and general, conceived in terms of the whole. 'Love's longing" may be the underlying sentiment, but the poet will reveal this in various lights and shadows. His stanzas will not be monotonous repetitions. The musician, however, must deny himself any detailed illustration of the poet's subtleties.*[26]

Although the poetry in *Kennst du das Land* is clearly in three stanzas, it is equally clear that the strophic setting subverts Goethe's intention. Goethe wants to present Mignon's nostalgia and her complicated sentiments to Wilhelm, as is shown in Goethe's use of the multivalent *Geliebter*, *Beschützer*, and *Vater*. It is true that the strophic form often has limitations in presenting the sentiments of the text in its entirely. In the case of *Kennst du das Land*, the form seems quite limited indeed. Unfortunately, each composer, including Goethe's preferred composers, Reichardt and Zelter, took the same action, setting the Lieder in strophic or gently modified strophic form, thereby overlooking Goethe's layers of meaning. However, considering the relationship between poets and composers versus performers and audiences, I would argue that even with the poem in strophic form, an excellent performer still can use her or his various vocal colors to completely interpret the state of the text. Therefore, if properly performed in a proper way, it seems not a matter of musical forms.

Moreover, even though each composition uses the same poem, the eight settings obviously are not in the same musical style and do not use the same musical language. In the comparison of Schubert and Wolf's versions of Mignon Song, for example, the Mignon in Schubert's modest version is more closely related to Goethe's Mignon, a thirteen-year-old waif, while Wolf's Mignon is more likely "an Italian operatic singer who looks back with longing to her Italian homeland."[27] Given the diversity in these depictions, I again question the assumption that poems are the main factor affecting the stylistic development of German Lieder.

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[26] James Husst Hall, *The Art Song* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 5.

[27] Kenneth Whitton, 157.

Musical Analyses – the Stylistic Development of Music

Stein praised J. F. Reichardt (1752-1814) as "a key figure in the development of the form. He was experimental, expanding the scope of the song form considerably… [He] developed vocal lines, harmonic effects, and piano accompaniments that released the song form from the limitations imposed on it by the First Berlin School and moved it into areas closer to Schubert."28 However, it is hard to appreciate these facts when examining Reichardt's *Kennst du das Land*. Reichardt was the first of many musicians trying to set music for Goethe's poems from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. Conventionally, easily performed *Hausmusik* style, Reichardt's Mignon (*Kennst du das Land*) is written in a single key (E flat major) – a *volkstümlich* melody with simple two or three parts harmonized piano accompaniment with the voice doubling the upper part. Perfect as *Hausmusik*, the required voice range is narrow – all notes within a single octave, with the exception of a two-line F in measure 15. Similar dynamic marking are placed throughout the piece: *f, pf,* and *crescendo*.

The next composer, Carl F. Zelter (1758-1832) set the poems of *Wilhelm Meister* to music before becoming acquainted with Goethe. In 1796, Zelter sent two copies of his first published collection of songs - *Zwölf Lieder am Clavier zu singen componiert von Karl Friedrich Zelter* – to the wife of Friedrich Unger, the publisher of *Wilhelm Meister*, with the request that Unger send one to Goethe. Goethe had been attracted to Zelter's setting of a poem, *Ich denke dein*, by Friederike Brun. It is easy to learn the sequel of the relationship between poet and composer. As we all know, Goethe greatly praised Zelter's compositions, as exemplified in his letter of May 11, 1820, "I feel that your compositions are identical with my poems: the music simply takes the poem aloft, as a gas does a balloon."[29] He also wrote in a letter to A. W. Schlegel, "If ever I looked forward eagerly to meeting anyone, I do so in Herr Zelter's case. This particular combination of [music and poetry] is so important… As far as I can judge, what characterizes his compositions is never a sudden inspiration, it is radical reproduction of the poet's intention."[30]

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[28] Jack M. Stein, 32.

[29] Ibid., 41.

[30] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Letters from Goethe*, trans. Dr M. von Herzfeld and C. Melvil Sym (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 282.

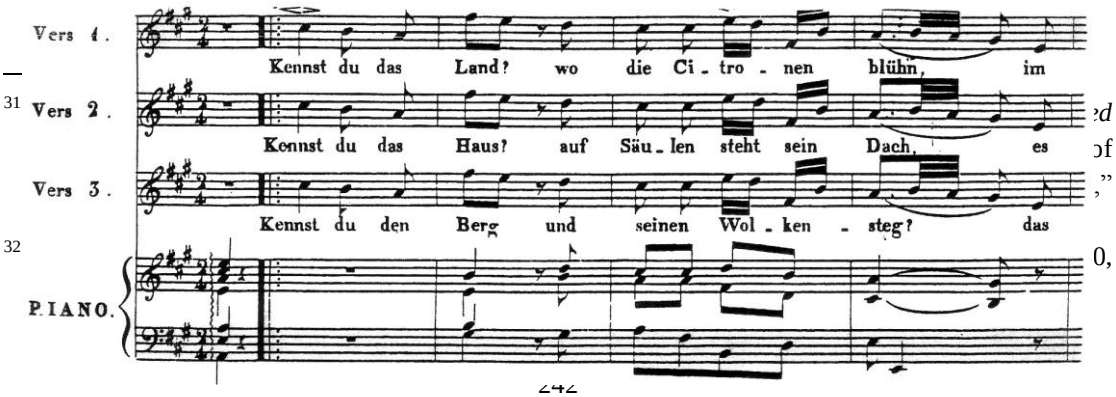
It seems that Zelter was particularly fond of Goethe's poem and composed six musical settings of it between the periods of 1795-1818 (see Table 1).[31]

Table 1.

Version	Published Year	Key	Meter	Form	Notation
1a	1796	A major	3/2	Modified Strophic	Harp-like accompaniment
1b	?	G major	3/2	Modified Strophic	Unchanged except the key
2	1828	A major	2/4	Strophic with mild modification	
3	182 1827	?	?	?	Very much like the version printed in the 1796 collection, appeared in Zelter's collection *Sechs deutsche Lieder für Altstimme mit Pianofort* ("Six German Songs for Alto and Pianoforte")
4	1826	E-flat major	3/4	Strophic	Under the title: *Mignon Lied: Kennst du das Land, etc. Zum dritten und viertenmal mit Begleitung Pianoforte componirt* (Mignon's song: "Do you know that land," etc. Composed for the third and fourth time with pianoforte accompaniment")
5	?	?	?	?	
6	1832	C major	3/2	Modified Strophic	Unfinished and completed by Landshoff with reference to the earlier version.

