

Ruth Schonthal

Early Songs for Voice and Piano

Art Songs by American Women Composers
Volume 11

Series Edited by
Ruth Friedberg

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Art Songs by American Women Composers

With this series, Southern Music Company initiates the first published collection of art songs set to music exclusively by American women. The songs span the whole of the twentieth century, and the majority of them are by living composers, with the notable exceptions of Amy Beach, Mary Howe, and Florence Price. Some of the songs presented in this collection have been previously published, but have been out of print for varying periods of time; others are being published for the first time; some are by well-known composers and others by lesser or little-known ones. All of the songs have been selected on the basis of poetic choice, strength in text-setting, and accessibility in performance.

V-106 Early Songs - Ruth Schonthal

Ruth Schonthal (1924-) was a musical child prodigy, whose family was forced to leave Germany during the Hitler regime. After early study at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin, she continued her studies at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm. Following a family move to Mexico City, Ms. Schonthal studied composition with Manuel M. Ponce. Her talents came to the attention of Paul Hindemith while he was on a concert tour of Mexico, and in 1946, she came to the United States where she studied composition at Yale University on a scholarship arranged by Hindemith. Schonthal has held teaching positions at Adelphi University, and is presently on the faculty of New York University and Westchester Conservatory. She has also had an active career as a performing pianist and as a composer whose ever-increasing reputation has occasioned an impressive roster of awards and commissions. Schonthal composes in all genres, but her piano and vocal compositions have an especially personal quality. Fluent in several languages, she has found that German, English, and Spanish are her favorites for text setting.

These eight songs, whose lyricism matches the flow of Rilke's poetry, demonstrate the composer's early mastery of vocal and pianistic writing in the German Lieder tradition. The texts are all drawn from *Die Frühen Gedichte* (1909) with the exception of *Liebes-lied* which appeared in *Neue Gedichte* of 1907. We have printed Rilke's poems (side by side with Schonthal's translations) exactly as they appear in their original published form. The reader will note that the German text contains some non-traditional spellings and word-groupings that are characteristic of this poet's unique style.

Translations

by Ruth Schonthal

Meine frühverliehnen Lieder

MEINE frühverliehnen
Lieder oft in der Ruh
überrankter Ruinen
sang ich dem Abend sie zu.

Hätte sie gerne zu Ronden
aneinandergereiht
einer erwachsenen Blonden
als Geschenk und Geschmeid.

Aber unter allen
war ich einzig allein;
und so ließ ich sie fallen:
sie verrollten wie lose Korallen
weit in den Abend hinein.

ARME Heilige aus Holz
kam meine Mutter beschenken;
und sie staunten stumm und stolz
hinter den harten Bänken.

Haben ihrem heißen Mühn
sicher den Dank vergessen,
kannten nur das Kerzenglühn
ihrer kalten Messen.

Aber meine Mutter kam
ihnen Blumen geben.
Meine Mutter die Blumen nahm
alle aus meinem Leben.

My early lent-away
Songs, often in the quiet
Of overgrown ruins
I sang to the evening.

Verse after verse,
I wanted to link
To give to a blonde maiden
As presents and jewels.

But I felt alone
Amongst everyone
And so I had to drop them:
They rolled like loose corals
Into the evening.

Arme Heilige

To poor saints, made out of wood
My mother brought gifts.
They look amazed, silent and proud
Behind the hard benches.

They surely forgot
Her devoted efforts.
They knew only the candleglow
Of their cold masses.

But my mother came
To offer them flowers.
My mother took the flowers
All from my life.

Ihr Mädchen seid wie die Kähne

IHR Mädchen seid wie die Kähne;
 an die Ufer der Stunden
 seid ihr immer gebunden, -
 [darum bleibt ihr so bleich;]*
 ohne hinzudenken,
 wollt ihr den Winden euch schenken:
 euer Traum ist der Teich.
 Manchmal nimmt euch der Strandwind
 mit bis die Ketten gespannt sind
 und dann liebt ihr ihn:
 Schwestern, jetzt sind wir Schwäne,
 mit am Goldgesträhne
 die Märchenmuschel ziehn.

