

Three Lieder based on poems by Heinrich Heine by Clara Schumann (1819-1896)
arr. By Aribert Reimann

When Robert Schumann first met Clara Wieck in 1829, she was a mere nine years old, but was showing a remarkable talent for playing the piano. By the time she was thirteen she had developed a keen admiration for Robert that soon blossomed into love. In a few short years he found that the feeling was reciprocated. Clara was the daughter of his teacher Friederich Wieck, and, despite his initial admiration for Robert, he was horrified to discover how they felt about one another. By this time, it was clear that Clara was a formidable musician who would enjoy an international career and Robert was not worthy. After long and bitter opposition from Wieck, a battle that lasted years, Robert was finally able to marry Clara in 1840. It took patience, persistence and, finally, a legal battle for the disapproving father to relent. The two had been determined and now could find the happiness together of which they had so dreamed.

Robert was in heaven, and doted on his new bride, and she, in turn, gave everything to him. He was so inspired that he wrote 138 songs during their first year together. She was his muse in marriage, art, and life.

Though it was always part of her education, Clara only started to compose in response to her husband's urging, and then it was only possible when her household duties allowed it, and most of her compositions were presented to Robert as Christmas or birthday gifts. These pleased him enormously and he continued to encourage her. But it was difficult. She wrote in her diary, "Whenever Robert went out, I spent my time in attempts to compose a song (which was always his wish)." After his death, it simply was not possible for her to compose. With the burden of providing for her eight children, her concertizing took precedence. Her output includes a piano trio, piano pieces and 28 songs. With her husband as a supreme guide, her approach to song writing was a very serious and thorough one. Some of the songs remained unpublished during Clara's life and were admired by those fortunate enough to perform or hear them.

In these performances, three of Clara's songs will be performed in a version for soprano and string quartet arranged by German composer and pianist Aribert Reimann.

Volkslied or *Folk Song* is the second of three poems that make up Heinrich Heine's *Tragödie*. The lyric was not actually written by Heine but quoted by him. He said that it was "a real folksong which I heard on the Rhine." It is attributed to the folklorist and composer Anton Wilhelm von Zuccamaglio. It is the only text to be set by both Clara and Robert. It is not certain which came first.

Though they were devoted to each other and very much in love, the Schumanns were destined to suffer through most of their marriage. Robert was mentally ill, suffering depression and was often in a state of melancholy. In 1854 he reported seeing visions, both angelic and demonic and feared he would harm his wife. After a failed suicide attempt, he requested that he be admitted to Franz Richarz's sanatorium. Clara was not allowed to see him for two years. Clara's 1842 song, written during a happier period, *Sie Liebten Sich Beide, They Loved Each Other*, in which the couple's doomed love ends in loneliness and separation seems very prescient today.

The final song in this trio exists in two versions, the one presented here is *Ihr Bildnis* or *Her Picture*. It is a song filled with sadness and regret. Again written during a happy time in the Schumann's life, it was also a time in which Clara expressed great sorrow over the estrangement from her father caused by her marriage. This conflict is apparent in the sadness expressed over a lost love, and especially the words:

And my tears flowed
Down my cheeks,
And ah, I cannot believe
That I have lost you!