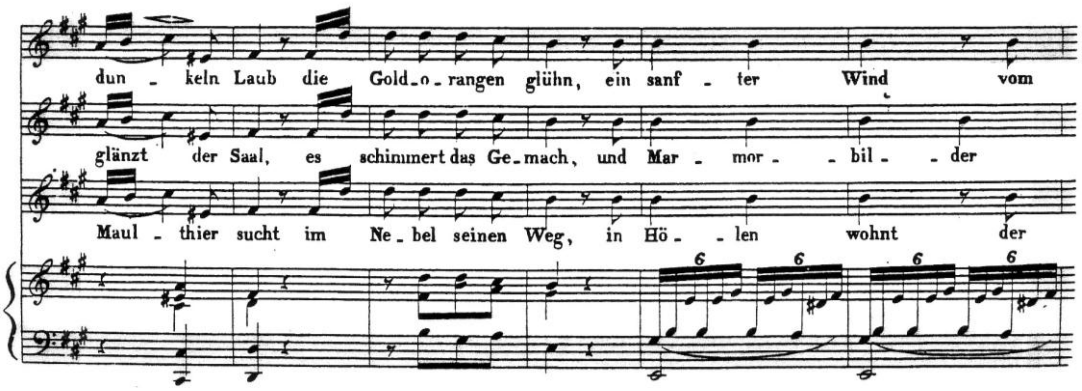
Although Zelter composed six settings, they are all in strophic or modified strophic form. Zelter's preference of strophic form is revealed in his letter of 10 January, 1824, to Carl Loewe, "the text must take priority, the strophic song is to be preferred to 'absolute through- composing,' the accompaniment must stay in the background (so that 'if necessary the melody could exist without it')."[32] Different from Reichadt's setting, the voice and the accompaniment in Zelter's setting create more of a flourish, and include many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, which results a quasi-coloratura melodic line (Ex.1).

Ex.1



Moreover, as his desire that the accompaniment serving as background for his songs, the many breaking chords in piano section allow that section to function much like a harp (Ex.2).

Ex. 2



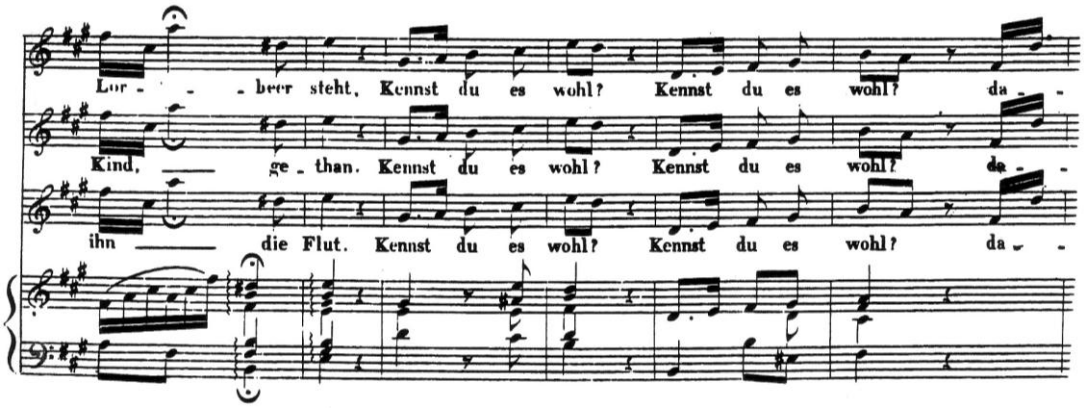
Furthermore, as Table 1 shows, Zelter's settings also remained in a single key throughout, without any modulation.

To me and to many others, Goethe's preference for Zelter's conventional compositions is understandable. Early Baroque music was criticized, as shown in J. J. Rousseau's *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768); "harmony is confused, charged with modulations and dissonances, the melody is harsh and little natural, the intonation difficult, and movement constrained."[33] Therefore, Goethe probably regarded Beethoven or Schubert's music as too complicated for interpreting or supporting his poems. However, when we appreciate a Lied, are we only concerned that the music is an auxiliary for presenting the poem?

[33] K Marie Stolba, *The Development of Western Music: A History* (Wisconsin & Iowa: Brown & Benchmark Publishers, 1994), 239.

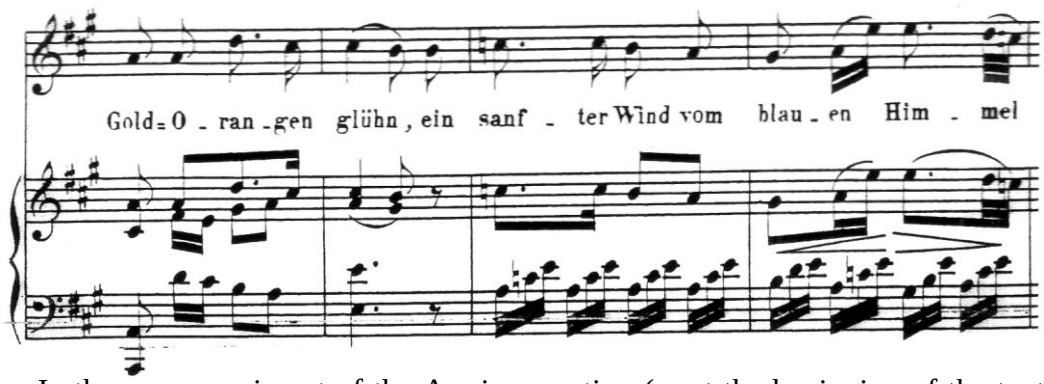
Through examining Zelter's six settings, obviously, he repeats several words and phrases, such as *dahin* and *kennst du es wohl*. Especially, in the second version (Tautwein –1, 1831), he changed *kennst du ihn wohl* to *kennst du es wohl* in verse three to complete his musical emotion. It is doubtful that Goethe would agree with that kind of change for his poem (Ex.3).

Ex.3



Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) composed his Mignon in 1809. Following the convention of simplicity, he used simple chords as accompaniment, with the top line doubling the voice. The composition was basically in strophic form, with mild variations in the third refrain. Different from both Reichadt and Zelter, Beethoven changed meters in the refrains and repeatedly modulated between A major and A minor (Ex.4).

Ex.4



In the accompaniment of the A minor section (as at the beginning of the text of *Sanfter Wind*), like Zelter, Beethoven broke the chords into triplet figures to symbolize the text – the soft wind. The noticeable point is that Beethoven uses the piano accompaniment to prepare for a key change. Such a compositional skill would never have been found in the preceding century. In addition to the key modulation relying on piano part, in the third verse, Beethoven changed the triplet figures to become a group of thirty-second notes in the left hand with chords in the right hand to thicken the texture of the accompaniment, which moves the piece toward a dynamic powerful climax. Moreover, his modification of the poem through a repetitive use of the word "*dahin*" to provide a transition back to a suitable mood for the start of the next stanza is also a new compositional technique in his time. It seems that Beethoven's song departs markedly from eighteenth century practice, to become the harbinger of the nineteenth-century German Lieder.

