

1 | In Search of Song

Richard Strauss's "Schlechtes Wetter" between Poem, Music, and Performance

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Despite apparent differences in their aims, practices, and discourses, performers and musicologists of the Lied are brought together in search of song by the common activity of interpretation. In this chapter, I want to frame the interdisciplinary critical approaches taken in this book by investigating a song that has much to teach us about the nature of song as interpretation: Richard Strauss's "Schlechtes Wetter," Op. 69 No. 5 (1918). First, from the musicological side (and with brief reference to two classic theoretical accounts of the methodology of Lied analysis by Kofi Agawu and Lawrence Zbikowski), I consider Heinrich Heine's poem and Strauss's setting of it as meta-texts that reflect on the artists' creative processes, observing in particular how Strauss's song can also be heard to reveal the creative and interpretative essence of the traditional manner of identifying text–music relationships in the Lied. Turning then toward the work and perspectives of performers, I explore Strauss's song as it was interpreted by soprano Elisabeth Schumann and the composer at the piano on their 1921 tour of the United States. I also provide some brief concluding reflections on my own performance of the song as pianist with soprano Sari Gruber in recitals given over the past decade. These performances radically alter our understanding of what the song is about and who we are to understand its vocal persona to be, illustrating the vital role of performance in determining what a song is and means. As I will suggest, the very adaptability of the Lied, its susceptibility to reinterpretation and transformation through performance, is perhaps its most distinguishing quality among the genres of classical vocal music, justifying its membership in the larger family of "song."

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With its pervasive ambiguity of tone and sophisticated irony, Heine's poetry is especially susceptible to reinterpretation through performance – no wonder his poetry has been set to music more frequently than that of any

other poet in the entire Lied repertoire.¹ So let me begin with the thirty-first poem of Heine's *Die Heimkehr* (1823–1824), which I will read as a poetic reflection on the act of writing poetry itself, depicted as a process of imaginative transformation:²

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|--|---|
| Das ist ein schlechtes Wetter, Es regnet und stürmt und schneit; Ich sitze am Fenster und schaue Hinaus in die Dunkelheit. | This is really bad weather, It's raining and storming and snowing; I sit by the window and look Out into the darkness. |
| Da schimmert ein einsames Lichtchen, Das wandelt langsam fort; Ein Mütterchen mit dem Laternechen Wankt über die Straße dort. | There shimmers a lonely little light, That wanders slowly along; A little old mother with a little lantern Totters across the street over there. |
| Ich glaube, Mehl und Eier Und Butter kaufte sie ein; Sie will einen Kuchen backen Fürs große Töchterlein. | I think she has bought Flour and butter and eggs; She wants to bake a cake For her big darling daughter. |
| Die liegt zu Haus im Lehnstuhl, Und blinzelt schläfrig ins Licht; Die goldnen Locken wallen Über das süße Gesicht. | That one lies at home in an armchair, And blinks sleepily into the light; The golden locks flow in waves Above the sweet face. |

The question that implicitly precedes and motivates this poem is *was ist das?* – “what is this?” – that is, what is this image that presents itself to the poet's gaze? His first answer is a succinct two-line bulletin: “This is [*das ist*] really bad weather, it's raining and storming and snowing.” For now, we can read those opening lines as objective reportage, a capsule weather update in which the poet relates the mere facts of his perception. In the next two lines, however, he looks out into the stormy darkness through the frame of the window in search of more detail, more information, more

¹ As an indicator, the popular text-and-translation website <http://lieder.net> lists 7,033 Heine settings as of April 23, 2022; Goethe is a distant second at 2,981 settings. On the crucial role of performance, musical or otherwise, in understanding Heine's poetry, see Binder, “Performance Matters,” and Binder, “Transformation of Poetic Irony.” The most important large-scale study of Heine's poetry as set by Lied composers remains Youens, *Heinrich Heine*.

² Heinrich Heine, *Buch der Lieder*, 39th ed. (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1876), 149. This edition dates from the decade when the young Strauss first set Heine's poetry. See Kennedy, *Strauss*, 23. All translations in this chapter are mine.

clarification of his initial impression, and ultimately more fodder for his inventive faculties. “What is this?” becomes a more expansive sort of question: “What else do I see, and how else might I understand what it is that I see?” The poet’s putatively empirical observations now lead to increasingly creative speculations. In the second stanza, he discovers a shimmering light in the storm, but we cannot be totally certain that its source is a little old mother’s lantern, as plausible as his claim may be. In the third stanza, the poet tells us what else he “thinks” (or “believes”) the lantern holder is carrying, signaling a further shift toward conjecture. We might become skeptical that he really knows which groceries this mother has supposedly bought, and even more skeptical that he knows she is going to bake a cake with them, let alone that the cake is for her daughter. By the end of the poem, the poet’s window now seems to look directly (and impossibly) into the mother’s house, and his initial perceptions are entirely transformed by his imagination. The falling rain and snow of the storm become the flowing locks of the daughter’s golden hair, and the wandering little light becomes the firelight into which the daughter blinks, her sweet face illuminated at last by the glow.

At the same time, if we revisit those opening two lines, we notice that they are tinged with grumpiness. “Es ist schlechtes Wetter” would be a more ordinary and less pointed descriptive phrase here, and the swift accrual of slushy-sounding meteorological phenomena may suggest some annoyance and disgust with all that precipitation. If we then read the opening storm image metaphorically, as an indicator of the poet’s bad mood, his investigation and elaboration of this image over the course of the poem can be heard to produce an emotional and psychological insight. The question *was ist das?* is no longer only about what the image is or what else it might provoke in the poet’s pictorial and narrative imagination, but also about what the image means or symbolizes, and the answer to all these cognate questions turns out to be the *Töchterlein*, the daughter who appears at the end of the poem as the storm’s poetic equivalent. As we know from the rest of *Die Heimkehr*, the *Töchterlein* is the infamous love object of Heine’s poetic universe, enchantingly beautiful yet also callous, spoiled, and utterly indifferent to the poet’s yearning and pain. In the ambivalent concluding image of the *Töchterlein* drowning by the fire, its tone poised somewhere between judgmental sarcasm and transfixed adoration, the conceit of the poem is revealed: The *Töchterlein* “is” the storm that simultaneously agitates and soothes the poet’s heart.³

³ For a different analysis of the poem along with an extensive discussion of the poem’s reception in literary scholarship that aligns with the reading presented here, see Binder, “Performance Matters,” 95–97.

