

Interpreting Texts as Scripts: The Lyric Model

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For those seeking to show the connection between musicological and artistic modes of interpreting musical texts, the philosopher George Steiner offers both an encouragement and a warning. In his book *Real Presences* of 1992 he uses his critical authority to make one of the strongest verbal statements about the significance of performance acts – acts that he implies have a weight and ontology that demand recognition from those who experience them:

No musicology, no music criticism, can tell us as much as the action of meaning which is performance [...] Unlike the reviewer, the literary critic, the academic vivisectionist and judge, the executant invests his own being in the process of interpretation. His readings, his enactments of chosen meanings and values are not those of eternal survey. They are a commitment at risk, a response which is, in the root sense, responsible. (Steiner 1992 p. 22.)

The implication is that performances offer an authentic experience that needs to be valued and considered at the highest level. There is, however, according to Steiner a problem about how such valuation is to be framed:

The truths, necessities of ordered feeling in the musical experience are not irrational; but they are irreducible to reason or pragmatic reckoning [...] When it speaks of music language is lame. (Steiner 1992 p. 19.)

Steiner calls upon an anecdote about Schumann to illustrate his case: 'Asked to explain a difficult *etude*, Schumann sat down and played it a second time' (Steiner 1992 p. 20). Here the artist seems intent to shut the mouths of scholarly researchers, and to insist upon the primacy of a lived transitory experience that need not answer to anything outside itself. The listener may wish to compare the second performance with the first, and even approach the second as a commentary on the first – as the performer's conscious mimesis of what he did before – but the presence of this extra reflective layer may only rest with the imagination of the listener, unless the performer himself frames his action in words.

Edward T. Cone speaks in his book *The Composer's Voice* about how musical performers inhabit an 'ill-defined area', one 'between ritual and game' (Cone 1974 p. 115), as they balance demands for a recognisable repetition of a musical text, with that for a new enactment. In seeking to define that in-between space Cone fears that performers might be drawn to extremes. They are pulled between 'accepting the ritual repetition of

a sacred text as their model for musical performance' (Cone 1974 p. 118) and improvising so freely that they 'give the effect of participating in a rather poorly organized sports event' (Cone 1974 p. 115). In Cone's view a rage for definition endangers the elusive transitory quality that gives musical performance its distinctive value as art. Musicological interpretation – analytical interpretation through the medium of words or verbal metaphor – often seems ill-equipped to stop this polarising of performance choices, encouraging, rather, simple dichotomies between a performance decision to conform to the text and a will to escape from the text. Musicological interpretation can seem to undermine artistry, unless any verbal exploration takes as its starting point the recognition that it will not be able to control or account for the artistic experience; rather it will serve to raise expectations for the far greater subtlety of the performance act itself. The recent hermeneutical explorations of Lawrence Kramer have offered new theoretical frameworks for acknowledging the importance of the 'potential knowledge-value of interpretive acts' (Kramer 2011 p. 31). Tobias Janz also affirms that musical works should themselves be approached as 'performative phenomena', so that any 'distinction between the work concept and the concept of performativity may be overcome and replaced by an integrative approach' (Janz 2011 p. 2). The question to be addressed here is how singers and pianists might be encouraged to lay hold of such an integration in practice, and to find words for reflection that arise directly from their activity as performers.

As a musicologist I have worked with song performers over many years, both in conservatoires and as part of the SONGART research group, to explore how performers can gain practical insights into their role from the words of the poems that they sing. Taken as pre-existent poetic texts, the poems of songs can capture a reflection on how a performer should seek to woo his listener, setting an ideal or measure for a performance to come. As lyrics, waiting to come to life through music, these poems also demand to be inhabited by performers and to be taken as scripts for performers' own communicative musical utterances. One of the clearest examples of how a song poem can be used to prompt analysis, yet analysis concerning the inadequacy of words and the primacy of musical performance itself, is provided by Goethe's poem 'An Lina':

Liebchen, kommen diese Lieder	[Beloved, should these songs
Jemals wieder dir zu Hand,	Ever return to your hand,
Sitze beim Klaviere nieder,	Sit down at the keyboard,
Wo der Freund sonst bei dir stand.	Where your friend used to stand beside you.
Lass die Saiten rasch erklingen,	Let the strings quickly sound,
Und dann sieh ins Buch hinein;	And then look into the book;
Nur nicht lesen! immer singen!	Only don't read! always sing!
Und ein jedes Blatt ist dein.	And every sheet will be yours.