It is not surprising the Goethe was displeased with Beethoven's setting. " 'I cannot understand,' Wenzel Tomaschek, the Czech composer, quotes him as saying in 1822, 'how Beethoven and Spohr so thoroughly misunderstood the poem as to through-compose it. I should have thought that the divisions occurring in each stanza at the same spot would be sufficient to show the composer that I expected a simple song from him. Mignon is a person who can sing a song but not an aria."[34] According his own statement, Goethe would have also been displeased with Schubert's, Schumann's, Wolf's and, of course, Berg's settings.

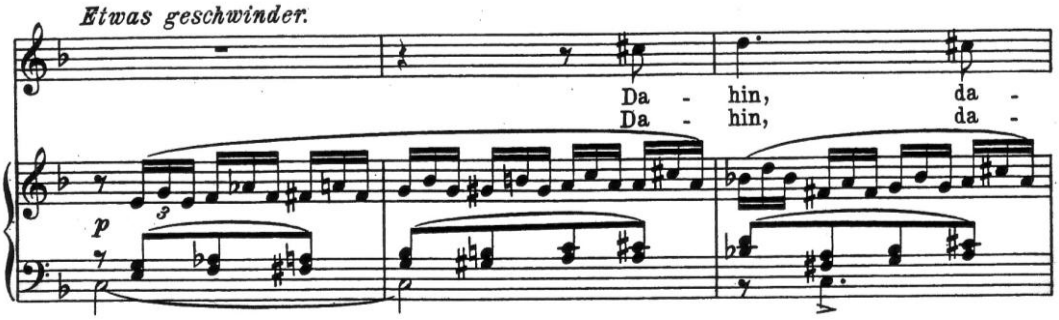
[34] Jack M. Stein, 53-4. Quote originally from Wenzel Tomaschek's autobiography in Paul Alois Klar, ed., *Libussa: Jahrbuch für 1850* (Prague,) IX, 331. Reprinted in Friedlaender, *Gedichte von Goethe in Compositionen seiner Zeitgenossen*, p. 145.

As Tomaschek's previous quotation suggests, Goethe has the same reactions to Spohr's setting as Beethoven's. Louis Spohr's (1784-1859) Mignon's Lied (*Kennst du das Land*) was composed in 1816. Over the course of his career, Spohr contributed much to the evolution of Romantic art form. He was attracted to and sought to explore the free and flexible forms, experimenting with a wide range of approaches to form and texture. Therefore, his compositions are in an assortment of forms, including strophic, modified strophic, through-composed, ternary, and AAB form. In the case of Mignon, the verses begin similarly and then diverge, as a modified strophic.

Satisfying his desire for exploring the free and flexible forms, in this piece, although the key (F major) is constant, Spohr uses accidentals throughout the piece. The meter changes almost every two or three measures, varying among 3/2, 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. Moreover, unlike the other seven settings, Spohr's Mignon's Lied does not contain symbolical musical language, such as use of continuous triplets to resemble the breeze. Although Spohr attempted to develop various musical forms, in spite of frequently changing meter and using accidentals, he generally follows conventional compositional rules. For example, as with those of many Lieder of the eighteenth century, Spohr's piano parts are generally not ambitious, though they are effective. Like previous composers' compositions, the upper line of accompaniment in Spohr's Mignon conventionally doubled the voice.

Franz Schubert's (1797-1828) setting of *Mignons Gesang* (1815) ventured further field. Unlike his frequent revisions of his other three Mignon's poems, he never returned to this piece after he completed it. Examining Schubert's settings, composed only five years after Beethoven's setting, one might find that Schubert has been greatly influenced by Beethoven in terms of texture. However, comparing the two compositions, Schubert has gone further in the direction of musical dominance than did Beethoven, especially in the *Geschwinder* (Faster) sections and the first half of the third verse. Giving the dynamic marking as *Etwas geschwinder* (A little fast), Schubert uses a series of sixteenth-note triplets to create an excited emotion, which depicts Mignon's longing and excitement about going home. (Ex.5)

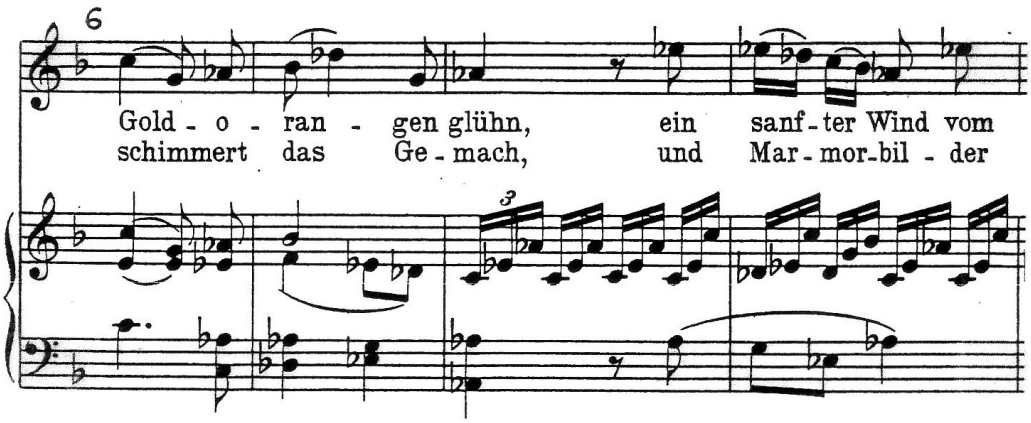
Ex.5



While describing the mountain, cloudy trails, mule, dragon, and cliff, Mignon recalls the scene of going across the Alps from Germany to Italy. In accordance with the depiction of the text, Schubert thickens the chords in the piano part, which involves many octaves in the left hand to create the solemn atmosphere.