In my reading, Heine's poem dramatizes the process of poetic perception (i.e., capturing and exploring observed reality in poetic language) as a creative act of interpretation that takes the form of a search for the meaning of what is perceived. The poet not only identifies and describes his visions of bad weather and a shimmering light but also probes them further to see what else they might represent or express at a more imaginative level. The traditional practice of art song analysis and criticism – what I will call the "standard model" – is also a creative act of interpretation in search of meaning, and its premise is to answer the question *was ist das?* in relation to the musical elements of a song. To wit, what is the music in the song supposed to represent as an expression of the poem? How does the music depict, enact, or otherwise communicate the poem's images, ideas, and perspectives? In his 1992 article "Theory and Practice in the Analysis of the Nineteenth Century Lied," Kofi Agawu described this standard model as a "pyramid structure with music at the base and words at the top," in which the semantic significance of the music is always to be found somewhere in the words of the poem.⁴ An analysis using the standard model seeks to connect as many dimensions of the music as possible to the meaning of the words, and we deem an analysis using this model to be most successful when it illuminates musical analogues for textual ideas that have escaped our attention thus far.

The standard model never seems to lose its appeal as a way of talking and writing about the Lied, but the knowledge it produces is of a certain kind, and Agawu's critiques of it remain salient. For one thing, Agawu notes that assertions about musical meaning issuing from the standard model are usually based on casual, ad hoc reasoning, rather than an exhaustive and methodical accounting of the relationships between music and text in a given song or repertoire. When an analyst makes an interpretative claim about the music's expression of the text, we tend to agree or disagree based on its appeal to our sensibilities, on whether it "works" for us, rather than on some objective, quantifiable set of criteria. However, as Agawu observes, these assertions "are of some interest on account of their putative artistic value, their rhetorical power or the degree of interpersonal resonance they achieve."⁵ When we encounter a novel and compelling interpretation of a song's music in terms of its text, we appreciate and celebrate it as a creative insight that expands

⁴ Agawu, "Theory and Practice," 6. What I am calling the "standard model" was the third of four analytical models that Agawu proposed and considered in his article. For another recent discussion of Agawu's article, see Rodgers, "Song," 316–19.

⁵ Agawu, "Theory and Practice," 9.

and deepens our sense of a song's potential for meaning, with no further verification necessary. Agawu is targeting music analysts here, for whom systematic objectivity would be a typical concern, but performers regularly and freely engage in this sort of critical practice as well in lessons, rehearsals, and masterclasses. With the standard model, no matter the discipline of the practitioner, we are in the realm of art, not science.⁶

Another of Agawu's critiques of the standard model is that it always begins with a reading of the poetic text (as I have done) and only then proceeds to find musical features of the song to support this reading, all under the assumption that the composer also worked in that order: First, read a poem, then set it to music. There are several issues here. First, we need to acknowledge that poems themselves are open to multiple plausible interpretations – again, Heine's work is exemplary here – so we cannot treat the poem as a factual given with a single accepted meaning. Moreover, our individual reading of a poem will inevitably point us in a certain direction with respect to the interpretation of its musical setting. Agawu reminds us that this direction has its casualties, in that some analytical insights might be lost if we assume that musical meaning in a song must originate with and be driven by the words, as the standard model seems to imply, and not the other way around. After all, as Agawu wondered, “are there not songs for which a musical idea went in search of a poetic idea?”⁷

That is exactly what Richard Strauss claimed of his own songwriting process in some remarks written in 1895 at the request of the musicologist Friedrich von Hausegger.⁸ In these remarks, Strauss states that it is the musical idea which will come to him first as the product of the inaccessible inner workings of fantasy, after it has been inspired and nourished by life experience and intellectual stimulation. Some sort of content in need of expression (Strauss gives “cheerfully grotesque content” and “religiously ecstatic content” as examples) is developed internally through this mysterious subliminal process until it suddenly emerges into the composer's consciousness as a musical idea.⁹ At this point, Strauss must ascertain the meaning and import of his new idea, so, like Heine before him, he too asks the pivotal question *was ist das?*:

⁶ For a critique of music analysis as science and a consideration of analysis and performance as related interpretative arts, see Binder, “Art and Science.”

⁷ Agawu, “Theory and Practice,” 10.

⁸ The original private manuscript of Strauss's handwritten remarks, along with information about how Hausegger drew from it in subsequent publications, is given in Werbeck, *Tondichtungen*, 534–39.

⁹ Werbeck, *Tondichtungen*, 534.

Now just as a father looks at a newborn for the first time: is it a boy, is it a girl[?]; – thus do I take a look at my [musical] "idea": "what does it express[?]" – : which country [does it come from?] – which content [does it contain?] – (so this would be Hans Sachs's "interpretation of true dreams [*Wahrtraumdeuterei*]").¹⁰

Like the cobbler-poet Hans Sachs in Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Strauss regards artistic creation as an act of interpretation in which the artist gives conceptual definition to aesthetic ideas that have already gestated in the womb of his subconscious. For Strauss, if the urge to give birth to a musical idea sends him to a book of poetry, and a particular poem elicits such an idea by supplying an appropriate conceptual definition for it, the result would be a Lied:

I've had no desire to compose for months, suddenly one evening an uncertain desire – to compose a Lied: I take up a book of poetry, leaf through superficially, a poem strikes me for which a musical idea turns up, often before I have really read through [the poem]. I sit down, in ten minutes the whole song is done. Apparently music has accumulated in me internally and specifically music of a very determinate content – when the vessel is full to the brim, so to speak, if I then hit upon a poem that only approximately corresponds [to this music] in content, then the opus is there in a flash[.]¹¹

When an incipient musical idea meets the catalyst of a matching poetic text, a Lied effortlessly flows from Strauss's pen. But if the musical idea clamors for expression without such a catalyst at hand, its delivery will not be so easy, as Strauss immediately goes on to explain:

[I]f the poem is not found – unfortunately quite often the case – then the urge to production will probably be satisfied and a poem that appears to me to be capable of musical setting will be transformed into tones – but [the work] goes slowly, it becomes contrived, the melody flows sluggishly, all one's technique must be of service in order to bring something into existence that can stand before strict self-criticism – and all this, because in the decisive moment the right two flintstones did not get struck together, because the musical idea, which had been prepared inwardly – God knows how – did not find the perfectly corresponding poetic conceptual vessel and must now be remodeled, reinterpreted, just in order for it to appear [*zur Erscheinung zu gelangen*].¹²

For Strauss, then, songwriting is a process in which inspired musical ideas of determinate yet unspecified content are forever in search of their most appropriate and fitting poetic correlates. When a musical idea finds its

¹⁰ Ibid., 536.

