



Herbstlied (Autumn song)

Music by: Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Text by: Siegfried August Mahlmann (1771 – 1826)

Published: 1844, Leipzig, Breitkopf & Härtel

Editor: Clara Wieck Schumann (1819 – 1896)

Instrumentation/Voicing: SA or TB or ST/AB, piano

Broad Description & Type/Genre: *Herbstlied* is a secular, Romantic Period German part song

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Text The original German text was written by poet and editor Siegfried August Mahlmann:

<i>Herbstlied</i>	<i>Autumn</i>
<i>Das Laub fällt von den Bäumen, Das zarte Sommerlaub, Das Leben mit seinen Träumen Zerfällt in Asch´ und Staub</i>	<i>The leaves fall from the trees, The tender summer leaves, Life with all its dreams Falls to ash and dust.</i>
<i>Die Vöglein im Walde sangen Wie schweigt der Wald jetzt still! Die Lieb' ist fortgegangen, Kein Vöglein singen will.</i>	<i>The little birds in the forest once sang, How silent now the forest is! Love has left, No birds will sing.</i>
<i>Die Liebe kehrt wohl wieder Im lieben künft'gen Jahr, Und alles kehrt dann wieder, Was jetzt verklungen war.</i>	<i>Love will surely return In the dear new year, Then all returns again What has now ceased to be.</i>
<i>Du Winter sei willkommen, Dein Kleid ist rein und neu, Er hat den Schmuck genommen, Den Schmuck bewahrt er treu.</i>	<i>Winter be welcome, Your dress is pure and new. He has taken all jewelry, But will faithfully preserve it.</i>

Composer

- Robert Schumann was a historically significant German composer of Lieder in the 19th century and was married to the great Clara Wieck.
- Schumann's biographers have attributed the, "sweetness, doubt, and despair of his lieder to the varying emotions aroused by his love for Clara and the uncertainties of their future together." Robert was a man of few words but spoke with his music, which may explain his many compositions dedicated to Clara.
- Robert often took long walks to escape to nature. He, like many of his Romantic Period contemporaries, embraced the ideal of Nature as truth, mixing beauty with pain. He along with other fellow composers often used poetry as their source of text.



The Composition

- *Herbstlied* was written in 1840, in the same year he married Clara after a long court battle for her hand (*yes- Clara sued her own father!*)
- This piece would be considered 19th century chamber music as a duet for Soprano and Alto with Piano, originally for entertainment in a salon of a home.
- *Herbstlied* is from Robert Schumann's *Werke, Serie X: Mehrstimmige Gesangswerke mit Pianoforte, Op. 43 Drei Zweistimmige Lieder* (Series 10, Choral works with piano; *Herbstlied* is No. 2 of the three duets in Op. 43

ELEMENTS OF MUSIC:

Form The AA'BB' form traces the four stanzas of the poem and follows the classic 4-bar antecedent/consequent period phrasing. The text of the first half of the poem musically presents the idea of life mirroring the seasons: m.1-12 (A section) describes the "fall-ing" transition from summer to autumn and m.12-24 (A') describes the silence of winter (life). The first B section (m.25-32) is marked by a cadence in m.24 with the text turning hopeful in the new year. The final stanza (m.32-45) reveals a surprise sentiment made by the poet with the text welcoming winter. Schumann interjects the use of melodic tags at m.10 & 21. Of particular significance is the tag at m. 41 ("...will faithfully preserve it"), seeming to suggest the idea of steadfastness and faithfulness- emphasizing that winter, what is typically a dark time, is secretly a faithful protector of all that is good (life, love).

Melody The melodic contour is diatonic and generally descending in the A section- the descension may be symbolizing the deterioration of life, as in the coming of winter. There is a significant (B ♭) accidental in m. 7 & 18 - perhaps Schumann wanted to emphasize the idea of life falling to ashes and love departing by lowering this note? In contrast, Schumann chooses to introduce new melodic material (Ascending and in Major) in the B section to continue the idea of life following the lead of the renewal of spring. The piano outlines the melody within its rich use of passing tones, and perhaps the use of accidentals as a departure from the tonic creates ambiguity of key, as with life's many unclear paths.

Rhythm The piece is driven by the ceaseless 16th note piano part in the A section and its sweeping triplet arpeggios in the B section. This perpetual movement of rhythm by the piano unifies the composition- again symbolizing a steadfast faithfulness that winter will protect the beauty that lies underneath its purifying snow. Perhaps also the steadiness of the piano against the less constant and simple rhythms of the vocal lines are imitative of the uncertainty of life's trials. I speculate that the dramatic use of triplets in the B section where the piano plays a "3" against the "2" of the vocal line is imitative of how the transition of seasons can be unstable and turbulent...