*omitted by the composer

You maidens are like small boats
 You are tied
 To the borders of the hours
 [That's why you stay so pale].*
 Without thinking
 You want to give yourselves to the wind
 Your dream is the pond.
 Sometimes the beach wind pulls you along
 Until the chains are stretched
 And then you love it.
 Sisters, now we are like swans,
 Pulling fairytale shells
 By golden strands.

Erste Rosen erwachen

ERSTE Rosen erwachen,
 und ihr Duften ist zag
 wie ein leisleises Lachen;
 flüchtig mit schwabenflachen
 Flügeln streift es den Tag;
 und wohin du langst,
 da ist alles noch Angst.

Jeder Schimmer ist scheu,
 und kein Klang ist noch zahm,
 und die Nacht ist zu neu,
 und die Schönheit ist Scham.

First roses awaken,
 Their perfume timid
 As very soft laughter.
 Fleetingly, with swallow-flat
 Wings, it grazes the day.

As yet, wherever you touch
 Everything is fear.

Every glimmer is tentative,
 As yet no sound is forthright
 The night is too new
 And Beauty is shame.

LIEBES-LIED

WIE soll ich meine Seele halten, daß
 sie nicht an deine röhrt? Wie soll ich sie
 hinheben über dich zu andern Dingen?
 Ach gerne möcht ich sie bei irgendwas
 Verlorenem im Dunkel unterbringen
 an einer fremden stillen Stelle, die
 nicht weiterschwingt, wenn deine Tiefen schwingen.

Doch alles, was uns anröhrt, dich und mich,
 nimmt uns zusammen wie ein Bogenstrich,
 der aus zwei Saiten *eine* Stimme zieht.
 Auf welches Instrument sind wir gespannt?
 Und welcher Geiger hat uns in der Hand?
 O süßes Lied.

How shall I contain my soul, that
 It does not touch yours? How shall I
 Lift it above you towards other things?
 Ah, how I wish I could hide it
 In some forlorn darkness,
 In a foreign, quiet place
 That does not continue to vibrate when your
 depth vibrates.
 All that touches us, you and me,
 Unites us, like one bow drawn
 Over two strings, producing a *single* sound.
 Upon what instrument are we both strung?
 And what Fiddler holds us in his hand?
 Oh sweet song.

Weisse Seelen

WEISSE Seelen mit den Silberschwingen,
Kinderseelen, die noch niemals sangen,-
die nur leis in immer weitern Ringen
zu dem Leben ziehn, vor dem sie bangen,

werdet ihr nicht euren Traum enttäuschen,
wenn die Stimmen draußen euch erwachen,-
und ihr könnt aus tausend Taggeräuschen
nicht mehr lösen euer Liederlachen?

White souls with the silver wings,
Child-souls, that as yet never sang,-
Who only gently, in ever widening circles
Are pulled towards life, of which they are afraid,

Will you not disappoint your dream
When the outside voices awaken you,-
And you cannot, from the thousand daily rustlings,
Any longer disengage your laughing songs?

Noch ahnst du nichts

NOCH ahnst du nichts vom Herbst des Haines,
drin lichte Mädchen lachend gehn;
nur manchmal küßt wie fernes, feines
Erinnern dich der Duft des Weines,-
sie lauschen, und es singt wohl eines
ein wehes Lied vom Wiedersehn.

In leiser Luft die Ranken schwanken,
wie wenn wer Abschied winkt. -Am Pfad
stehn alle Rosen in Gedanken;
sie sehen ihren Sommer kranken,
und seine hellen Hände sanken
leise von seiner reifen Tat.

As yet you are not aware of Fall coloring the woods
Wherein laughing maidens stroll;
Only sometimes the scent of wine
Kisses you like a faint, fine memory.
They listen, and one of them perhaps
Sings a melancholy song of reuniting.

In the gentle air, bushes rustle
Like someone waving farewell. On the path
All the roses stand in thought.
They watch their summer sicken,
And the bright hands of summer sink
Softly after their ripe deed.

Ich will ein Garten sein

ICH will ein Garten sein, an dessen Bronnen
die vielen Träume neue Blumen brächen,
die einen abgesondert und versonnen,
und die geeint in schweigsamen Gesprächen.