¹¹ Ibid., 537. For other translations and discussions of this passage, see Getz, "Lieder," 337, and Kennedy, *Strauss*, 103.

¹² Ibid.

perfect poetic counterpart, the two flintstones strike and a compelling song flashes into being. But Strauss might have to read through a lot of poems and wrestle mightily with his musical ideas in order to bring about that happy coincidence.

Strauss returned to these ideas about his creative process in the summer of 1918, just as he was returning to song composition again after a hiatus of twelve years following the retirement of his wife, Pauline, from the recital stage.¹³ On June 21, 1918, Max Marschalk, composer and critic for Berlin's *Vossische Zeitung*, met with Strauss for an interview while the latter was in Munich to attend a music festival.¹⁴ When the discussion pivoted to the topic of Strauss's working methods, Strauss took time to think before offering some reflections that are remarkably similar to those he wrote for Hausegger in 1895, beginning with these comments about song composition:

"Yes, you see," he then let out, "this is a question that cannot be answered briefly and without some explanation. Sometimes production flows with great difficulty, and sometimes inspiration is there immediately, and afterward I can hardly give an account of how I came up with a theme, a melody, a Lied. Just now, while I was waiting for you, I picked up a volume by Achim von Arnim and read the little poem 'Stern,' and while reading, musical inspiration came to me as well. I immediately wrote down the Lied, and if you want, I will perform it for you." Then he sat down at the piano and sang and played the Lied ["Der Stern," ultimately published as Op. 69 No. 4] which, in its simplicity, in its true and noble folklike quality, in the uprightness of its melodic line, seemed to me to be one of his most happy inspirations.¹⁵

Later that summer, after Strauss had gone back to his villa in the Bavarian Alps at Garmisch, Marschalk paid him another visit to continue the conversation, and at one point, Strauss added the following clarification of his earlier account:

A melody that seems to be born in the moment is almost always the result of laborious work. And by the way: work too is a thing of talent. The Lied "Stern" with the text by Achim von Arnim that you recently got to know was born in the moment; also the Lied "Traum durch die Dämmerung [Op. 29 No. 1]." But these are rarities.¹⁶

¹³ For a full account of the Strauss's career as recitalists together, see Petersen, *Ton und Wort*, 142–61. The *Sechs Lieder*, Op. 56 (1906), were the last published opus of songs Strauss completed before a burst of song composition that began in late January 1918 and included opp. 66–69; see the tables in Petersen, *Ton und Wort*, 119 and 195–98.

¹⁴ See Trenner, *Chronik*, 399. Marschalk's article based on his summer conversations with Strauss was ultimately published as "Gespräche mit Richard Strauß," *Vossische Zeitung*, October 15, 1918, evening edition, n.p.

¹⁵ Marschalk, "Gespräche." ¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The composition of "Der Stern" (The Star) on June 21, 1918, demonstrated that rare moment of creative serendipity Strauss had once described in 1895, when the wellspring of musical inspiration finds an appropriate poetic vessel and a new song spills out almost of its own accord. Later that same day, after the meeting with Marschalk had led him to mull over long-held beliefs about his compositional process, Strauss picked up Heine's "Das ist ein schlechtes Wetter" and set it to music; this song would ultimately join "Der Stern" in the Op. 69 publication *Fünf kleine Lieder* as well.¹⁷ In this context, Strauss's "Schlechtes Wetter" can be heard as a meta-song in which the composer self-consciously depicts the more frequent and less fortunate creative scenario, in which there is something unsatisfactory about the first meeting of musical and poetic ideas, prompting the composer to go in search of other poetic correlates while adapting his musical materials accordingly. Just as Heine probes the poetic potential of his initial storm image to discover what further significance it might hold, Strauss (who in my meta-analysis can be heard as the protagonist of his own song) observes and conceptually defines his initial musical ideas before going on to test them for more promising poetic associations. And because the textual imagery keeps changing while the musical ideas remain more or less the same, Strauss's song also serves as an ironic commentary on the standard model of song analysis, in which the words are always privileged as the consistent and reliable indicator of the music's semantic meaning. By undermining our assumptions about this meaning at every turn, the song prevents us from settling too comfortably in our conclusions about what a musical idea is supposed to represent simply because it had been linked previously to some aspect of the text.¹⁸

The first three measures of the song give us two of the three elements that make up virtually all the song's musical material, as seen in Example 1.1: a descending arpeggiated figure in thirty-second notes (*a*), here in F minor, and dissonant crunches on the second and third beats of the 3/8 meter, usually heard as grace note figures and involving scale degrees 6 and 5 (*b*).

What is this music supposed to be? *Was ist das?* Strauss, who I am imagining as the singer of his song in this analysis, reflects upon his compositional inspirations as they appear in the piano part, and he has the answer readily at hand: "It is really bad weather," the falling and splattering of rain and snow, with hemiolas indicating the storm's increasing agitation from m. 7 onward. By m. 18 (see the beginning of Example 1.2), the storm has abated somewhat, leaving us with ordinary grace notes (perhaps the

¹⁷ Trenner, *Chronik*, 399; Petersen, *Ton und Wort*, 119.

¹⁸ For a full score of the song, see [https://imslp.org/wiki/5_Kleine_Lieder,_Op.69_\(Strauss,_Richard\)](https://imslp.org/wiki/5_Kleine_Lieder,_Op.69_(Strauss,_Richard)).

Example 1.1 Richard Strauss, "Schlechtes Wetter," mm. 1–12

Ziemlich rasch

(a) Das

ist ein schlech - tes Wet - ter, es

reg - - - - - net und

stürmt und schneit;

f sfz *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *ff sfz* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*

splashing of puddles) and the arpeggiated figure in a lower register (perhaps distant thunder). In m. 21 Strauss hits upon the third and final musical element (*c*), a broad stepwise melody in the right hand, and again a conceptual definition is immediately forthcoming in the text: It's the brooding of a melancholy Strauss looking through the metaphorical window and observing his dark musical materials, wondering if something better might be made of them (Example 1.2).

