

Lachner, F: Die Seejungfern
Tenor, Horn and Piano/Harp

Even during his lifetime Franz Lachner's reputation varied widely, (he lived from 1803 to 1890), and opinions about his work as a composer are still divided today. Richard Wagner praised him as the "masterly creator of the splendid Royal Court Orchestra", which Lachner conducted in Munich for almost thirty years as Court Conductor from 1836, and as General Musical Director from 1852. He did not, however, refrain from making derogatory remarks to the effect that Lachner's compositions lacked creative power and were dull, dry and devoid of poetry. In contrast, Robert Schumann regarded Lachner as the "most talented and learned among the south German composers".

However, both judgements can to a limited extent and at various times, be valid of one or other part of Lachner's rich and astonishingly wide-ranging creative output.

This applies to the 200 or so songs which Lachner wrote for voice and piano. Certainly several can be found among them which appear excessively influenced by the fashionable taste of the time and are admitted today to be too homely and sentimental. Others however display thoroughly sound musical vigour and Lachner's pure craftsmanship. This is also true of the songs to which he added an obbligato instrument (mostly clarinet, horn or cello). Most of all it applies to the three songs with obbligato horn, which appear here separately in editions based on the autograph in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. They can stand beside the undisputed masterworks of this genre, e.g. Franz Schubert's "Auf dem Strom".

They are as follows:

1. "Die Seejungfern" (Mus. Mss. 5990) for voice (tenor), horn in E and harp or piano; composed 1.1.1837; words by Heinrich Heine (1797-1856).
2. "Frauen-Liebe und Leben" (Mus. Mss. 5996) for voice (soprano), horn in E and piano; composed 30.7.1838; words by Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838).
3. "Notte soave delizia" (Mus. Mss. 6377) Italian canzona for voice (baritone or alto), horn in F and piano.

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