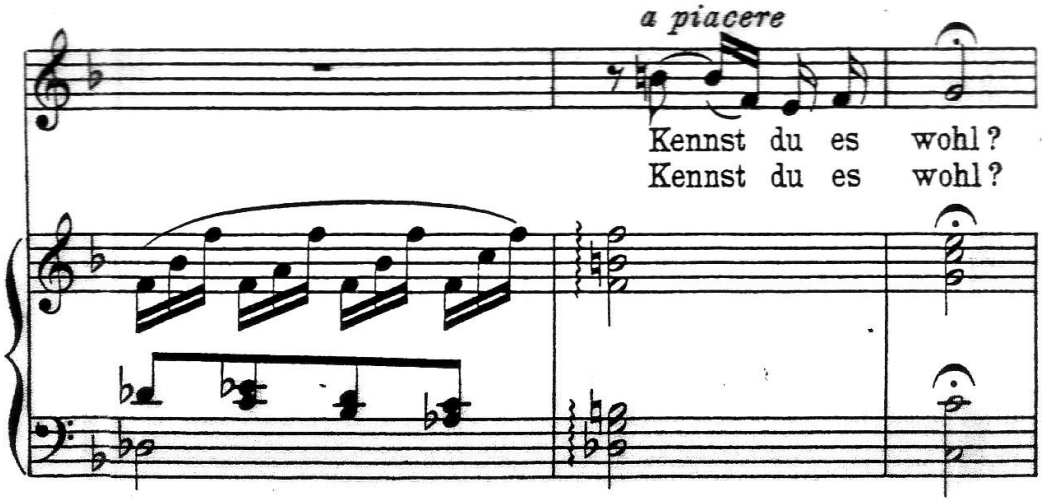
Generally speaking, Schubert's mildly modified strophic form is one in which the music texture remains unchanged; however, the music is simply repeated in the second stanza and then moves to minor for the third. Like Beethoven's setting, Schubert did not provide an introduction for this piece. Beginning with F major, the music soon turns to A-flat major at the mid-second phrase – "*Goldorangen glühn*." As we all know, Schubert had a predilection for major –minor contrasts, and for minor-keyed inflections within a major context and vice versa. In this piece, Schubert craftily used the note G at measure 6 to become a transposed point of F major to A-flat major. (Ex. 6)

Ex. 6



At the phrases "*Kennst du es wohl*" and "*Kennst du ihn wohl*" in the third stanza, there is a B-natural leading to the tonic chord of C major or leading back to the dominant chord of F major. (Ex. 7)

Ex. 7



Arriving to the speedy refrain, in order to work out the full musical line, Schubert used a sequence of word repetitions. Thus, the text becomes:

Dahin, dahin, dahin möcht' ich mit dir, O mein Geliebeter, ziehn.
Dahin, dahin, dahin dahin, möcht' ich mit dir, O mein Geliebeter, ziehn,
dahin, dahin, dahin dahin.

Some authors disagree with Schubert's disregard for the true meaning of a poem; he often modified poems to fit his music. In this particular case of the repeating *dahin*, Whitton wrote, "[Schubert]'s version is spoiled by those repetitions on 'dahin' which threaten to become comical – at one stage there are eleven!"[35] Stevens added, "…the refrain in Schubert's song being almost hilarious."[36] Moreover, Kramer also refereed to Newman's critic, [Schubert], naively scribbling pieces in Viennese coffeehouses, failed to understand the psychopathology.

> *of Goethe's harper and Mignon, perhaps because he did not trouble to read Goethe's novel, or perhaps because of his inferior 'general culture.' He set the Wilhelm Mister lyrics ' in a more or less mechanical way, vaguely sensing their underlying emotions but never realizing them in terms of music as profound as themselves …[f]or him they were just pretty poems.*[37]

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[35] Kenneth Whitton, 157-8.

[36] Denis Stevens, *A History o f Song* (London: Hutchinson, 1960), 238.

[37] Lawrence Kramer, "Decadence and Desire: The *Wilhelm Meister* Songs of Wolf and Schubert,"

Regarding these authors' considerations, in my opinion, these arguments are too arbitrary. Referring to the description of Schubert's close friend, Josef von Spaun, about his composing *Erlkönig*, "We found Schubert all aglow reading the *Erlkönig* aloud from a book. He walked to and fro several times with the book in his hand; suddenly he sat down, and in no time at all the wonderful ballad was on paper."[38] Similarly to the way he composed the *Erlkönig*, Schubert probably read the Mignon out loud many times before he wrote it down. Moreover, as Goethe himself narrates in his novel, in the case of *Kennst du das Land*, the poetry itself is definitely describing Mignon's nostalgia. I wonder even if he "understand[s] the psychopathology of Goethe's harper and Mignon," how can he depict such a "psychopathology" in his music. To these authors, it is merely a personal perception about music and is not applicable to everyone.

Compared with Schubert, Schumann was not so interested in writing songs at the beginning of his compositional career, as indicated in a letter he wrote to Hermann Hirschbach in June, 1839: "All my life I have thought vocal music inferior to instrumental and have never considered it to be great art."[39] However, only eight months later, in February 1840, in a letter to his wife, Clara, he wrote, "Oh! Clara, what a joy it is to write for the voice, a joy I have lacked too long."[40] As a famous piano composer, Schumann used his piano-writing skills to blur the distinction between instrumental and vocal music; therefore, the piano no longer serves as a servant for the poem. Following Schubert's path, Schumann carried on the ideal of seeking balance between music and text.

This kind of musical development of German Lieder obviously shows in Schumann's Mignon settings. Among these eight composers, Schumann is one of the two who provided a prelude for this poem when it was set to music. Schumann's short, four-measure prelude profoundly depicted Mignon's longing. The opening theme also serves as a quasi-ritornello between stanzas. Mignon's enigmatic personality is present in the piano part through the part's many leaps and chromatic and dissonant

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Music at the Turn of Century, ed. Joseph Kerman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 115-6.

[38] Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Schubert*. 48.

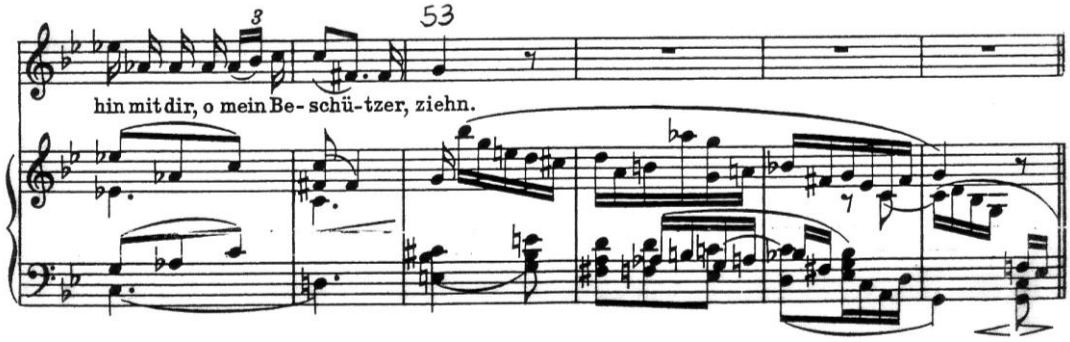
[39] Martin Cooper, "The Songs," *Schumann: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (Westport: Greewood Press, Publishers, 1977), 98.