In m. 32 Strauss takes the grace notes (*b*) up into a high register, triggering a new poetic association. Now he identifies them as a shimmering little light ("Das schimmert ein einsames Lichtchen"), and when Strauss declares a few bars later that the light is coming from the mother's lantern, the sporadic appearances of the arpeggiated figure (*a*) going on in the left hand become the mother's lurching steps as she totters across the street. Meanwhile, the chords that begin to thicken the grace notes in m. 44 hint at a new possible meaning for figure (*b*) that only comes into greater focus once Strauss lets his fancy take flight in mm. 52–53 with the words "Ich glaube." Strauss now begins to "think" or "imagine" that his original musical inspiration may properly serve a more cheerful poetic purpose. The coming together of the grace note chords (*b*) with the principal melody (*c*) (now in the right hand) and the realignment of the arpeggiated figure (*a*) back into the middle of the bar as part of the accompaniment all signal that a waltz is taking shape out of the musical materials that originally surfaced from the depths of Strauss's subconscious, and this rollicking, lusty waltz in *D* \flat major now goes in search of a suitable poetic counterpart. Strauss's search gathers momentum as he lists the groceries in the mother's shopping bag, and then in mm. 60–61, the waltz climaxes in classic Viennese fashion on the word "Kuchen," or "cake." Here is where the two flintstones of music and poetry are audibly struck together, the "eureka" moment of the composer finally discovering the perfect poetic match for all three of his original musical ideas, now placed together in a more ideal configuration. From here on, all the new semantic meanings provided for the music will revolve around the daughter for whom this "cake" is being baked. As the principal melody (*c*) continues to waltz through the texture, the arpeggiated figure (*a*), again in hemiola, signifies the daughter's dreamy repose in mm. 69ff., all languorous limbs draped over the armrests of her chair, while in mm. 87ff. it embodies the flowing locks of golden hair spilling over her sweet face. In between (mm. 77–81), the grace note figure (*b*) comes to depict her flickering eyelids as she blinks into the firelight.¹⁹

¹⁹ For another account of the musico-poetic imagery in this song, see Getz, "Lieder," 359–63.

Example 1.2 Richard Strauss, "Schlechtes Wetter," mm. 18–31

18 *etwas ruhiger werden*

(b) Ich

[dim.] *p* *express.*

sfz *leg.*

(a)

22

sit - ze am Fen - ster und schau - e hi -

(c)

* *leg.* * *leg.*

27

naus in die Dun - kel - heit.

dim.

Heard from this perspective, Strauss's song dramatizes the work of song composition as an act of the interpretative imagination at the same time as it unmask the standard model of song analysis as a similarly interpretative endeavor. The song teasingly defies the listener or critic who would make overconfident associations between a song's text and music, but it also celebrates the instability of these associations as a precondition of creative analytical play. From both the compositional and analytical perspectives, "Schlechtes Wetter" highlights the idea of song as a fluid process rather than a fixed product waiting to be definitively decoded. As Agawu once suggested, "[w]hat is interesting ... is not what song *is*, but what it *becomes* in its perpetual striving for a concrete mode of existence."²⁰ In work spanning the last two decades, Lawrence Zbikowski has taken up Agawu's challenge of answering the "difficult question of a concrete identity for song," of articulating what song is beyond the mere sum of its constituent media.²¹ Creative flexibility is at the heart of his "conceptual blending" approach to song analysis. Unlike the standard model, which puts the text at the top of a meaning pyramid, Zbikowski's method grants equal agency to both music and text as mutually impactful "input spaces" whose shared structural and conceptual features provide a framework (the "generic space") that guides the analyst in fleshing out the details of their interpretation in the "blended space," where the analyst's own imagination, knowledge, and perspective will inform the final results. Consequently, as Zbikowski has often shown, different musical settings of the same poem will blend differently with that poem and change the poem's meaning accordingly, just as in Strauss's song, different textual associations made with the same musical material reveal new possible meanings in the music.²²

But until relatively recently, another crucial "input space" had been missing from all this theorizing about song, and that is performance. After all, different performances of the same song will also yield different meanings, each of which will depend on the specific performers, listeners, and context at hand. If song is an act, not a thing, then performance has to be an integral part of any formulation of a "concrete identity for song." In an article from 2018, Zbikowski brings performers into his conceptual blending approach as he explores the famous final aria ("Dido's Lament") from Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas* (premiered in 1689).²³ Zbikowski asks us to envision the mezzo-soprano Lorraine Hunt Lieberson taking on

²⁰ Agawu, "Theory and Practice," 7. ²¹ Ibid.

²² Zbikowski's principal writings on conceptual blending as it pertains to song analysis include *Conceptualizing Music*, 243–86, and *Foundations*, 167–200.

²³ Zbikowski, "Conceptual Blending."

the role of Dido in a traditional production of the opera, as well as the choreographer Mark Morris who danced the role in tandem with Lieberson's vocal performance in his own 1998 staging. Zbikowski's blending of Lieberson and Morris with the operatic character of Purcell's Dido teases out some of the broader implications of those pairings, most notably with respect to gender and voice. But when the analysis turns to Dido's Lament itself, it is only the music and text as encoded in the score that are considered as input spaces, while details of performance are left to the imagination of the analyst as they elaborate upon the findings of the initial blend. Zbikowski's focus here is to illustrate the creativity of analytical practice, so the more ancillary status of performance in his study is understandable. But the creative practice of performers and the specific circumstances of performance could just as easily feed into the conceptual blend as primary input spaces in determining musical meaning.²⁴ In the case of Dido's Lament as performed in a conventional production of Purcell's opera, the circumstances of performance are admittedly rather circumscribed, and the singer's task – to portray the role of Dido – is more narrowly defined. Song, however, is not typically beholden to those kinds of prescriptions.

Let me therefore propose a definition of song as a *musico-poetic text in search of a performance*. The protean malleability of song in performance is perhaps the most characteristic feature of what we think of as “song,” as opposed to operatic arias or musical theater numbers serving their original functions in a specific dramatic context. To be a song is to be a combination of music and lyrics that travels across different performance contexts and takes on different meanings in each one. When the musical theater singer and actress Maria Friedman performed Dido's Lament in her 2009 cabaret tour of England devoted to the “British Songbook,” she preceded it with reflections on the passing of her mother's and grandmother's wartime generations and paired it with the WWII anthem “The White Cliffs of Dover.” In Friedman's cabaret, it was no longer Dido who sang her lament, imploring her servant to remember her despite her sad fate to die of a broken heart at the hands of her lover Aeneas; instead, audiences heard both a terrified soldier on the battlefield, pleading to be remembered by his family back home, and Friedman's own exhortation to her audience not to forget the adversity endured by those who came before them in their own history.²⁵ In its journey from opera house to cabaret, Dido's Lament

²⁴ Zbikowski implicitly points toward such a conclusion, at least in general terms, in “Performing Agency.”

