

## A Setting of Schiller's 'Dignity of Women'

In 1810, Friedrich Reichardt published a book of solo settings of poems by Friedrich Schiller. With the exception of the much younger Franz Schubert, Reichardt was the most prolific author of *lieder* based on Schiller's poems.

His music for "Dignity of Women," a poem which expresses many of the ideas of Schiller's essay "On Grace and Dignity," seems to be the only setting ever attempted. As usual in the earliest *lieder* writing, Reichardt did not distinguish the vocal line from the top line of the piano accompaniment.

Schiller's poem is in nine stanzas which convey a strong contrast between feminine and masculine principles, reflecting his conviction that "[o]n the whole, one will find more grace in the female sex. . . . Bodily frame, as well as character, must contribute to grace; the former by its suppleness, to receive impressions and set them in play, and the latter by moral harmony of feelings." Yet, Schiller continued, "seldom will the female character elevate itself to the highest idea of moral purity. . . ." This moral will, Schiller says, is more apt to the male.

Schiller's essay was especially aimed against Immanuel Kant, but it also indicts the ideology of modern feminism and "gay rights," which flattens the moral and emotional im-

plications of the biological differences between sexes. Schiller did not say that an individual could not partake of both grace and dignity. Rather he was attacking the concept so cherished by feminists, that any individual of either sex is self-sufficient in these qualities.

The fact that the poem is entitled the "Dignity" and not the "Grace" of woman, points to the idea that there is a dignity, based on grace, which is a higher ideal than either grace without dignity or dignity without grace; just as justice based on mercy is greater than either alone.

### Metrical Procedures

Schiller set up two different metrics for the five "feminine" stanzas against the four "masculine" ones. In the six-line "women's" stanzas, with rhyme scheme *aabccb*, the rhythmic structure of the eleven-syllable line flows along in threes. Each tercet contains two feminine rhymes, followed by a closing one-syllable masculine rhyme.

The "men's" verses are each eight lines, with an *abcdcd* rhyme scheme. The meter shifts to a march-like one-two, one-two, and the lines alternate between eight and seven syllables. Every other line stops on a masculine rhyme.

These metrical procedures are perfectly joined to the imagery. The opening lines of the first ("women's") stanza, for instance, end with the words *weben*, *Leben*, *Band*, or "weave, life, and band," suggesting the idea of joining. The second ("men's") stanza starts with the rhyme-words, *Schranken*, *Kraft*,

*Leben*, *Leidenschaft*, or "boundaries, power, life, passion," which suggest sharp intervention.

### Reichardt's Setting

Reichardt's strophic solution is very simple in principle: different music is required for the two kinds of strophes. The "women's" strophes are in E $\flat$  major and in triple meter, the instruction tells the performers to use "grace and dignity," while *p* calls for an overall soft dynamic. The "men's" stanzas are marked "strong," are in duple meter, and the dynamic marking is *f*. The key changes to the relative minor, C-minor.

A telling difference between the two strophes is the accompaniment. The falling vocal line of the first is met by a rising E $\flat$  arpeggio in the bass, and the two lines "weave" sinusously across each other in a graceful dialogue.

In the "masculine" strophe, the accompaniment is simply the octave doubling of the vocal line, suggesting an unequivocal will. While the "women's" strophe is filled with stepwise flowing motion, the "men's" strophe is very angular, relying on big jumps of octaves, thirds, fourths, and many tritones, until only on the last two notes is there a calm, "normal" interval of a fifth.

At the conclusion, the "feminine" strophe *unites* in peace what masculine pride had divided in war. Thus grace and dignity are brought together, and women afforded a supreme role which feminism would deny them.

—Nora Hamerman

The study of classical settings of poetry is perhaps the most efficient way to learn the principles of poetic composition. Selections offered here are either previously unpublished, or no longer available in print.

# Würde der Frauen

## Dignity of Women

(Friedrich Schiller)

Friedrich Reichardt

Mut Würde und Anmut. (With dignity and grace)

1 Eh-ret die Frau-en! sie flech-ten und we-ben himm-li-sche Ro-sen ins ir-di-sche  
Ho-nor the wo-men! They're ro-ses ce-lestial twin-ing and weav-ing in lives \_\_\_\_\_ ter-

Le-ben, flech-ten der Lie-be be-glük-ken-des Band, und, in der Gra-zi-e  
res-trial, weav-ing the bond of the most bles-sed love, veiled in the Gra-ces' most

züch-ti-gem Schlei-er, näh-ren sie wach-sam das e-wi-ge Feu-er schö-ner Ge-  
mod-est at-tire \_\_\_\_\_ nour-ish they watch-ful the e'er-lasting fire \_\_\_\_\_ of love-ly

3 Aber mit zauberisch fesselndem Blicke  
Winken die Frauen den Flüchtling zurücke,  
Warnend zurück in der Gegenwart Spur.  
In der Mutter bescheidener Hütte  
Sind sie geblieben mit schamhafter Sitte,  
Treue Töchter der frommen Natur.