[40] Ibid., 98.

appoggiaturas.

In strophic form, the three stanzas of the song are almost identical, with the exception of a few changes in voice part and the measure in which the harmony and the right hand melody line are altered. It becomes a diminished chord that supports the descending notes series of B-flat – G – E-natural – D – C-sharp, whose B-flat is also the highest note of the entire song. (Ex. 8)

Ex. 8



Moreover, although mirroring Beethoven and Schubert's use of triplets beginning with the third phrase, Schumann used triplets of a chord figure whose thickened harmony embodied emotions that seem to presage Wagner's music drama. Indeed, this rendition is far from the ideal classical song cherished by Goethe and Zelter.

Obviously, the path of stylistic development of German Lieder accelerate after the end of the nineteenth century. It is easy to see this when comparing Schumann's and Wolf's *Mignon* settings, since Wolf's *Mignon* is composed almost forty years after Schumann's. The musical environment was also greatly changed. There was a significant shift attributable to Wagner, who scrupulously handled words to become a major principle of vocal composition. Influenced by Wagner's motif, chromatic harmony, and declamatory style, Wolf created his own musical treatment.

Moreover, furthering the balance found between voice and piano, to Wolf, poem, voice, and piano are in an equal position. In his various volumes, Wolf subtitles in a characteristic and revealing manner: "Gedichte von …für eine Singstimme und Klavier."[41] Obviously, Wolf used "Poems" (*Gedichte*) instead of "Songs" and "voice and piano" (*Singstimme und Klavier*) instead of "voice with piano" (*Singstimme mit*

[41] Mosco Carner, *Hugo Wolf Songs* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), 7.

Klavier) to show his attitude about the three elements in a song. Such an attitude often showed through in his compositions. In his *Goethe-Lieder*, for example, Wolf frequently assigned the thematic melody to the piano, subduing the lyrical flow in the voice part. Furthermore, in a letter to Milanie Köchert about a meeting in October 1890, Wolf wrote, "On the whole I got the impression that I was *not* understood, that they busied themselves too much with *musical* matters and thereby forgot what is new and original in my musico-poetic conception. Continual chatter of musicians."[42]

Generally speaking, in this piece – *Mignon* (*Kennst du das Land*), Wolf used harmonic means to represent the pathological in music, mirroring Mignon's deepest feelings and thoughts. Moreover, Wolf intensely used chromaticism, semi-tonal *appoggiaturas*, suspensions and chromatic alterations of diatonic chords, and syncopation, to portray Mignon's unbalanced and anxious mood. Beginning with the key of G-flat major, the four-measure piano introduction is full of richness. Different from Beethoven's, Schubert's, or Schumann's changing piano figures from chords to triplets, Wolf modified the mood through a changed key signature: from G-flat major through E-flat major, A-flat major, and then a return to G-flat major for the refrain. When the key turns to A-flat major, the time signature also changes, from 3/4 to 9/8. The music seems wrenched into a new dimension, the voice cries out the question *Kennst du es wohl* ('Do you know it'; in the third stanza, *es* becomes *ihn*); in addition, the thickened chords and the right hand's descending melody with changeable dynamic in the piano part also passionately sing out Mignon's mood of longing.

Although the framework did not change, Wolf gave very different treatment to the third stanza. The ritornello is similar to the first and second one; afterward, it changes to a F-sharp minor, which is equivalent to flat minor, and thus the tonic minor of the song. In the verse of "*Kennst du den Berg und Seinen Wolkensteg*? *Das Maultier sucht im Nebel seinen Weg*; *in Höhlen wohnt der Drachen alte Brut*; *es stürzt der Fels und über ihn fie Flut*" the left hand *tremolando* spells Mignon's memories in her dangerous journey crossing the Alps into Germany. The piece ends with almost the same structure as the former two refrains; however, the postlude repeats the piano introduction of G-flat major as if there were to be yet another strophe. But there is not – after the stretched ninth chord, the singer adds a final,

[42] Ibid., 5.

wistful "*lass uns ziehn*!" (Let us go!)

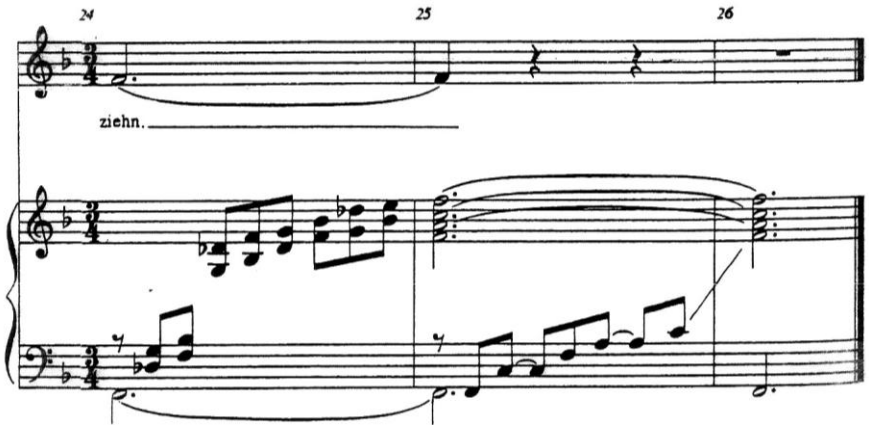
Because he quoted Goethe's own statement in the beginning of Book Three, many praised Wolf's authentic or close interpretation of Goethe's poems. For example, Eric Sams wrote, "Wolf faithfully follows these indications with a setting which despite its apparent complexity is basically in simple strophic form… The intense power of the music, even in the piano version, remains a splendid conception, quite beyond anything attempted or imagined by any other of the composers who had set this poem."[43] Carner adds, "Reading Goethe's description of Mignon's delivery, no setting is likely to satisfy the critical listener completely… Of all the composers known to me who attempted a setting of '*Kennst du das Land*,' Wolf comes nearest to achieving it."[44] The psychology of musical appreciation is complex and varied. Although many admire Wolf's work above others' – claiming it "stands high among the world's most memorable songs"[45], I am afraid Goethe would not agree with an emotional painting that relies on tension and relaxation of harmonic resources.