²⁵ “A Conversation with Maria Friedman,” interview by Edward Seckerson, www.edwardseckerson.biz/podcasts/maria-friedman-talks-to-edward-seckerson/, accessed April 26, 2022.

retained its music and lyrics – only its instrumentation was adjusted to fit Friedman's cabaret ensemble – but by virtue of that journey itself, the aria became a song. Aficionados may cringe when the uninitiated refer to any piece of classical music as a "song," in ignorance of how the piece originally functioned as an exemplar of a specific genre, but this habit contains an insight into the essence of song. Songs are migratory and adaptable, perpetually in search of transformation through performance. The cabaret environment most obviously illustrates this cardinal quality of song, but the Lied is no exception, as the performative turn in Lied studies has so amply demonstrated.

In her recent study of another of Strauss's Heine settings ("Frühlingsfeier," Op. 56 No. 5), Laura Tunbridge borrows the metaphor of "versioning" from the world of computer programming to map out the peregrinations of this song as it traveled from one singer to another, from piano to orchestral accompaniment, from live to recorded performance, and across a multitude of performance contexts. It is precisely the wide range of this song's mutations over time that, in Tunbridge's words, "opens up a space in which the way song is interpreted *as* song might be interrogated."²⁶ As Tunbridge concludes, "song, made up of different parts (words, music, performance), is more often dissected than allowed to expand and accrue meaning through the versioning process."²⁷ In a similar spirit, I now trace the movements of "Schlechtes Wetter" as it left Strauss's compositional workshop behind and acquired new meanings in performance.

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"Schlechtes Wetter" was taken up by singers and performed in recitals soon after its publication in late 1919,²⁸ but it received its most prominent and sustained attention from concert audiences in its early years of existence when it was sung by the soprano Elisabeth Schumann and played by Strauss on their recital tour of the United States during the last two months of 1921. This was a relatively early moment in Schumann's storied career; she had only begun her tenure of almost two decades at the Vienna State Opera two years prior, after Strauss insisted she join the company as he was preparing to become its codirector.²⁹ Schumann was

²⁶ Tunbridge, "Versioning," 285. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

²⁸ At the Vienna Konzerthaus, for example, the song was included in three separate recital programs given in October 1920 and November 1921 by Maria Ivogün, Anna R. Hardorff, and Ernst Reitter. See the Vienna Konzerthaus database at <https://konzerthaus.at/database-search>.

²⁹ See Puritz, *Elisabeth Schumann*, 86–89.

twenty-four years younger than Strauss, and her most iconic role to date was Sophie, the naïve, innocent ingenue and daughter of Herr Faninal in Strauss's opera *Der Rosenkavalier*, whom she first portrayed at the age of twenty-two in the 1911 Hamburg premiere. Three years later, in 1914, she played Sophie again at her New York Metropolitan Opera debut to generally glowing reviews. The effortless beauty of her singing, especially during the "Presentation of the Rose" scene in the second act, seems to have had a memorable impact, and her talent for characterization was also praised, even if critics were divided about her ability to capture Sophie's artlessness – some found Schumann to be too serious and deliberate in the role.³⁰ Schumann finally came to Strauss's attention in 1917 when they worked together at a Mozart festival in Zürich. Strauss was immediately captivated by Schumann's singing and even offered to rewrite the title role of *Salomé* for her, although Schumann resisted the suggestion for fear of vocal strain.³¹ In the words of Schumann's biographer Gerd Puritz, "the youthfulness of [Schumann's] voice, the silvery quality, was exactly what [Strauss] wanted in the character of Salomé."³² It is striking that Strauss thought Schumann had the potential to play Salomé, a character as salaciously wicked as Sophie is sweetly virtuous.

Scholars commonly acknowledge that when Strauss returned to song composition in the following summer of 1918, Elisabeth Schumann was one of his principal inspirations.³³ As we know, this is when Strauss wrote "Schlechtes Wetter," along with another Heine setting, "Waldesfahrt," which immediately precedes "Schlechtes Wetter" in the Op. 69 song collection. In Strauss's hands, "Waldesfahrt" is a schizoid character study strongly reminiscent of the *Ophelia-Lieder* he also wrote that summer; all of these songs have quicksilver changes of tempo, texture, and mood that suggest a dramatic figure in the throes of madness. I now want to argue that when Strauss accompanied Elisabeth Schumann in "Schlechtes Wetter" on their American tour, there were certain contexts in which it too had the potential to become a character song, although featuring a very different character. In these contexts, the vocal protagonist would no longer

³⁰ Max Smith, review of November 20, 1914, performance of *Der Rosenkavalier*, *New York Press*, and Algernon St. John-Brenon, review of November 21, 1914, performance of *La Bohème*, *Morning Telegraph* (New York, NY), both at the Metropolitan Opera House, accessed from Metropolitan Opera archives database, <http://archives.metoperafamily.org/archives/frame.htm>; Sylvester Rawling, "'Rosenkavalier' Sung at the Opera With New Sophie," *Evening World* (New York, NY), November 21, 1914, 5; "'Rosenkavalier' at Metropolitan," *The New York Times*, November 21, 1914, 13.

³¹ See Kennedy, *Richard Strauss*, 146–47. ³² Puritz, *Elisabeth Schumann*, 77.

³³ See Petersen, *Ton und Wort*, 118, and Heisler Jr. and Tunbridge, "Strauss before Sixty," 273.

be a stand-in for Heine the poet or Strauss the composer, as in my earlier readings, but rather the self-centered, narcissistic daughter of the poem, embodied by Schumann as an operatic prima donna projecting a girlish blend of Sophie's sweetness and Salomé's naughtiness, just as Strauss had seen in her four years earlier.