Und wo sie schreiten, über ihren Häupten
will ich mit Worten wie mit Wipfeln rauschen,
und wo sie ruhen, will ich den Betäubten
mit meinem Schweigen in den Schlummer lauschen.

I want to be a garden in whose fountain
The many dreams would bring forth new flowers,
Some distant and pensive,
And others joined in silent conversation.

And where they stride, above their heads
I wish with words to rustle like treetops,
And where they rest, I want with my silence
To listen to their drugged slumber.

EARLY SONGS

(1939 - 1944)

with texts by Rainer Maria Rilke

1. Meine frühverliehnen Lieder

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal

Sehr zart und innig (rubato)
8va

p

Mei-ne fröh-ver - lieh-nen Lie - der oft in der

(loco)

poch. rit. 3 a tempo poco affrettando

Ruh ü - ber-rank-ter Ru - i - nen sang ich dem A-bend sie zu.

8va

poch. rit. a tempo poco affrettando

2. Arme Heilige

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal

3. Ihr Mädchen seid wie die Kähne

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal

Sehr lieblich vorzutragen

3/4

p

Ihr Mäd - chen seid wie die Käh - ne; an die

U - fer der Stun - den seid ihr im - mer ge -

accel.

bun - den. *accel.* *p* *cresc. molto*

4. Erste Rosen

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal



Moderato

*poco rit.**pp**a tempo*

Ers-te Ro - sen er - wa - chen, und ihr

*poco rit.**a tempo**simile*

Duf - ten ist — zag

poco affrettando

Liebes-Lied

5. Wie soll ich meine Seele halten

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal



Agitato

leidenschaftlich *p*

Wie

soll — ich — mei - ne — See - - le hal - - ten,

cresc.

p

dass sie nicht an dei - ne röhrt?

3

3

7. Noch ahnst du nichts vom Herbst des Haines

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal

Allegro moderato
cantabile

p *cresc.* *dim.*

p dolce

Noch ahnst du nichts ____ vom Herbst des Haines, drin lich - te

pp

Mäd - chen la - chend gehn; nur manch-mal küsst ____ wie fer - nes,

p

8. ICH WILL EIN GARTEN SEIN

Rainer Maria Rilke

Ruth Schonthal

Largo, ma rubato

Ich will ein Gar - ten sein, — an des-sen Bron - nen — die vie-len

Traü - me neu - e Blu - men brä - chen, die ei - nen ab - ge - son - dert und ver -

son - nen, und die ge - eint — in schweig-sa-men Ge - sprä - chen.

Ruth C. Friedberg

Ruth Friedberg has had a richly varied career as a performer, teacher, and writer. She studied piano with Frank Sheridan of New York City's Mannes School and Vladimir Sokoloff in Philadelphia, and holds academic degrees from Barnard College (B.A.) and the University of North Carolina (M.A. in musicology). Friedberg was a member of the Duke University faculty for twelve years, and has also taught at the New School of Music in Philadelphia, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas at San Antonio, and San Antonio College. Most recently, she was Director of Music at Incarnate Word College where she was nominated in the fall of 1992 for the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation Professorship in recognition of her academic career.

Ruth Friedberg has performed in concerts of chamber music and in vocal recitals all over the United States as well as in Canada, Mexico, and Asia. During her tenure at Duke University, she recorded a two volume series with tenor John Hanks, *Art Song in America*, which was published by Duke University Press. After moving to Texas in 1975, she began a ten year term as keyboard artist for the San Antonio Symphony, in which capacity she and music director Lawrence Leighton Smith performed Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* in 1983.

Scarecrow Press has published Friedberg's three volume series entitled *American Art Song and American Poetry*, and she has also written many articles, reviews of new music, and entries in the *New Grove's Dictionary of Music* and *U.S. Grove's Dictionary*. Other recent publications are a collection of poetry titled *Coasts* (1990); *Circle of Women* (1993), a song cycle (words by Friedberg, music by Lawrence Weiner); and her latest book, *The Complete Pianist - Body, Mind, Synthesis* (1993). Friedberg is widely in demand for her lecture-recitals which combine her performing and academic interests. She has given these at the University of Michigan, the University of Arkansas, Duke University, the University of Texas, the University of Calgary, Albright Institute in Jerusalem, Hong Kong Baptist College, and many other locations.