Taking a more moderate angle of approach, Alban Berg's Mignon was composed in 1907. In a very different poetic treatment from that of other composers, he took only the first stanza of this poem. In 1904, Schoenberg reflected on the character of this and similar songs: "When Alban Berg came to me in 1904, he was a very tall youngster and extremely timid. But when I saw the compositions he showed me – songs in a style between Hugo Wolf and Brahms – I recognized at once that he was a real talent."[46] Indeed, listening to Berg's *Mignon*, Brahms often lurks in the piano section, while the voice remains close to Wolf's declamatory style, although Berg did not care as much as Wolf did about interpreting the poem. A typical early twentieth century work, Berg's *Mignon*, although it still maintains a key signature in F major, functions as a late romantic piece, its tonal direction a little blurred. Although there were similar treatments by other composers, such as the use of triples to indicate *Ein sanfter Wing*, Berg's work involves only the first stanza, and functions as a through-composed form. The most important innovation is his modern harmonic treatment. At the end of this piece, for example, the movement from the breaking dominant-

[43] Eric Sams, *The Songs of Hugo Wolf* (London: Eulenburg Books, 1975), 192.
[44] Mosco Carner, 39.
[45] Eric Sams, 192.
[46] Mosco Carner, *Alban Berg –The Man and The Work* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 9.

seven chord leading to a breaking tonic-chord embraces something like a modern jazz flavor. (Ex. 9)

Ex. 9



The Factors That Affect the Stylistic Development of German Lieder

Through the analyses of these eight settings of Goethe's Mignon, we can easily frame the process of the stylistic development of German Lieder from Reichardt and Zelter's conventional strophic form, *volkstümlich* melody, and *Hausmusik* tradition, to Wolf and Berg's modified strophic or through-composed form and free and chromatic Romantic melody. Gradually, German Lieder earned a place in the programs of concert halls. I wonder what factors affect the stylistic change of German Lieder. Is it the development of German poetry, the variation of musical styles, the evolution of instruments (mainly of the piano), or something else? In the case of Goethe's *Mignon*, the poem remains unchanged as it is set into various musical forms to become Lieder in different forms. It seems that the style of German poetry does not affect much the style of German Lieder. In order to clarify this consideration, it is necessary to discuss the historical background of German Lieder and its poetry and the relationship between the poem and the music in these eight settings of *Mignon*. What kind of music relates to conventional German literature? How do these composers combine both arts? What kind of musical language is involved in their compositions? What is the effect under such a musical treatment?

Besides the church music tradition, the forerunners of the German Lied and its poetry include Minnesingers and Mastersingers. So-called minnesingers partially go

back to the native Germanic love poetry tradition and are also influenced by French poets in some degree, especially the Provençal trouvères- troubadours. Flourishing between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, the poet (a knight) was also a composer and instrumentalist. The themes of minnesongs are often about an unattainable love, complaints of lady's cruelty, false friends, intrigues, and traitors. The music itself often involves a stepwise melody, a syllabic text setting, a limited range, and no text repetition. The accompaniments were performed ad libitum, i.e., the instrumental figurations were improvised and not written down. Therefore, the content of poetry is obviously the prime element.

When the chivalry abrogated, minnesingers vanished with it. The mastersingers, as part of a production of a different kind of poetic activity, succeeded the minnesingers. Passed from the nobility to cultured middle-class citizens, the art of poetry was set into a learnable trade. As Brody and Fowkes explain, "A boy who was apprenticed to a shoemaker or carpenter would simultaneously be sent to the local *Sinfschule* for instruction in singing and versifying.…Just as the craftsman went through the successive stages of apprentice, journeyman, master, etc., the mastersinger was first a *Schüler*, then a *Schulfreund*, a *Singer*, a *Dichter*, and, finally a *Meister*."[47] Obviously, the music involved more of mastersingers' activities than that of minnesingers for in training to approach the goal of being a *Meister*, a *Singer* must be able to sing a certain repertoire of prescribed tunes; to attain the level of *Meister*, a mastersinger must be able to compose new tune themselves. The performance of the mastersingers still emphasized the poetry.

Arriving at the Renaissance period, the polyphonic textures spurred the need for keyboard instruments and skills. "As a result, this epoch saw the invention of many different instruments, among them the virginal, clavichord, and harpsichord, all forerunners of the piano. Composers began to develop idiomatic figurations suitable to the sound of these keyboard instruments."[48] Some composers began to seek the combination of vocal and instrumental style in one composition. The music played a more important role in a song than it had in any previous periods.

However, when opera gained its extremely elaborate development during the

[47] Elaine Brody and Robert A. Fowkes, *The German Lied and Its Poetry* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 6.

[48] Ibid., 8.

seventeenth century, affected by its clear and expressive style of declamation, the musical material of the German solo song, or continuo lied, was reduced to two basic parts: the singer's melody and the continuo accompaniment. It seems that the history of the stylistic development of music moves in circles, and now cycled back to the time of the minnesingers. The difference is that the accompaniments of this period tend to be richer in harmony.

Independently existing during the period of minnesingers, mastersingers, and other genres, the *Volkslied* finally earned its greatest attention in the eighteenth century. Therefore, by the eighteenth century, there was the *volkstümliches Lied*, whose tuneful melody, regular phrasing and meter, and routine harmonization, is considered the precursor of the romantic German Lied. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the circular path came back to the beginning, and composers strived to use the musical language that would properly interpret poems they introduced in their compositions.

Such a circular path of musical development, perfectly reflects my discussion of *Kennst du das Land*: in Reichardt and Zelter's versions, the poem dominated everything and music acted as a servant, through Spohr, Schubert, and Beethoven's music and poem standing for themselves, to Schumann's allying music and poem, and then we arrive at Wolf and Berg's synthesis of the two elements. It seems that the style of poem does not play any key roles in determining the musical development among of these composers' compositions.

Going further in discussing the poem of set into a song, when a poet presents a poem, he or she may intend to display the beauty of the verses or may try to express the sentiments of a mood. In *Kennst du das Land*, besides the mood of Mignon's nostalgia, there are lemon trees and orange groves, the laurel and the myrtle, and the scent-laden breezes of a warmer climate, all of which promise an organic feast of the senses. Mignon's lyrics do not merely narrate her own nostalgia, but also reveal Goethe's own longing for Italy. Thus, the question becomes this: what needs to be present when a poem becomes a Lied, the text or the mood? No matter what the presentation of the text or the mood, the style of the Lied depends on composers' synthesis of the musical language.

Although people often think that their songs departed from the rigid plainness of the "Berlin school" style towards the *Volkstümlich* styles of early Romanticism, Reichardt and Zelter clearly attempted to preserve the original intent of *Kennst da das*

Land; therefore, their modest musical language cautiously protected and embellished the poem. As a result, the simple chords recall the music of the thirteenth and fourteenth century *minnesinger*, whose poems were accompanied by a simple instrument – the lyre. In the hand of Reichardt and Zelter, Goethe's poem seems not to have inspired them much in their decisions of musical style. For Goethe himself, or for others who attach importance to poems rather than to music, Reichardt and Zelter's modest music is the best partner for a poem, because such music does not interfere with the text.

