

## Othmar Schoeck (1886 – 1957) – song cycles with orchestra

### Nachhall/Echo op. 70

#### 1 Echo

A wanderer makes his lucid song ring out;  
Now he falls silent and vanishes amid the pine trees;  
How I would like to hear him go on singing,  
But I console myself by thinking: he can't sing forever.

The wanderer is silent, but those crags  
Are carrying his echo to me in somber choruses,  
As though wanting to retrieve his song by magic;  
Now it is quiet -- I hear only the spring gushing.

The wanderer fell silent and departed; I calmly said:  
Farewell! so why do I now feel mournful  
That his echo wouldn't resound for longer?

It will move me more than the man's death  
If, after a few days have passed,  
Here and there somebody still utters his name -- until all are silent.

#### 2 Loneliness

Have you ever found yourself all alone,  
Loveless and without God on a moor,  
The wounds of base misfortune bandaged  
With silent pride, numb or angry suffering?

Had all cheerful hopes disappeared from your view,  
Like a huntsman on a mountain precipice?  
Is the barking of the lost hounds dying away,  
As a little bird flies off to escape the winter?

If you were ever so alone on a moor,  
Then you will know how one is forced  
To rush at a boulder, to embrace it;

And how, being frightened by the loneliness,  
One leaps up in horror from the impassive rock  
And fearfully stretches one's arms to the wind.

#### II.

The wind is a stranger, and you cannot embrace it;  
The boulder is dead, you will seek in vain  
A comforting word from this cold, rough object;  
You will even feel abandoned by roses.

Soon you see them, unaware of you, turned pallid,  
Occupied solely with their own dying.  
Go further forward: decay greets you everywhere  
In the long dark avenues of living creatures!

Here and there you see them peering out of their huts,

Then they slam their windows in your face,  
The huts go tumbling, and you feel a shudder.

Loveless and without God! the path is awful,  
The wind blows cold in the alleys; and as for you? -  
The entire world is desperately sad.

### **3 My heart**

A sleepless night, the rain is pattering,  
My heart is wide awake and listening  
Half back to ages past,  
Half to the tread of future ages.

O heart, your listening is not good;  
Be everlasting, heart, and cheerful!  
For behind us, so many laments are calling,  
And before us, many a question is quivering.

So be it! let your mortal part die!  
A storm approaches! so be it! -- just as once the boat  
With Christ aboard wasn't shattered by storms,  
So the lord of the universe resides within you.

### **4 Changed World**

Humanity has come to realize,  
In spite of all pious hocus-pocus,  
That life before the grave  
Is finally something to take seriously.

The fetter of an illusion has been broken,  
That the earth is only an exercise yard,  
Life only a vaulting-horse,  
And that heaven will set us upon a charger.

On earth's green and open ground  
Everybody will soon be wanting already, at once,  
Before being covered with clods by the grave,  
To let his steed graze and frolic.

### **5 Going home in the evening**

On his back, his bundle of wood  
The poor man bears home;  
The cheerful farm lad cracks his whip  
On the harvest-laden cart.

The herd with its burden of milk  
Settles down in the homely cowsheds;  
To his wench, with a joke and a kiss,  
Flies the merry apprentice.

From field and forest the huntsman  
Whistles on his swift journey home;  
And hare and quail are peeping,  
Like trophies, from his pocket.

One sees the poet blithely reeling  
Out of the gloom of the oak-trees;  
He staggers home with his load  
Of immortal thoughts.

#### **6 On a Dutch landscape**

Wearily the streams are creeping,  
Not a breath of air will you hear fluttering,  
The discoloured leaves are falling  
To the ground in silence, weak with age.

Crows, scarcely moving their wings,  
Are slowly travelling; there on the hill  
The windmill lets its sails come to rest;  
Oh, how sleepy this region is!

Spring and summer have flown away;  
The little hut over there, as though sulking,  
Doesn't look out, its straw hood  
Pulled down low over its eyes.

Slumbering or idly musing  
The shepherd rests with his flock of sheep;  
Nature, weaving autumn mist,  
Seems to have fallen asleep at the distaff.

#### **7 Voice of the wind**

The dark forest is sunk in slumber,  
The air is too sluggish to stir a leaf  
Or carry the scent of blossom, and the birds  
Are silent in the foliage, and the ducks on the pond.

Only fireflies, like the quiet sparks of a dream,  
Flitting through one's sleep, shimmer in the branches,  
And to an unbroken dance of sweet dreams  
My soul gives itself up, drunk with silence.

Listen! there's a sudden rushing in the trees  
That calls me away from my precious dreams,  
Abruptly I can hear earnest voices speaking;

The startled soul pays heed to the wind  
As to words from its father, calling to the child  
To leave off playing and head for home.