Ach, wie traurig sieht in Lettern,	Oh, how sadly the poem,
Schwarz auf weiss, das Lied mich an,	In black-on-white letters, looks at me,
Das aus deinem Mund vergöttern,	Through your mouth it can deify,
Das ein Herz zerreißen kann!	It can break open the heart!] ¹

Beyond the personal lament for a distant beloved, Goethe's poem suggests a cultural message of the inadequacy of the 'black and white' of written texts compared to the power of the 'mouth' to 'open the heart'. As David E. Wellbery has pointed out (Wellbery 1996 p. 211) this is a 'song about songs', or more explicitly it is a song about a lyric poem waiting for a performance to become what it should be. By itself the text on the music stand is 'sad', and yet it plays its part in preparing for the performance act that Goethe describes through his poem. It is clear from the poem that if the song had not been captured as a text, if it were not available to the 'hand', then the beloved might not be prompted to relive or make a mimesis of the living performance that occurred when the 'friend used to stand beside you'. Indeed in the notion of the song *returning* to the hand, Goethe suggests the song may have been written down at the time of that earlier convivial performance. The text supports the link in the performance chain; its presence is the encouragement for the working of memory, even if the sounding of the piano strings is the literal cue for a tuning in to the past ('Let the strings quickly sound, *then* look into the book'). Also only a 'look' is allowed at the text, not a reading. And that 'look' shows the deadness of the 'black on white', so that the urgency of releasing the impulse to sing is impressed upon the beloved. The violence of the imagery of 'breaking open the heart' could be transferred aesthetically to the violence done to the text as the singer breaks silence and makes the song her own. The text is shown to be both a prompt and a prop within the performance scene. It is assembled as a text on the music stand and then taken up, torn apart and forgotten as a mere script for the singer's triumph, for her moment of transcendence which, according to Wellbery (Wellbery 1996, p. 209-210), typifies the lyric.

Whilst it is not clear what words the beloved might be singing in the performance scene of Goethe's 'An Lina', it is perfectly conceivable that she might be singing the poem itself. For at one level the poem can be taken quite simply as a message of love and longing:

- (a) I wish I was still standing by the piano to make music with you
- (b) Isn't it sad that most communication now seems to happen at a distance via bits of paper on a music stand rather than in the flesh

¹ The text of 'An Lina' was written for the edition of *Goethe's New Writings* in 1800, for the section entitled 'Lieder'. The translation is by the author.

Taken as a love lyric, the words can be absorbed into the song melody and many of their details forgotten. Yet as a description of good song practice the words retain their presence as an explicit lesson in how to prepare for a performance event:

- (a) As you sit down at the piano make sure to listen in first, seek to remember what happened before
- (b) Bridge the gap from silence by tuning in (preluding) as you create a space and expectation for something to happen
- (c) Then begin to sing back what is before you (the music on the stand)
- (d) Now call on a response from your listener

Goethe admitted to having mixed feelings about a poet theorizing about his art. In a letter to Schiller of 18 November 1800 (Goethe 1957 p. 307-308), the year in which he wrote 'An Lina', Goethe expressed both his reservations and his enthusiasm for artists joining in with the urge to reflect:

I really do not know where poor Poetry is to flee next. Here she is again in danger of being driven into a corner by philosophers, scientists, and company. I cannot, of course, deny that I myself invite and encourage these gentlemen, and that of my own free will I yield to the bad habit of theorizing, so I have only myself to blame. However some very good things are being brought to mind in a very good way [...]