Wolf also intended to present the true style and features of the text; however, he used more modern musical language than others to draw out or to interpret the poem. His use of various syncopations in rhythm, thickened chords, chromaticism in the melody, floating tonal orientation, a changeable dynamic, and the use of the orchestral piano creates a most passionate *Mignon*. Many praised his ability to fuse music and poetry. Philip L. Miller, for example, truly admired Wolf, and wrote, "Though Schubert remains the warmest and most lovable of the lieder composers, Hugo Wolf is now generally acknowledged the master of masters. Here is a musician whose literary taste is above reproach, one who became so absorbed in the poetry that caught his imagination that he would concentrate on one poet at a time until he had exhausted such material as he could respond to."[49]

However, some were concerned that adaptations in such a manner overemphasized the display of the poem, and that the strong musical language of such Lieder eventually became disadvantageous for poem itself. For example, Kravitt argues,

> *'The Modern Lied,' identified as the creation of Wolf, is 'poetry in the eminent sense of word,' Rudolf Louis objected. 'This is the first time in the history of the lied that the musician has merged [himself] completely with the poet.' Wolf objective, Louis continued, is to make 'evident with music that which the poet could only suggest with words,' with the result that the poetry receives greater attention than the music. The danger of this 'new practice' is that declamation becomes ubiquitous: it destroys melody and dissolves poetry into*

[49] Philip L. Miller, xxiii.

prose.[50]

It is true that the voice line carries the text. Riechardt and Zelter simplified the accompaniment and allowed the voice to bring out the text. In contrast, Wolf used the voice as a declamatory form, and displayed the mood of text in the chromatic and complicated harmonic progression. It seems that the style of poem did not affect Reichardt or Wolf when they decided the musical language for this poem. In contrast, the musical style itself directly affected the stylistic development of German Lieder. The almost one hundred year interval between Reichardt and Wolf, both of whom worked with the same original poem, produces *Mignon* in totally different musical styles. How the poem inspired them matters much less, in the end, than how the composition was affected by the gradual development of musical style.

Obviously, after Reichardt, the musical style of German Lieder gradually changed, from a simple, classical style to a complex, Romantic style. Even the terminology reflects the differences between the traditional, "old-fashioned" tunes and the modern German lieder: originally labeled the *Melodielied* (lyrical song), the *volkstümlich* Lied (folkish song), or the *Stimmungslied* (songs with gentle evocative mood), Lieder became known as declamatory songs, symphonic lied, and orchestral songs. It is doubtful that these large-scale changes in the styles of Lieder can be directly attributed to the style of German poetry.

After Reichardt and Zelter, and following the *Volktümlich* tradition, Schubert's songs always contained beautiful melodies. Capell describes Schubert's style of song:

> *Schubert's melody was from the first irresistible. Schubert and melody – it is a truism, the two are almost synonymous. But in a great number of Schubert's song the vocal line is not self-supporting. A professional paradoxist might disparage his gift of melody by isolating a given line. The life of his melody is again and again found to depend on associated figures and harmonies… The vocal line in Schubert is in any number of songs a wonder of invention, shapeliness, and grace; but to name one of his songs brings to mind not just that,*

[50] Edward F. Kravitt, *The Lied: Mirror of Late Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 3-4.

> *but a general view – not alone the caroling miller but also the tumbling water and the wheel, not only the cry of the Erl-king's prey but also the terrible galloping and the tossing of the eerie branches on the fatal ride, and so on with hundreds of Schubert's musical scenes.*[51]

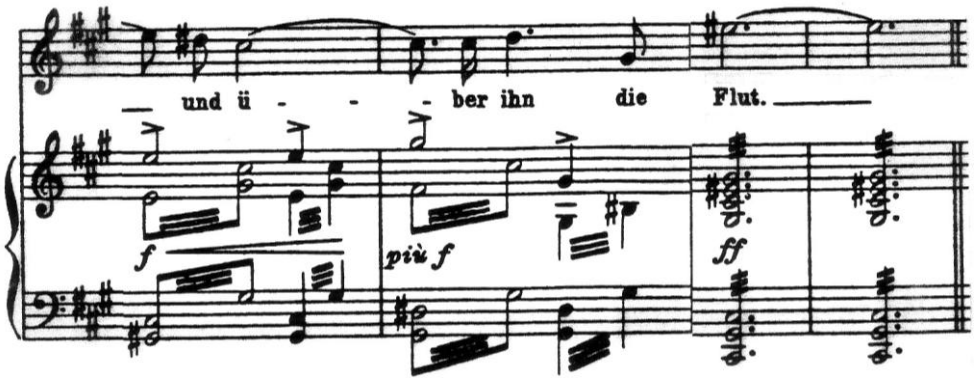
Moreover, the musical inflection commonly recognized as the special Schubertian technique is modulation; his use of this technique influenced the compositional style of up-and-coming youngsters. The factor that inspires a Schubertian picturesque style is the literal depiction of a poem, rather than the meaning, mood, or style of the writing.

Schumann, as a composer of the Romantic period, devoted himself exclusively to the composition of piano works; his songs are an extension of the piano-music, and often express Schumann's own world of feeling. The characteristics typical of Schumann's compositions are the preludes and the long expressive postludes. Moreover, he often repeated or altered words or verses to remold their meaning closer to the mood he wished to convey. This 'editing' is not only a trait of Schumann's work, but is typical of composers in the Romantic movements. Again, it is clear that the style of Schumann's songs is not necessarily directly related to the style of the poem.

In the late Romantic period, musical styles changed significantly. Naturally, these compositional techniques were involved in German Lieder, such as exaggerated and over-complicated piano sections, the application of an extended vocal range, and the frequent use of chromatic harmonies and enharmonic progressions. When this kind of musical style applied to the Lied, it became known as the "Modern Lied." As well known that Wolf's *Mignon* is a typical example of this genre. Beginning with mysterious chords, contrast with conventional harmonic progression, the melody of this piece gradually moves to the final dramatic, surprise, and excitement in E-sharp on the "*Flut*" (waterfall) to become a dominant chord of E minor. (Ex. 10)

[51] Richard Capell, *Schubert's Songs* (England: Duckworth, 1973), 40-1.