Harmony The beginning toggles between A natural and harmonic minor- but accidentals in the vocal in m.7 as well as throughout the piano part present modal ambiguity, just like the transitions of seasons tease humans into temporary windows of the upcoming season.. However, in m.24, a V⁷ chord boldly sets up a significant tonal shift to its relative Major of C signifying renewal with the arrival of spring. Schumann seems to create a sense of harmonic steadiness in the vocal lines, juxtaposed by the more dissonant piano part, perhaps drawing similarities to the unstableness of the transitioning of seasons as the poems suggests. Unexpected dissonances/suspensions are created with 2nds and 7ths throughout the piece (m.10). The vocal harmony is solely left to the Alto which parallels the contour of the Soprano. With Schumann first being a pianist, there's no surprise that the piano truly has a voice of its own with the consistent use of chromaticism in passing tones.

Timbre	Schumann does a masterful job marrying the rich piano part to the colorful vocal lines, while also creating tension between them by inserting suspensions and chromatics. The A section in minor should help the singers create darker colors - this can mirror the common thought of winter as a dark and depressing season. In contrast, the C Major tonality in the B section lends itself to a brighter vocal tone color- invoking a sense of hope that in the spring, flowers will bloom again.
Texture	The vocal lines are homophonic, with a sprinkling of call and response in measure 7 and 21. These two significant instances of textural changes occur with the text of, "ja-ja", which is not found in the original poem. Schumann adds them here as if to allow the performer to agree with the poet that life's dreams (love) can fall to dust. The piano has a dense texture with both hands providing plenty of independent lines. The introduction, interludes, and extended postlude secures its place as having an equal part in the song, rather than "just an accompaniment." In m.38-39: the piano triumphantly plays two chords during a rest in the vocal, as if to imitate the fox horn of a hunter calling attention to what's to come. Conceivably, Schumann is reinforcing several related ideas: that Nature knows best and to follow its lead, that winter will make way for the beauty that it faithfully preserved, that good can come from bad, that death brings life, and that hope is in the horizon.
Expression	There is a playful use of text painting at the beginning and end of the A section --with staccato/tenuto representing the falling leaves and expressing that life disintegrates into ashes and dust. Schumann is deliberate in stating that the A section be sung <i>piano</i> , the first B section sung <i>mezzoforte</i> , and the final section sung <i>forte</i> -- as if to designate that autumn and winter are solemn and quiet (poems says "silent") and spring is to be energetic and exclamatory. Additionally, the opening expressive marking specified by Schumann as <i>Nicht schnell</i> (not fast) is also indicative of the composer's intentional link to the rhythm and tempo of the colder months. However, the slightly accelerated tempo at m.25 creates a quick contrast in mood suggesting an urgency and longing for change to come. Schumann encourages expressive singing in the rise and fall of the melodic contours, as well as varied entrances. There seems to be a draw to use <i>molto rubato</i> as a significant expression of tension and release, mirroring the changes and turns of life.
Musical Selection	<i>Herbstlied</i> is a great introduction to German lieder and the phrasing choices of Romantic Period. It is crafted in a way that is accessible to younger singers but also highly satisfying to perform by accomplished vocalists. The vocal ranges are not difficult and the melody is hauntingly simple, yet wonderfully felt on the voice due to the intuitively expressive phrases. <i>Herbstlied's</i> beautiful piano part will draw you in immediately and its harmonies will keep you engaged until the final chord. This piece allows for great discussions on Schumann's compositional choices and provide opportunities for students to delve into how nature acts as a mirror for the human condition (or art imitating Nature?) The themes that <i>Herbstlied</i> presents are indicative of what we know as Romanticism, yet are clearly transcendent and timeless- students surely will connect to the German poetry that evokes love, loss, hope!!
Additional Considerations	Features a great pianist Program with a men's group too! Or S/T with A/B This song has typically been used as studio literature- with soloist singing the soprano melody; why not program this for a beginning choir to sing in unison?!?
THE HEART STATEMENT	The heart of <i>Herbstlied</i> is its overt, but at times sublime harmonic meanderings as musical manifestations of the human desire to find hope in the midst of uncertainty.