Goethe's instructions to performers in 'An Lina' offer both a theoretical model of how a lyric creates its transcendent effect and immediate practical advice. His lesson might be taken literally as relating to a past performance practice – the instruction to prelude, the encouragement to be declamatory in the mode of address ('break open the heart'). Heinrich W. Schwab has assembled many accounts of Goethe working directly with singers on the performance of strophic song. The poet was particularly enamoured with the artistry of Wilhelm Ehlers, an actor and singer whom he trained in Weimar, and whom in a diary entry of 1801 he praised for mixing epic and lyrical roles in his song performances with guitar (Schwab 1965 p. 69). In this Ehlers was fulfilling an idea Goethe voiced in his essay 'Ballade: Betrachtung und Auslesung' (Goethe 1887-1912, I, 41, p. 223). In this account of how performers should approach the singing of poetic ballads, Goethe said they should create their own flight from mixing the ingredients of epic, lyric and dramatic as prepared by the poet's 'Ur-Ei' (source egg). In a sense they should be prepared to improvise or to act like a composer. As Schwab has pointed out (Schwab 1965 p. 71) composers were often thought to be the best performers of their own songs within Goethe's circle. Johann Friedrich Reichardt, one of the composers closest to Goethe, was a skilled tenor and as such famous for his skill in declamatory delivery (Schwab 1965 p.

48). The written trace of Reichardt's performance practice can be seen in his setting of 'An Lina' from 1804:

Frei deklamiert

Lieb-chen, kom-men die-se Lie-der je-mals wie-der dir zur Hand,

5
sit-ze beim Kla-vie-re nie-der, wo der Freund sonst bei dir—

8
stand.

Example 1: Reichardt, *An Lina*.²

The instruction 'freely declaimed' takes up the notion of a need for urgency in the singer's response, as do the dotted rhythms and paired articulations in the vocal line. Al-

² Published in *Johann Friedrich Reichardt: Goethes Lieder, Oden, Balladen und Romanzen mit Musik*. Ed: W. Salmen. Munich: G. Henle Verlag ©1964. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

though the song has no literal prelude, the closing arabesque for the keyboard indicates the style such a prelude might take, and throughout Example 1 both voice and keyboard lines are given quasi-improvised anacrusial flourishes. The sustained registral peak on 'Freund' also hints at a milking of the audience response in an effort to 'break open the heart'. Looking at Reichardt's setting in this way encourages one to approach Goethe's poem as a text – a text which captures what is thought to have happened in the past and provides a frame for what should happen in the future. Yet, if the lessons on performance in 'An Lina' are approached more generally, in the spirit of aesthetic aspiration rather than as an explicit instruction, then Goethe's poem can also be taken as a script. As a script it demands an interpretation that might be prepared, but that in essence relies upon the lyric moment for its realisation. In the four stages of singing that Goethe outlines in 'An Lina' (see above), the poet indeed seems most concerned to set out the frame for the performance event – sitting in silence, preluding at the keyboard, looking into the text, expecting a response of the heart. Apart from the injunction 'always sing', the transcendent experience that animates and validates such processes has to be understood by implication. The space is prepared but the reality of performance itself has to bring the script alive.

Goethe is perhaps the most famous example of a reflective artist. In 'An Lina' the analytical and the performative can seem to jostle for preeminence to create a rather contrived poem. However, the poem's dialectical pull between instruction and invitation, between text and script, might be resolved if these conflicting approaches are understood as successive stages in how a performer works. At a higher level of criticism 'An Lina' might be understood as demonstrating how, for a performer, a stage of text assembling needs to be followed by stages of text dissolving – to be followed by text assembling in its turn. What has been text needs to become script, what has become script needs to become text. In terms of the implied chronology of the lyric in 'An Lina', there are already two such cross-over points:

(a) SCRIPT → TEXT

A remembered scene (poet and beloved performing together in the past) is captured in a song that returns to the beloved's hand

(b) TEXT → SCRIPT

The text on the music stand is enlivened by the singing impulse into a moment that can break open the heart

If the beloved succeeds in breaking open the heart, she will create a new 'remembered scene' that will have the potential for being assembled as a text and thus establish a further cycle of transformation or reversal. Goethe was fascinated with notions of how to prepare a scaffolding for creativity, a 'hypothesis' that could dissolve or be kicked

away once its purpose had been fulfilled. As he expresses it in his *Maxims and Reflections* (Goethe 1998 p. 154):

Hypotheses are scaffoldings erected in front of a building and then dismantled when the building is finished. They are indispensable for the workman; but you mustn't mistake the scaffolding for the building.

The lyrical model for interleaving past reflection with current experience, analytical text with performance script, in 'An Lina' is certainly interesting to the musicological interpreter, but Goethe would also expect its usefulness to be demonstrable in practice. Can such a model continue to be relevant to performers as they seek to realise the lyric for their audiences? Can it provide useful answers to Steiner's question about how to shift the balance of power from musicological to artistic approaches to interpretation?

If articulated in the explicit way suggested above, it becomes possible to apply Goethe's lyric model to all kinds of performance situations, some near to, some far from, the Goethe-Reichardt exchange demonstrated with 'An Lina'. One of the most interesting test cases is provided by the performance of Beethoven songs since he is credited with claiming the status of text for his music, and authority for himself as composer, in a way that Goethe often found disturbing. In a letter of 19 July 1812 to Christiane von Goethe (Goethe 1957 p. 375) the poet described his first impressions on meeting Beethoven:

I have never seen any artist so concentrated, so forceful, with such depth of feeling. I can well imagine his strangeness in the world.

Goethe's reaction to Beethoven turned from unease to outright offence when he saw the composer's approach to his Mignon lyric 'Kennst du das Land'. As he describes the song performances by Mignon in his novel *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe makes clear that in an important sense she is improvising: 'she modified the phrase "Let us fare!" each time it was repeated, so that one time it was entreating and urging, the next time pressing and full of promise' (Goethe 1989, p. 84). Yet when Beethoven came to interpret Mignon's performance Goethe said he had turned her into an opera singer.³ Although Beethoven's setting is strophically laid out, the composer picks up and dramatizes the contrasts of mood within each verse of the text, so that performers might feel they need simply to follow the composer's lead rather than to create Mignon's characteristic fluctuations for themselves.

Although there are in-between spaces for performers to exploit in Beethoven's 'Kennst du das Land', particularly in the silences which surround the contrasts of each verse, the degree of 'composed-ness' inherent in the musical text far outweighs that in the Rei-

³ This remark was made by Goethe to the Czech composer Tomášek. See Zedeněk Němec 1941: *Vlastní Životopis V. J. Tomáška*. Prague: Topičova edice v Praze, p. 239, as reported in Smaczny 2004 p. 170.

hardt song above. The performer now has two texts to turn into script, a poetic and a musical one, and – if Goethe is to be believed – the author of the musical text is intent on establishing its presence even to the destruction of all else around it. In a famous anecdote of how the poet reacted to a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony by Mendelssohn at the piano, Goethe is said to have called the music huge and mad, so mad that he feared the house would fall down (Mendelssohn 1862 p. 8).

Yet there is evidence that Beethoven was aware of the more subtle performance freedoms inherent in strophic song practices and their potential to work mysteriously in transforming a listener's experience. He knew for himself the declamatory practices of Wilhelm Ehlers (Schwab 1965 p. 180), and the degree of variety he would inject into simple folk-like songs. It is possible to hear a tribute to such practices in Beethoven's setting of 'Der Bardengeist', an evocation of an Ossianic bardic singer by the poet Franz Rudolph Herrmann which Beethoven set in 1813.