#### **8 The false friend**

"Oh, be my friend!" is the cry from the liar's mouth,  
The hypocrite who, with secret contentment,  
Reckons up the profit from just such a bond;  
You trust him -- and already you have shaken hands,  
Noble fool that you are! For when stormy times are approaching,  
You'll see the rascal, pale and quaking,  
Leap into the cosy hut of his own self;  
You, locked out, can battle with the storm.

## 9 Niagara

Clear and cheerful as youth,  
And as though murmuring a sweet dream,  
The Niagara travels onward  
At the green edge of the primeval forest.

Travels onward, gently flowing,  
Still happy and leisurely,  
Reflecting the splendor of the forest  
And the stars of a silent night.

So the waves glide gently on,  
So that the wanderer is undisturbed  
And surprised to hear the rushing  
Cataracts from miles away.

Where the Niagara's courses  
Draw nearer to the cataract  
The stream is suddenly seized  
By a wild notion of its downfall.

Disregarding heaven and earth,  
It now hastens at a frantic rate,  
Having wrecked the lovely image  
That at first it bore so amiably.

The rapids hurtle, shoot,  
And thunder forth, pressing wildly,  
As though gripped by a yearning  
For the great going under.

What the wanderer's ear caught from afar,  
Niagara's deep waterfall,  
He cannot hear on arriving there  
Because the roar of the waves is too loud.

And so he who comes closer to the cascade  
May listen out to no avail;  
Yet a prophet was able to hear  
The future rushing in the distance.

## 10 The sound of home

When it was expelled from Paradise,  
Every soul heard a melody  
Echoing in a bittersweet farewell,  
Whereupon earth's covering enveloped it.  
This song has still not been wholly drowned,  
But is sounding constantly softer here on earth.  
Pay heed, o heart, that amid life's setbacks  
The song's final breath doesn't escape you!  
An echo of this song has sprung up:  
The sweet poetry of the Levant;  
Of youthful dreams it's sometimes sung,  
Yet obscurely, not knowing where from, or how.  
But anyone who has ever heard clearly and fully

This wonderful native melody  
Will be deeply pervaded by fretful nostalgia,  
And will never be cured of his yearning.

### 11 The crane

Field of stubble, empty forests;  
And the wind roams desolately,  
Since it can find no more leaves  
Rustling in response to its greeting.

The crane is departing from the meadow,  
Which has cooled and grown weary of life,  
Joyfully it calls that it has found  
The route leading to the South.

In the midst of the autumn chill  
The spring sends the migrating crane  
Its solace from distant lands,  
Being in secret agreement with it.

Oh, what feelings the bird must have  
When, through the gloom of the mist,  
Its heart is stabbed by radiant warmth  
And the distant forest whisperings!

As it flies high over the sea  
The fragrance of meadows lend it vigor;  
Oh how sweet it is to have a sense of  
Anticipation, longing, and faith!

Mist is thawing on the stubble;  
Barren the forest; but I'll gladly bear it  
Since perceiving the sound of the crane  
Journeying into the distance.

While I was stepping  
Gingerly through the stubble,  
I thought at once of all the scythes  
That have hacked into my life.

The bare bushes promptly made me  
Feel regret for another withering  
Than that of the leaves which the breeze  
Had tossed about at my feet:

But it's without grudge or hatred  
That I look back at buried joys,  
For the heart in my bosom was singing out  
Like the bird up in the skies;

Oh yes, the heart in my breast  
Is at one with the crane's,  
And it, too, knows of the land  
Where my springtime awaits me.

## 12 O thou land

O you land of essence and of truth,  
Imperishable for ever and ever!  
I long for you and your clarity;  
I long for you.  
(Peter Palmer)

## Three Heine songs op. 4

### 13 Summer evening

Dusky summer-eve declineth  
Over wood and verdant meadow,  
Golden moon in azure heavens,  
Wafting fragrance, softly shineth.

By the brook-side chirps the cricket,  
Something stirs eithin the water,  
And the wanderer hears a rustling,  
Hears a breathing past the thicket.

In the streamlet, white and slender,  
All alone the nymph is bathing,  
Beautiful her arms and shoulders  
Shimmer in the moonbeams' splendor.  
(Emma Lazarus)

### 14 Why?

Oh, why are now the roses so pale  
Oh say, my love, say why  
Why now in the grass of the greening val  
Dumb the blue violets lie?

Why fills the sky with such doleful soun  
Yon lark aloft in air  
Why breathes the thyme from each sunny moun  
A corpselike odor there?

Why shines the sun on the meads today  
So coldly, in sullen gloom  
And why is now the earth so grey  
And dismal as a tomb?

And why am I now so sick and so drear  
My dearest love, reply  
Oh say, my dearest of all most dear  
Why didst thou leave me, why?  
(John Todhunter)

### 15 **Where?**

Where, for one who is weary of travel,  
will my last resting place be?  
Beneath palms in the south?  
Beneath lindens by the Rhine?