Introducing The Piece

Orator: Hand out a copy of the poem *Herbstlied* (just text, no music) with German on left side and English translation on the right side of the paper. Have a student read aloud the poem in English. As it is being read, have students circle key words they think may help in interpreting the poem. Discuss general themes that are in the poem and count how many references there are to Nature...” Why does poet reference seasons? What could this song sound like? On your devices, go to the google link on the board: predict and briefly describe what you think this song could sound like.” Day 2 *Predictions-* Choose and read aloud to students a few of their predictions from yesterday. Then, have students listen to recording and compare what they hear to what they predicted it would sound like.

OUTCOMES

Skill Outcome

Students will demonstrate expressive singing through the discovery of various articulations and phrase shapes.

Strategies

1. *Warm up with vocalises:* 1-3-2-4-3-5-4-6-5-7-6-8-7-9-8 and descend with same pattern. Perform first as “normal” with no expression, then sung in different articulations and dynamics; take student suggestions for variations. Students can use XL Large rubber bands while singing to emphasize tension and release.
2. *Pick your Favorite:*
 - a. Choose a vocalise (such as in strategy #1) and take student suggestions for a “favorite” note: have students sing and aim the energy/direction to that note, followed by a receding and decaying of energy. Experiment with different “favorite” notes. Big idea: as musicians, we have choices to make when we perform and the only wrong answer is to sing lifeless (flat lining).
 - b. Transfer Favorite Note concept to *Herbstlied*: begin with first phrase.
3. Have students explore and discover various phrase shapes:
 - a. *Sing what you see:* Scribble a shape on the board and have choir sing it.
 - b. *Draw what you hear:* Students draw each shape on a separate index card.
 - c. *Show what you hear:* Students listen to recording of *Herbstlied* and use rubberbands to imitate the performers expression of phrases, applying to stressed and unstressed syllables of German text.
4. *Expert Noticer (™ Margaret Jenks):*
 - a. What do you notice in m.3? What does “staccato” mean to you? Where else do you see this marking? Schumann does not have a lot of expression markings in this song, but he deliberately put these in there- Why?
 - b. Ask students to find the “Ja-ja” measure on page 2: what does that text mean? Students will discover that Schumann added the Ja-ja. Why did Schumann add new text to the poem. How can we highlight this measure (or the restatements of it) to make this interesting? (Sing it staccato.)
5. *Orator-Reprise:* Choose 2 new students each to read aloud the first stanza by acting out for the class the poem version of *Herbstlied*. Discuss their “performances”... (Inflections? Dynamics? Word stress? Passion in voices? Etc.) Transfer expression ideas to phrasing choices.

Assessments

1. (Informal) *Index Cards:* Students use index cards of previously drawn phrases to demonstrate recognition of shapes (hold up in air) based on listening examples.
2. (Informal) *Listening Squad:* A small group of student volunteers evaluate full group on the way they shape their phrases and give feedback to choir.

**Knowledge
Outcome
(Assessments
cont.)**

3. (Formal) *Voice visits*- in trios, students visit with Mrs. B in practice room and sing P1 of *Herbstlied* using agreed upon phrase shaping from class rehearsals; provide feedback.

**Knowledge
Outcome**

Students will identify Major keys and their relative minors and will practice discerning the tonal center in context.

Strategies

1. *Major Scales Review*:
 - a. Aural/kinesthetic- Warm up on Major, natural, and harmonic minor scales in solfege with Curwen hand signs in various keys.
 - b. Visual- Locate DO in isolated key signatures on board.
2. *Harmonic Human scale*: Hand 8 students each a solfege/hand sign poster and have class tell them where to go to construct a Major scale; ask human scale to rotate until LA is on the bottom, making it the root note; Add stickies to each solfege poster that corresponds to the pitches of the relevant scale. Finally, show what A natural minor and A harmonic minor looks like on a staff.
3. *Recognizing keys from known*: Have students view the sheet music of *O How Lovely is the Evening* and determine where our home note of DO lands.
4. *Hearing Hunt*: Have them listen to first minute of *Herbstlied* recording:
 - a. Does it begin in minor or Major? Have students listen to remainder of piece. Does the song remain in minor? If not, where does it shift?
 - b. Look back at the poem- why do you suppose Schumann decided to shift keys here?
6. *Recognizing keys from new*: Have students view the music for *Herbstlied* and determine where DO lands (tricky... no sharps or flats! Now what?). Does anyone know the formula for finding the minor key signature? (Have students find LA and to confirm, students hum an "A" to see if the song revolves around that home note.)
7. *Contextual Clues*:
 - a. Present 4 rules for finding tonal centers & apply to a random piece.
 - b. Apply 4 Rules to *Herbstlied*; discuss key change.
8. *Expert Noticer* (TM Margaret Jenks) *Enrichment*:
 - a. What is with M. 7? Does B ♭ fit in the key of A minor or C Major?
 - b. Are there other accidentals in this piece? Why did Schumann choose to alter that note there? (Will anyone notice that these words are not in the orig poem?)
 - c. Does the B ♭ steer us towards another tonal center?)