Der Bardengeist

Dort auf dem hohen Felsen sang
Ein alter Bardengeist;
Es tönt wie Äolsharfenklang
Im bängen schweren Trauersang,
Der mir das Herz zerreisst.

Und wie vom Berge zart und lind
Ins süsse Blumenland
Kastalias heil'ge Quelle rinnt:
So wallt und rauscht im Morgenwind
Das silberne Gewand.

Nur leise rauscht sein Lied dahin
Beim grauen Dämmerchein,
Und zu den hellen Sternen hin
Entschwebt sein Herz, sein tiefer Sinn
In süssen Träumerein.

Und still ergriff mich mehr und mehr
Sein wunderbares Lied.
Was siehst du, Geist, so bang und schwer?
Was suchst du dort im Sternenheer?
Wie dir die Seele glüht!

"Ich suche wohl, nicht find' ich mehr,
Ach! Die Vergangenheit.
Ich sehe wohl so bang und schwer,
Ich suche dort im Sternenheer
Der Deutschen goldne Zeit.

[The Bardic Spirit

There on the lofty rock sang **(a)**
An old bardic spirit;
It sounds like an Aeolian harp
In a fearful, heavy lament
That breaks my heart asunder.

And as sweet and soft from the mountains
Into the land of flowers
Runs Castalia's holy spring:
So flows and swells in the morning wind
The silver cloak.

Only lightly swells his song
In the grey twilight,
And away to the bright stars above
Floats his heart, his deep sense
Sweetly dreaming.

And quietly gripped me more and more **(b)**
His wondrous song.
What do you see, Spirit, so fearful and heavy?
What do you seek in the starry host?
How your soul glows within you!

"I truly seek, and find no more, **(c)**
Ah, the past.
I truly look, so fearful, so heavy,
I search there in the starry host
For the Germans' golden time.

Hinunter ging die Sonne schon, Kaum blieb ein Widerschein; Mit Arglist und mit frechem Hohn Pflanzt nun die düstre Nacht den Mohn Ums Grab der Väter ein.	The sun was already sinking, Hardly a reflection remained; With malice and with insolent scorn A dark night of poppies grows Over the grave of our fathers.	
Ja, herrlich, unerschüttert, kühn Stand einst der Deutsche da; Ach! über schwanke Trümmer ziehn Verhängnisvolle Sterne hin. Es <i>war</i> Teutonia."	Yes, bright, unshaken, brave The Germans once stood there; Ah, over the shaken ruins pass The fateful stars. It <i>was</i> Teutonia."	
Noch auf dem hohen Felsen sang Der alte Bardengeist; Es tönt wie Äolsharfenklang Ein banger, schwerer Trauersang, Der mir das Herz zerreisst.	Still on the lofty rock sang The old bardic spirit; It sounds like an Aeolian harp A fearful, heavy lament That breaks my heart asunder. ^{4]}	(d)

As captured on the page with all eight verses, the poem sets out a four-stage performance process (see the annotations on the poem). Each of these stages bears distinct relation to the four stages of performance instructions in 'An Lina' (see page 98 above):

- (a) Remembering a past experience of song
- (b) Seeking to pull the song into the present
- (c) Singing back what the bard sang
- (d) Consigning the song back to memory for the next person to remember

In this case there is an actual quotation of what is sung, in verses 5, 6 and 7, however, the expectations that are set out by the description of the listener's response to a 'wondrous song' that 'breaks my heart asunder' far outweigh the interest of the quoted song itself. The quoted theme of a lost golden time and a lost home land brings no surprises. It is close in spirit to the long sections of Ossianic verse that Werther reads to Charlotte in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, or to the parody *Bergschloss* that, according to Sternfeld, Goethe was inspired to write having heard Ehlers sing the folksong 'Da droben auf jenem Berge' (Sternfeld 1949 p. 513-515). Any surprise has to come from the placing or telling of the song within a song, and from the poem's play with present as well as past tenses which prevents the song from resting firmly in the past. The poem is clearly about a present performative feat of evocation rather than simply an act of remembering or repeating, and as such the text demands strong creative intervention if it is not to be

4 Author's translation.

dismissed as simply pretentious and embarrassing. Within the traditions of strophic song performance the poem would have been seen as fodder for re-ordering, subtracting and adding verses, according to the performer's own sense of the message to be given and the sensibilities of his listeners – a tradition carried into the current recorded practice of artists such as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Hermann Prey, both of whom choose to sing only a small selection of the eight verses on offer.