Will I, somewhere in a desert,  
be buried by a foreign hand?  
Or will I rest by the coast  
of a sea in the sand?

Still, I will be surrounded  
by God's heaven there as well as here;  
and as funeral lamps,  
stars will float above me at night.  
(Emily Ezust)

### **Eight songs op. 17**

#### 16 **Memory**

J. von Eichendorff  
op. 17 No. 7

I hear the brooklets rushing  
here and there in the wood.  
In the wood, amidst the rushing,  
I know not where I am.

The nightingales sing  
here in the solitude,  
as if they wanted to speak  
of fine old times.

The moonbeams dart  
and I seem to see below me  
a castle lying in the valley -  
yet it is so far from here!

It seems as if, in the garden  
full of roses white and red,  
my sweetheart were waiting for me -  
yet she is long since dead.  
(Emily Ezust)

#### 17 **Summer**

J.G. Jacobi  
op. 17. No.1

Like field and meadow  
Gleaming in the dew!  
Heavy as pearls  
Are the plants around!

And through the bushes  
The wind is so fresh!  
And loud in the bright sunbeam  
Are the sweet small birds!

Oh, but there  
Where my sweetheart I saw  
In the little chamber  
So lowly and small  
Thus covered round about  
Hidden from the sun  
Where the earth remained far and broad  
With all of its  
splendor!  
(David Guess)

### **18 In Autumn**

J.L. Uhland  
op. 17 No. 2

Greetings to you with springtime joy,  
Blue heavens, golden sunlight!  
Yonder, too, from the garden bowers  
I hear happy strings resounding.

O soul, do you discern once again  
Soft, sweet songs of spring?  
Look about you at the dun-coloured trees.  
Ah, it was a lovely dream.  
(Sharon Krebs)

### **19 The Churchyard in spring**

J.L. Uhland  
Op. 17 No. 3

Silent garden, bloom apace,  
Deck thyself with verdure young:  
Be the red earth's latest trace  
Hid with roses, thickly sprung.

Haste to close yon darksome grave,  
Thus to view it grieves my heart,  
Though, in sooth, it doth not crave  
Aught wherein my love hath part.

Stay, this grave myself will share,  
Now shall earth receive her due;  
Nay, not yet—in upper air  
Many a task I've yet to do.  
(Walter William Skeat)



## 20 **May has come**

Heinrich Heine

op. 17 No. 5

May has come,  
The flowers and the trees blossom,  
And through the blue of heaven  
The rosy clouds travel.

The nightingales are singing  
Down from the leafy heights,  
The white lambs are leaping about  
In the soft green clover.

I cannot sing and leap,  
Ill I lie in the grass;  
I hear a distant ringing,  
I am dreaming I know not what.  
(Sharon Krebs)

## 21 **The happy wanderer**

J. von Eichendorff

op. 17 No. 8

When God wishes to show true favour to someone,  
he sends him out into the wide world  
and points out his miracles  
in mountain and wood and river and field.

The indolent ones who laze at home  
are not refreshed by the dawn;  
they only know about rearing children,  
about cares, burdens and miseries - and all for bread.

The brook springs out of the mountains,  
the larks zip high with pleasure;  
is there anything I should not sing with them  
with full throat and fresh spirit?

Let dear God alone prevail;  
He sustains the brook, the larks, the wind and field,  
and the earth and sky;  
and he has also ordered my life for the best.  
(Emily Ezust)

## 22 **Peregrina II**

E. Mörike

op. 17 No. 4

Something wrong entered the moonlit gardens  
of a once sacred love.  
I trembled when I discovered a long-past betrayal  
and with a tearful but cruel look  
I told the slim  
enchanted girl

to take herself off away from me.  
Oh, her high forehead  
sank down, for she loved me;  
but silently away she went,  
off into the grey world.

Sick since then,  
my heart has been wounded and in pain.  
It will never heal!

It is as if there were a magical thread, spun by the air,  
from her to me, a connecting anxiety,  
a pull, drawing me, pining, back to her.  
How? If only one day on my doorstep  
I were to find her sitting, as once before, in the morning twilight,  
her travelling things next to her,  
and her eye, looking at me trueheartedly,  
would say,

"Here I am again,  
I've come back from the wide world."  
(Malcolm Wren)

### **23 In a castle**

J. von Eichendorff  
op. 17 No. 6

Asleep on his watch  
up there is the old knight;  
above move rainshowers,  
and the wood rustles through the grill.

Beard and hair grown into one,  
chest and ruff have turned to stone;  
he sits for many hundreds of years  
above in his silent den.

Outside it is quiet and peaceful:  
all have taken to the valley;  
woodbirds sing alone  
in the empty arching windows.

A wedding passes by below  
on the Rhine, in the sunlight:  
musicians play gaily  
and the fair bride - she weeps.  
(Emily Ezust)