Assessments

1. *Pre-test*: Give students a 25 question pre-test on Major and minor key signatures.
2. (Formal) Homework: Students are given a worksheet determining various Major and minor key signatures.
3. (Formal) *Recordings on smartphones*- students sing a C major scale on solfege and its relatives of natural AND harmonic minor; students are graded against a checklist.
4. (Formal) *Key Signature Test*: Students complete a 25 question test on key signature ID of Major and minor keys, both in isolated contexts and in known and unknown excerpts.

Affective Outcome

Students will discover the Romantic Period ideal that Nature can be a mirror for the human condition and reflect how their own life experiences go through cycles, much like the transition of seasons.

Strategies

1. *The Four Seasons*: Have a new student read aloud the poem. Discuss characteristics of each season of weather and what transitions look and feel like. Ask students what their favorite season and why. Think/Pair/Share. Discuss how the poem used the seasons to portray decline, death, rebirth, growth, life.
2. *Shooting The Breezes*: Discuss final stanza- Isn't winter a dark time? According to poem, winter protects what...? ("Jewelry"- life, love) Unravel and discuss the classic, "Don't judge a book by its cover," scenario: What is seemingly a lifeless season covered with snow is really secretly working as a faithful protector of all that is good. Why do you think Schumann decided to repeat the final line of poem?
3. *The Love Story*: Share the dramatic story of Robert and Clara Schumann- speculate the various emotions felt by Robert, Clara, and her father. (NTS: Cliffhanger- don't tell them end of story!) Journal Entry: Describe and reflect on a time when you were in a tense or stressful situation and were uncertain of any resolution.
4. *A New Hope - A Force Awakens*: Ask students, "What does it mean to be hopeful?" Discuss definition of Hope: Confident expectation of better days ahead. "Are you a hopeful person? Why or why not? Is Nature hopeful?" Lead discussion of idea that Nature, with its predictable (confident) cycles, is hopeful. Humans can look to Nature as a mirror too. Schumann (like many Romantic Period composers) appreciated Nature and drew many parallels to life- especially taking the lead that spring (hope) awakens.

Assessment Reflection

- Share with the class the ending of Robert Schumann's love story: Did Clara's father give permission? Did the courts rule in their favor? Did they end up together? Journal Entry: Have students reflect on a time when their uncertainty was returned with resolution/hope.

10 Ways To Take Out The Piece

1. ... composed by Robert Schumann
2. ... a German lied/art song
3. ... sung in German
4. ... whose editor was the composer's wife
5. ... composed in 1840 / 19th century / the Romantic Period
6. ... that shifts tonal centers in the B section
7. ... with text written by German poet Siegfried August Mahlmann
8. ... that speaks about the changing of seasons
9. ... considered chamber music originally sung in a salon (someone's living room)
10. ... that begins in a minor

Checklist of Items Needed To Teach This Piece

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| • Printed scores | • Student devices or smartphones | • Key sig. worksheet |
| • Copies of German poem | • Recordings of <i>Herbstlied</i> | • Computer/projector attached to speakers |
| • Index cards | • Solfege/pitch names posters | • Reserved practice room |
| • XL Rubber bands/slinkies | • Pre-test/post-test | • Rubrics |
| • Google form for Intro | | • Journals, Pencils |

Music and recordings

- <http://javanese.imslp.info/files/imglinks/usimg/5/51/IMSLP51617-PMLP28191-RS98.pdf>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPjX5y4ixGg>

Additional Concepts & Ideas That Can Be Taught With This Song

- German diction
- Vowel unification
- Romantic Period characteristics
- Dissonance vs consonance
- Identifying various intervals, especially 2nds, 3rds, 6ths
- ID of half steps/whole steps
- Major vs minor

NTS (note to self)

- Begin early embedding warm-up exercises to reinforce singing in parts of intervals of 3rds and 6ths and even dissonances of 2nds and M7.
- Is there a student who speaks German or taking German at school? Use as class resident expert!
- Contemporaries of Robert & Clara Schumann were ... Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, Liszt, (Felix and Fanny) Mendelssohn