When Strauss programmed "Schlechtes Wetter" on the American tour, it was always preceded by "Der Stern," the song that Strauss had composed on the same day that he completed "Schlechtes Wetter" (June 21, 1918) and that he had played for Max Marschalk as an example of the happy coincidence of musical and textual inspiration in his creative process.³⁴ The protagonist of "Der Stern" sees the Great Comet of 1811 coming toward earth from the safety of her house and welcomes it as a warm and intimate friend inspiring dreams of peace. Musically, Strauss set Arnim's poem in the Classical pastiche vein of *Der Rosenkavalier*, and as a writer for *Musical America* noted in a review of the December 15 recital at New York's Town Hall, the song even includes a quote from the "Presentation of the Rose" scene as a retransition to the reprise of its opening theme (see Example 1.3).³⁵

This passage in the song specifically cites the two bars that immediately precede Sophie's line "Wie himmlische, nicht irdische, wie Rosen vom hochheiligen Paradies" (rehearsal 30). This memorable and touching moment when Sophie revels in the rose she has just received from Octavian (see below) is a vocal showstopper, requiring supreme breath control and beauty of tone in a high register, and it is indelibly associated with the role of Sophie. It is also exceedingly likely that Strauss made the reference to *Der Rosenkavalier* even clearer by improvising a transition between "Der Stern" and "Schlechtes Wetter" using the opera's musical material. It was common practice for Strauss to perform transitions of this sort based on his operas,³⁶ and a critic for the *Musical Courier* noted that he did so using a passage from *Der Rosenkavalier* during the New York Town Hall recital at some point.³⁷ When Elisabeth Schumann sang "Der Stern," the song's direct quotation from and stylistic allusions to *Der Rosenkavalier* may have reminded a few more informed audience members (and certainly Strauss himself) of her signature operatic character. Advance press coverage of

³⁴ See *The Baltimore Sun*, "Strauss Recital Tonight," November 10, 1921, 4; *Boston Globe*, "Concert and Recital programs for the Current Week," November 13, 1921, 57; *The Washington Times*, "The Strauss Festival," November 27, 1921, 4D; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, "Matters Musical," December 11, 1921, 4; and Petersen, *Ton und Wort*, 177, which gives the program at New York's Town Hall for December 15, 1921.

³⁵ "Elisabeth Schumann in Strauss Program," *Musical America* 35, no. 9 (December 24, 1921): 9.

³⁶ See Orel, "Strauss als Begleiter," 13.

³⁷ "Strauss Song Recital," *Musical Courier* 83, no. 25 (December 22, 1921): 27.

Example 1.3 Richard Strauss, “Der Stern,” mm. 17–22

17 *ruhiger* *poco rit.*
 ich träu - me von Ruh. Die
 (Rosenkavalier quotation)
p *dim.* *pp*

21 *tempo primo*
 an - dern sich deu - ten die Zu - kunft dar - aus, ver -
p
Red *Red* * *Red*

the recital tour often mentioned Schumann’s star turn as Sophie,³⁸ and in New York, audiences still fondly remembered her Met debut in that role.³⁹ Moreover, the text of “Der Stern” also resonates with the “Presentation of the Rose” scene. In the opening portion of Act Two that immediately precedes this scene, Sophie is also looking excitedly out of her own house

³⁸ See, for example, “Strauss Recital Tonight”; “Richard Strauss, Mme. Schumann and Piastro Are to Be Heard in Concert in Indianapolis,” *The Indianapolis News*, November 12, 1921, 4; and “In the World of Music,” *The Brooklyn Standard Union*, December 25, 1921, 9.

³⁹ Schumann recognized this herself in her private diary of the tour on November 15 after performing with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York with Strauss at the podium: “I was received right away with great warmth – everyone still remembers my Sophie from 1914–15.” My thanks to Joy Puritz for providing me with access to electronic copies of her grandmother’s 1921 tour diary both in the original German and in her English translation which I also consulted. All citations and discussions of the diary in this chapter refer to this unpublished source. A fuller analysis of the diary is given in Heisler Jr. and Tunbridge, “Strauss before Sixty.”

for an auspicious and friendly guest: not a comet, but rather Octavian, the young cavalier who is to present her with a silver rose signifying her engagement to Baron Ochs, and with whom she will soon fall in love as they sing the "Presentation of the Rose" duet together.

Let us imagine Schumann and Strauss moving on to perform "Schlechtes Wetter" in this context. As Schumann now sings about sitting by the window and looking out into the darkness, the close analogy with both Sophie and the protagonist of "Der Stern" may suggest to some knowledgeable or attentive listeners in the audience that Schumann is also portraying a young daughter at home in this new scenario as well. In a direct comic contrast to *Der Rosenkavalier* and "Der Stern," however, the musical and textual imagery at the beginning of "Schlechtes Wetter" is stormy, and the jagged, dissonant vocal line has the potential to signal that this daughter's mood is petulant and grouchy, more Salomé than Sophie. Schumann as *Töchterlein* then notices a *Mütterchen* tottering across the street, and as she and Strauss move on to the waltz that gradually takes shape in the middle of the song, our listeners might understand it to signify the growing excitement of the spoiled, self-indulgent daughter as she recognizes this *Mütterchen* as her own mother and gradually comes to the conclusion that her mother is heading home to bake her a "cake." The vocal and musical climax on "Kuchen" in mm. 58–59 now indicates the *Töchterlein*'s burst of delight in imagining this cake that will soon lift her spirits. In mm. 62–65, she goes on to identify herself in the third person as the cake's fortunate recipient; the sudden warmth of a surprising A-major harmony on the first syllable of "Töchterlein," part of a cycle of major thirds that leads from the waltz's D \flat major to the home tonic F major, may indicate a transition to self-conscious playacting, perhaps a result of catching her reflection in the windowpane, illuminated by the firelight. This third-person playacting continues as the musical text painting of golden hair and fluttering eyelashes enables her to luxuriate in her own beauty. With her poor *Mütterchen* now completely out of mind, Schumann caps off this scene of preening with her high B \flat during the phrase "Locken wallen" ("[the] locks flow") in mm. 81–86, blending the vain self-regard of an operatic diva persona with that of the character of the daughter.