Beethoven clearly relished the chance to convey his own enthusiasm for the Ossianic myth. His setting of 'Der Bardengeist' coincides chronologically with his work on the Irish, Welsh and Scottish folksong settings commissioned by George Thomson. His musical rendering of Herrmann's poem is unexpectedly complex, given the severely restricted nature of the vocal line. As in the folksong arrangements, Beethoven inflects the simple melodic contours with a quirky instrumental frame that reminds the listener that there is a commentator presenting these songs to the listener:

Maessig langsam

Dort auf dem ho-hen Fel-sen sang ein al-ter

Bar-den-geist; es toent wie Ae-ols-har-fen-klang im ban-gen schwe-ren Trau-er sang, der

p

p

cresc.

Ped.

*

6

11

mir das Herz zer - reisst.

15

Ped. * Ped.

* Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. (*)

Example 2: Beethoven, *Der Bardengeist*.⁵

In *Der Bardengeist* it is the piano's accented diminished seventh harmony in bar 12 that brings the emotional climax to each verse and sets the energy levels for the next strophic repetition. The piano's postlude also breaks across the voice's steady two-bar phrases from the end of bar 6 to bar 12, causing the metrical downbeat to be once more displaced to the half bar, as it was in the piano prelude and up to the end of bar 6. However, the vocal melody here, unlike in the folksong arrangements, is clearly not a quotation to be safely identified with the past tense. The imbalance in the phrase-lengths of the first vocal utterance – two bars followed by one-and-a-half bars – suggests a present attempt to remember a vocal melody from fragments of the past. With the shifting of the downbeat from bars 6 to 7 it is almost as though the vocal melody exists across two different time-frames; thus Beethoven offers a musical equivalent of the poem's mixing of past and present tenses. Indeed without the additional piano postlude which succeeds the final verse, it would not be possible to say which metrical emphasis,

⁵ Published in *Beethoven Sämtliche Lieder*. Ed: H. Lühning. Munich: G. Henle Verlag © 1990. Reprinted with permission from the publisher.

on the first or second dotted crotchet of the bar, represents the true downbeat. The heavier two-bar phrases from the end of bar 6 can stand out as an interpolation against the balladic swing established by the piano's prelude, or the piano's opening and closing phrases can seem only a scaffolding that falls away with the strength of the central vocal statement. Whilst the song continues its cyclical course, the performers can play with these different possibilities of emphasis pretty much at will; the bardic singer comes in and out of musical focus, marked by signs of musical presence and absence in almost equal measure.

Thus much is suggested by approaching Beethoven's music for 'Der Bardengeist' as text. Approaching Example 2 as performance script increases the potential for the significance of repetition to be played out over different time scales – whether across the sweep of all eight verses offered by Herrmann, or across a single verse or couple of verses as might be chosen to be sung by the performer, or across the atomized patterns of interlinking thirds that Beethoven introduces in the piano prelude. The conception of different time frames that can be gathered by looking at the musical text, gives way to the reality of aural memory seeking to grasp what it is that is being repeated – whether a fragment, a tune, a motif or a phrase. The eye sees and fixes the dimensions at work in the disposition of the text on the page, but the ear shifts fluidly with the performers' management of time, as they are able to manipulate each detail to expand or contract the unit of attention.