Ex. 10



Although many praise Wolf's craft for its literary taste and ability, his use of musical language does not really vary according to the structure or the style of a poem. In other words, I would not agree that Wolf declaimed the poem literally. Instead, I argue that he fused the mood of the poem into his personal musical language, where the dramatic tension and relaxation passionately paint a mature Mignon's homesickness for her native Italy. In the same vein, Kramer argues,

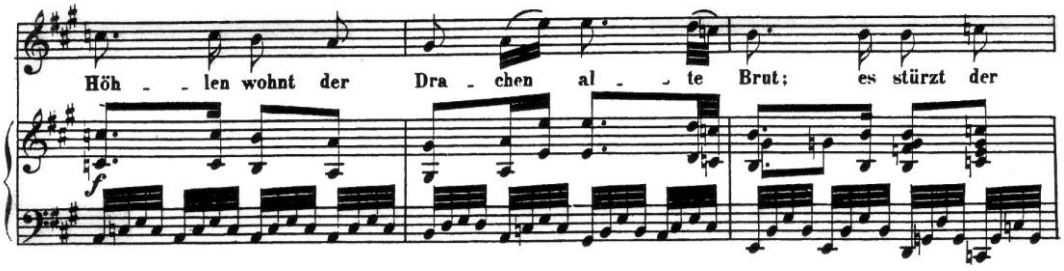
> *Wolf's rewriting of Schubert's settings depends less on his 'understanding' – that is, his interpretation – of particular texts than on his adherence to a culturally ascendent model of human personality that differs from Schubert's. Wolf's expressive differences from Schubert can no more be extricated from late nineteenth- century representations of the self than his purely musical differences can be extricated from the influence of Wagner.*[52]

It is so true that these composers' attitudes in using of different musical ideas to interpret the same poem sometimes reflects their personalities and what the text means to them, rather indicating a sensitivity about the poem's meaning to the original poet. For example, in this case of *Kennst du das Land*, although Beethoven, Schubert, and Wolf all decided to use thickened chords in presenting Mignon's recollections about suffering on her journey from Italy to Germany, the use of different musical treatments creates Lieder that are very different in terms of musical effect. Beethoven chose to remain the previous key; therefore, even though he

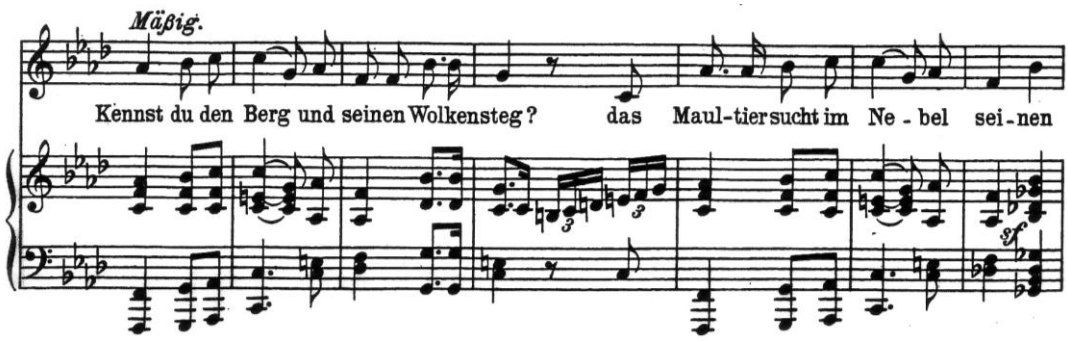
[52] Lawrence Kramer, 116.

doubled the melody in the right hand, it did not make much difference as previous two verses (Ex.11~1). Schubert modulates this section to a related minor key, also using dark thickened chords, with the melody often staying at the lower register, which creates a picture of sadness and helplessness (Ex.11~2). In the same vein, Wolf also chose the minor key to state Mignon's feelings; however, Wolf's use of a passionate tremolo in both hands and wide range of quasi-orchestral sonority develops more organoleptic stimulation (Ex.11~3).

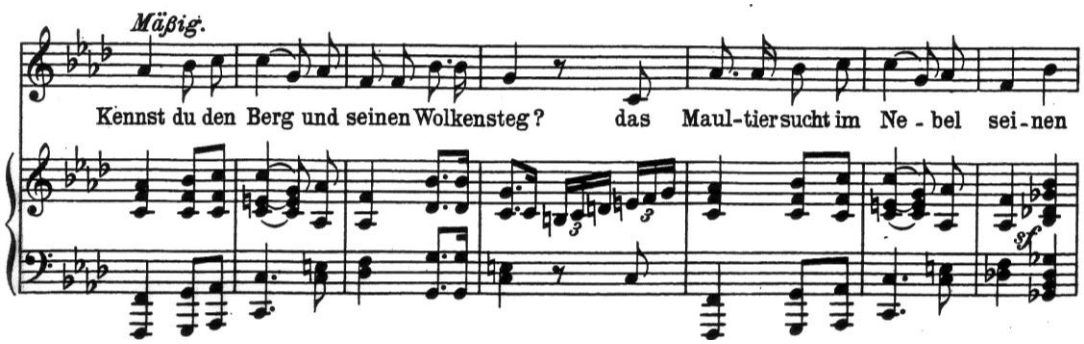
Ex. 11~1



Ex. 11~2



Ex. 11~3



Many authors argue that composers should "authentically" present poems when they set them into music. There are still many concerns about the relationship between

music and poetry being problems for a song-composer. However, as previous discussion shows, it is impossible to interpret fully the poets' intention when declaiming their poems. It is also impossible to attempt to interpret fully the poets' intention through abstract musical language. The communication of poets, composers, performers, and audiences always creates barrier on certain levels, since everyone is physically individual with psychological differences in musical feelings. When poetry meets music, music serves as a stimulus and can only encourage the imagery from the individual experiences and the understanding of the text. Furthermore, no matter what kind of style the poem is, setting into music of different styles, one poem can be presented as songs in various types. Thus, the style of the poetry certainly does not dominate the stylistic development of German Lieder.

Conclusion

Above all, a study of these eight settings of Goethe's *Kennst du das Land* reveals that the style of Goethe's poems seems disengaged from the stylistic changes of German Lieder, at least in the case of Mignon's Lieder; in contrast, the evolution of musical styles plays a very important role for the post-eighteenth century German Lied's development. Through this study, I gained a greater understanding of German literature, the stylistic development of German Lieder, and the musical characteristic of various composers that, I believe, will benefit my teaching and performing career in the future.

Indeed, Goethe's wonderful poems inspire many composers to devote themselves to the field of song writing. Although it seems that Goethe's poems did not really affect the style of German Lieder, composers and German Lieder lovers can still appreciate Goethe's contribution in providing beautiful poetry that inspired the certain of many German Lieder. Without Goethe's efforts, concert halls would be missing a significant portion of the splendor that we find in the repertoire of German Lieder.

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