Other than the textual and contextual evidence I have presented thus far, what else can we examine to determine the historical plausibility of my interpretation of "Schlechtes Wetter" as it was performed and understood on the Schumann–Strauss recital tour? While a recording of Schumann and Strauss performing this song together is unfortunately not extant, we do have a recording Schumann made six years later in 1927 with Karl Alwin, her

husband and a conductor and coach at the Vienna State Opera.⁴⁰ On that recording, Schumann barks out the opening measures with a punchy, clipped delivery and lands on “schneit” in m. 11 with the consonants emphasized and a short, non-vibrato vowel segment of only an eighth note’s duration, all consistent with an attitude of peevish disgust. Her childish enthusiasm during the recitation of ingredients at the beginning of the waltz is palpable (“Ich glaube, Mehl und Eier / Und Butter kaufte sie ein”); in m. 56 she sings the second “und” at a somewhat higher pitch than the written Ab in a yelp of eager anticipation. In mm. 67–68, on the word “Töchterlein,” Schumann suddenly shifts to an air of tender, almost prettified sweetness, lightening up her tone and using a massive portamento sigh to connect the word’s last two syllables. If this gesture indicates an attitude of contented self-admiration, then that attitude continues throughout the rest of the recording. With a heavier tone, portamento, and thick vibrato on “Lehnstuhl” in mm. 75–76, Schumann sinks into the deep sensuality of being ensconced in the armchair, then immediately tosses it off with a flirty grace note on “blinzelt” before basking in the firelight in mm. 79–81 with a blossoming fullness of tone on “Licht.” Schumann takes plenty of time to stretch out the high notes on “Locken” in mm. 85–86 and carries that silvery thread of sound into “wallen” in mm. 87–89, depicting the gentle flow of her locks with another precious, vibrato-filled portamento from F down to C. She treats the end of the final phrase, “süsse Gesicht,” in much the same way in mm. 91–94 but lingers even longer and more passionately on those words, as though hopelessly entranced by the beauty of her own sweet face. We must be careful, of course, not to make too much of any one interpretative detail on such a recording, especially since many of these gestures were part and parcel of the performance practice of the time. It is also impossible to say whether, in the second half of the song, Schumann is vividly describing her vision of the *Töchterlein* as an imaginative, empathetic narrator, rather than actually participating in the story as the *Töchterlein* herself. But taken together, these aspects of Schumann’s recording point toward an interpretation of the vocal persona that is at least compatible with the line of argumentation I have been pursuing.

We will turn to public reception in a moment, but it is perhaps at the private, personal level, between Schumann and Strauss themselves, that the idea of Schumann-as-*Töchterlein* in “Schlechtes Wetter” may have resonated most powerfully. In the diary that Schumann kept during the

⁴⁰ Elisabeth Schumann, soprano, and Karl Alwin, piano, “Schlechtes Wetter,” by Richard Strauss, recorded November 14, 1927, track 25, disc 5, on *Elisabeth Schumann: Silver Thread of Song*, Warner Classics 9184802, CD.

American tour, there is evidence to suggest that she and Strauss had developed a father–daughter dynamic by the end of their journeys together. The clearest expression of that dynamic appears in the last entry from December 31, 1921, as Schumann sat on the steamship taking her back to Europe:

I think back over the whole tour, and of you, great man, of you Richard Strauss, I think with a grateful heart and thank you with all the sincerity I can muster. You were a wonderful friend – at your side I was protected from all intrigues and managers' tricks.

You were always intent on my success, cared for my wellbeing and brought me medicine, like a father to his beloved child.

Here Schumann addresses Strauss in her diary in terms that closely mirror the scenario of the song, but with a twist that puts the characters in a different light: Perhaps the *Töchterlein* is resting sleepily by the fire at home because of illness, and the *Mütterchen* is fetching the ingredients to make her a fortifying treat, just as Strauss went out to bring Schumann medicine when she needed it. Here is a passage where Schumann described such an instance of Strauss's medical attention in the diary, from November 13:

Just now Richardl and Franz sat in my suite for a little while – we are like one family – a charming relationship. Strauss's eyes sparkle when he looks at me. He is so touching – brought me a pill to my bed the day before yesterday, and when I couldn't swallow it he ran for a glass of water and gallantly presented it to me.

At the time of the tour, Strauss's son Franz was 24, Schumann was 33, and Strauss was 57. While Schumann was Strauss's professional colleague and also shared with him the life perspective of someone in a spousal relationship (after one performance she compared Strauss's praise of her singing with that of her husband Karl), the age gap between herself and Strauss aligned her more with Franz as a sibling in this temporary "family," with Strauss as the father of his "beloved child[ren]." Instances of Strauss's quasi-paternal protectiveness, affection, and praise are sprinkled throughout the diary: He graciously delivers her a banana from the dining car to supplement her dinner (October 15); he makes a show of "treating [her] to [their] first luncheon" (October 16); he shares the private entrance to his bathroom (October 16); he "congratulates [her] so sweetly on [her] success" after a particular concert has unsettled her nerves (November 1). Strauss even had a habit of referring to her as his "little Schumann [*Schumännchen*]" (November 26 and 30), using the same type of diminutive nickname that Schumann gave to her own son in the diary on November 14 and December 24 (and that also appears in the names of the *Mütterchen* and *Töchterlein* in "Schlechtes Wetter").

If Schumann appears to have embraced the idea of being something like Strauss's virtual *Töchterlein* on their tour together, she might have resisted the idea of extending that role play into her performance of "Schlechtes Wetter," given that the *Töchterlein* in the song is transfixed by her own image and seems not to have any gratitude for the *Mütterchen*'s efforts on her behalf. Ever "intent on [Schumann's] success," however, Strauss himself may not have had such compunctions. At certain moments in the diary, we see Strauss encouraging Schumann to take liberties with her singing so as to step more fully into the role of self-indulgent, crowd-pleasing diva, *Werktreue* aesthetics be damned. In a benefit concert on the steamship taking them to New York at the start of the tour (October 25), the duo performed three Strauss songs:

Strauss is so delightful and always intent on my success. Before the concert he said: "Why not hold your top notes a little longer, don't always sing so precisely." Afterwards I asked him: "Well, did I sing the top notes long enough?" – "Yes," he said gaily, "but always with a bit of an inner sense of shame [*inneres Schamgefühl*]." He means because I always sing what's written. He beamed at my success.

Ever the scrupulous concert artist, Schumann was not attitudinally inclined to linger excessively on her high notes, but here Strauss authorizes her to do so in order to impress the public. On the train back to New York from Philadelphia on November 2, Strauss rejected the idea that Schumann needed to study voice with Marcella Sembrich, who had just begun teaching at Juilliard after her retirement, saying that "any improvements you need to make I can tell you, or your husband. You ought to sing more legato and learn how to do with your facial expression what your voice can't manage. You often sing too honestly – hide your weaknesses by cheating a little." For Strauss, Schumann's serious and uncompromising approach to her singing was preventing her from fully seizing upon her potential to ingratiate herself to the public, not only in terms of vocal delivery but also visual presentation. A few weeks later on November 27 after a poker game, Schumann reported that Strauss had told her "that I look particularly pretty from the side when singing and that one day I should have myself photographed while singing. He often says nice things to me, strokes me a lot – he likes me very much." In this personal context, "Schlechtes Wetter," with its opportunities for the portrayal of a pretty and self-absorbed young woman, characterization through facial expression, and the flaunting of strategically placed high notes, perhaps allowed Strauss to cast Schumann in the role of cherished, pampered daughter and dazzling stage diva that he envisioned for her.