Reflective performers of *Der Bardengeist* might note how well Beethoven's written music for the single verse maps onto the four stages of the lyric model for 'breaking open the heart'. The prelude's Aeolian-harp like fragments suggest the first stage (remembering a past experience of song). As the vocal line takes up the piano's fragment and adds on an answering phrase, it suggests the second stage (seeking to pull the song into the present). The third stage (singing back what the bard sang) is represented by the succession of two-bar phrases from the end of bar 6, and the fourth stage (consigning the song back to memory for the next person to remember) by the return of the piano postlude in bar 14. The single verse thus holds in microcosm the shape of the song as a whole; the text is complete. Yet as those stages are acted out in the details of actual performance, Beethoven's text is thoroughly dismembered and revealed as, in essence, a jumble of source ingredients, much like Goethe's 'Ur-Ei'. Beethoven has perfected a text that writes its own dismemberment, as it waits – quite explicitly – for performers to make their own song with it.

Not many performers or commentators have valued this song, despite it prefiguring in interesting ways some of the stylistic and aesthetic preoccupations of Beethoven's late period music. The image of Beethoven as text-maker tends to take precedence over

an image of him as text-destroyer, even though there is much evidence of the composer's awareness of the frailty and inadequacy of written texts – whether verbal or musical. Musicology has built many of its analytical disciplines on the need to explain Beethoven's compositional significance, sometimes ignoring the fact that analytical explanation might in some ways offer a less valuable form of verification than the direct testing of music in performance. Does *Der Bardengeist* invite a first, and then a second, playing to see what happens as performers seek to meet the expectations set out by the lyrical model? Trying music out in performance might seem the only valid form of interpretation, properly understood. However, the expectations that prompt performers to try again are often the result of aesthetic aspirations, aspirations that texts – both verbal and musical – bear witness to. Whilst texts, and the musicological interpretations concerned with them, cannot instruct or determine artistry, they can encourage and prepare for the artistic moment when a text becomes a script and – to use the language of the lyric – the heart is broken.

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Abstract

Interpreting Texts as Scripts: The Lyric Model

Faced with Steiner's admission that writing cannot capture the actual experience of music in time, this article considers Goethe's way of transforming texts into scripts for musical performance, using his lyric poem 'An Lina'. Through this poem Goethe offers both theoretical and practical lessons in how to use texts to prepare and frame the transitory moment of performance; he outlines a four-staged model in which a written text becomes script, ready for being reassembled as text. The paper explores the wider ramifications of such a cyclical model of text making and text dismembering in relation to Beethoven's setting of Herrmann's 'Der Bardengeist'. In this song Beethoven's manipulation of contrasting time-frames invites an analytical interpretation of the act of performance. Beethoven's perfecting of a musical text for 'Der Bardengeist' is compared with the more fluid referencing of an improvisatory performance practice in Reichardt's setting of 'An Lina'. However, there are aspects of Beethoven's text which suggests it can also be taken as a script, as a scaffolding for preparing the experience of a performance moment rather than as a building in itself. In the lyric model, texts – and the musicological interpretations concerned with them – retain significance but in a changing context. They are not so much significant in themselves as in raising expectations for the far greater subtlety of the performance acts which they help prepare or frame.

Keywords

Text, interpretation, script, lyric, song, performance, Goethe, Beethoven.

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Professor Amanda Glauert is Director of Programmes & Research at the Royal College of Music, London. She gained a first in her undergraduate studies in music at Cambridge University, and completed her doctorate on the songs of Hugo Wolf at the University of London. After lecturing posts at Trinity College Dublin and the Colchester School of Music, she moved to the Royal Academy of Music where as Head of Research and Post-graduate Programmes she established new masters and doctoral programmes for performers and composers. Her research into the aesthetics of the German Lied, which has led to many publications on Wolf and Beethoven, has centred on theories of the lyric and the insights they give into the performer's role. In 2010 she co-founded the SONGART research group with Dr Kathryn Whitney as part of the University of London's Institute of Musical Research.