How much did Schumann and Strauss actually play up the idea of Schumann as *Töchterlein* when performing "Schlechtes Wetter" together? And how did audiences respond to the song? Schumann's diary and American newspaper coverage confirm that "Schlechtes Wetter" was by far the most successful song of the tour; it had to be repeated at almost every performance, three times in Milwaukee.⁴¹ In a preview article in *The Baltimore Sun*, Strauss noted that despite differences in taste from city to city, "all audiences will applaud 'Schlechtes Wetter,' my song on Heine's poem. For some reason they all seem to like this."⁴² Critics described the song as a "delightful bit of humor and fancy,"⁴³ "lively,"⁴⁴ and "charming,"⁴⁵ with two critics using the word "dramatic" in singling it out for comment.⁴⁶ A third critic (for *The Washington Times*) specified that notion further by describing Schumann as "delightfully impish in her humorous little drama of the 'Bad Weather' song, which she had to repeat,"⁴⁷ and the review in *The Capital Times* (Madison, WI) declared that the song "was given in a fascinating way, with excellent expression, and the true idea of the number was conveyed to all present."⁴⁸ Was this "true idea of the number" expressed in the way that Schumann dramatically portrayed the "delightfully impish" *Töchterlein*, or did the critic simply mean that she was being a good storyteller? In general, critics felt that the song was a good vehicle for Schumann's skill at characterization, but it is very hard to say with any confidence whether American audiences felt she was embodying the character of the *Töchterlein* per se. It had been eight years since Schumann's Metropolitan Opera debut, and she no longer quite looked the part of the young ingenue; the reviewer for the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* remarked that on stage Schumann "impressed one as a haus-frau dolled up for the first time in her life."⁴⁹ Reviews and preview articles also tended to emphasize the idea that Strauss had chosen Schumann as the ideal singer to

⁴¹ See Schumann's diary entry on December 9.

⁴² "Audiences in U.S. Like Ones Abroad[,] Says Dr. Strauss," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 11, 1921, 4.

⁴³ W. J. Henderson, "Sings Songs By Strauss," *The New York Herald*, December 16, 1921, 11.

⁴⁴ F.H., "Strauss Bill Delights Crowd at National," *The Washington Herald*, December 2, 1921, 7.

⁴⁵ "Strauss Song Recital."

⁴⁶ Charlotte M. Tarsney, "Strauss Plays Own Songs for Soprano," *Detroit Free Press*, December 8, 1921, 11; "Richard Strauss Plays His Songs at Concert," *New York Tribune*, December 16, 1921, 10.

⁴⁷ Jessie MacBride, "Strauss Rouses Concert Crowd to Enthusiasm," *The Washington Times*, December 2, 1921, 6.

⁴⁸ Portia B. Lugoff, "German Songs Charm Strauss Audience Here," *The Capital Times* (Madison, WI), December 9, 1921, 6.

⁴⁹ Harvey B. Gaul, "Musical Comments," *The Pittsburgh Daily Post*, November 13, 1921, 45.

execute his own compositional intentions, a perspective which would have made it difficult to regard Schumann as the daughter in the song rather than as an extension of the composer's voice.⁵⁰ But other reviews point more explicitly toward an interpretation of Schumann's performance that is in line with the argument I have been pursuing here. For example, here is the critic for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*:

The love of home and fireside was sung subduedly, according to the text of Heine, who, in his lilt, "Bad Weather," tells how a little old mother ventures forth on a dark night, lantern in hand, to buy things for a cake which her young and worldly-wise daughter insists on having.⁵¹

It is unclear which persona this critic thinks is singing the song – it could be Heine, or Strauss, or one of the characters, or simply Elisabeth Schumann, who sang the song "subduedly." But it is interesting that the critic characterizes the daughter as "young and worldly-wise," rather than entirely naïve and innocent, and that she "insists on having" a cake, even though her little old mother had to "venture forth on a dark night" to make that happen.

If the preceding discussion of "Schlechtes Wetter" as it was performed and discussed during the Schumann–Strauss American tour of 1921 cannot come to any definitive conclusions about the song's meaning in that context, I hope that this investigation at least demonstrates how musicological inquiry of this sort can open up new possibilities for a song's interpretation in performance, and conversely, how performance choices and conditions can transform the meaning of a song, sometimes radically so. When I have performed this song with soprano Sari Gruber, for example, we have aimed to capture the ironic perspective of Heine the poet on his *Mütterchen* and *Töchterlein*, rather than personify any one particular character or adopt a meta-perspective on the song as a reflection on artistic creation or song interpretation and analysis. While Sari sweetens her tone on "Töchterlein" in m. 67 much as Schumann did, emphasizing that character's prettiness, she also fattens the first half of the preceding long note on "große," wryly suggesting that this darling girl who imagines herself to be deserving of special treats is also pudgy and spoiled. Yet regardless of our intentions, our performance will always land differently for some of our audiences. In a recent conversation with me on August 21, 2022, Sari pointed out that for non-German speakers, the broad thrust of our storytelling might come

⁵⁰ See, for example, "Some News of the Musical Season," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 23, 1921, 10, and *The Indianapolis News*, "Richard Strauss."

⁵¹ Richard Spamer, "Dr. Strauss' Songs as Sung by Schumann Hold House in Thrall," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, November 22, 1921, 14.

through, but not the fine-grained details. We also remembered that when we performed the song in her daughter's kindergarten class and at a children's concert, *auf Deutsch*, we took care to exaggerate the vivid text painting and emotional vicissitudes in Strauss's score – what a nasty storm, what a funny little light, what a delicious cake! – because we knew the words would be semantically meaningless to them. They responded to our over-the-top gestures with apparent fascination and delight, if they weren't simply overwhelmed by the powerful sounds of an operatic soprano and a grand piano.

This variability of song is an essential part of its identity as a genre. It means that seemingly self-evident observations we make about a song, even about the identity of the person singing it, can be upended as the song migrates from one performance situation to another. In the process of song, text and music go perpetually in search of each other, until that moment when they connect in performance and all three flintstones strike to ignite a song into being.