3 But with their glances so magic'ly chaining,  
Beckon the women the fug'tive restraining,  
Warning him back in their presence anew.  
In the mother's most moderate quarters  
They have remained yet with modesty's manners,  
Nature's daughters, with piety true.

4 Feindlich ist des Mannes Streben,  
Mit Zermalmender Gewalt  
Geht der wilde durch das Leben,  
Ohne Rast und Aufenthalt.  
Was er schuf, zerstört er wieder,  
Nimmer ruht der Wünsche Streit,  
Nimmer, wie das Haupt der Hyder  
Ewig fällt und sich erneut.

4 Hostile e'er the man is striving,  
With a crushing force doth roam,  
Wildly through his life surviving,  
Without rest and without home.  
What he builds, he ruins later,  
Never rests the wishes' strife,  
Never, as the head of Hydra  
Falls and e'er renews its life.

5 Aber, zufrieden mit stillerem Ruhme,  
Brechen die Frauen des Augenblicks Blume,  
Nähren sie sorgsam mit liebendem Fleiß,  
Freier in ihrem gebundenen Wirken,  
Reicher als er in des Wissens Bezirken  
Und in der Dichtung unendlichem Kreis.

5 But they, contented with quieter honor,  
Pluck now the women the moment's fine flower,  
Nourish it loving and diligently,  
They have in their bounded work greater freedom,  
Richer than man, too, in districts of wisdom  
And in the unending sphere, poetry.

6 Streng und stolz sich selbst genügend,  
Kennt des Mannes kalte Brust,  
Herzlich an ein Herz sich schmiegend,  
Nicht der Liebe Götterlust,

6 Stern and proudly self-depending,  
Knoweth man's cool breast thereof,  
Heartily to heart though bending,  
Not the godly joy of love,

Stark. (Strong)

füh - le mit hei - li - ger Hand. 2 E - wig aus der Wahr - heit Schranken schweift des Man - nes wil - de Kraft, un - stet  
 feel - ings with hand from a - bove. To truth's lim - its ev - er end - less man with wild - force doth flee, thoughts do

trei - ben die Ge - dan - ken auf dem Meer der Lei - den - schaft. Gier - ig greift er in die Fer - ne, nim - mer  
 drive him ev - er rest - less on - to pas - sion's stor - my sea. Greed - y grasps he the e - ter - nal, si - lent

wird sein Herz ge - stillt, rast - los durch ent - leg - ne Ster - ne jagt er sei - nes Trau - mes Bild.  
 will his heart be ne'er, rest - less through the stars su - per - nal hunts he his dream's im - age e'er.

Kennet nicht den Tausch der Seelen,  
 Nicht in Tränen schmilzt er hin,  
 Selbst des Lebens Kämpfe stählen  
 Härter seinen harten Sinn.

Knows he naught of souls exchanging,  
 Not in tears melts he e'er hence,  
 Steels he in life's battles raging  
 Harder yet his hardened sense.

7 Aber, wie leise vom Zephyr erschüttert  
 Schnell die äolische Harfe erzittert,  
 Also die fühlende Seele der Frau.  
 Zärtlich geängstigt vom Bilde der Qualen,  
 Wartet der liebende Busen, es strahlen  
 Perlend die Augen von himmlischem Tau.

7 But, just as softly from zephyr doth shiver,  
 Quick as Aeolian harp-string doth quiver,  
 Thus so the feeling-full woman's soul, too,  
 Image of pain makes her tenderly fearful,  
 Heaves then the e'er-loving bosom, and tearful,  
 Beaming the eyes are from heavenly dew.

8 In der Männer Herrschgebiete  
 Gilt der Stärke trotzigt Recht,  
 Mit dem Schwert beweist der Scythe,  
 Und der Perser wird zum Knecht.  
 Es befehlen sich im Grimme  
 Die Begierden wild und roh,  
 Und der Eris rauhe Stimme  
 Waltet, wo die Charis floh.

8 In the realm where men are ruling  
 Might defiant right doth have,  
 With his sword the Scyth'an's proving  
 And the Persian will enslave.  
 War be they in fury waging,  
 The desires both wild and rude,  
 Eris' voice is hoarsely raging,  
 Governing, where Charis fled.

9 Aber mit sanft überredender Bitte  
 Führen die Frauen den Zepter der Sitte,  
 Löschen die Zwietracht, die tobend entglüht,  
 Lehren die Kräfte, die feindlich sich hassen,  
 Sich in der lieblichen Form zu umfassen,  
 Und vereinen, was ewig sich flieht.

9 But now, so softly, persuasively pleading,  
 Women with scepter of morals are leading,  
 Smother they discord, all raging enlght,  
 Teach they the powers, that hateful develop,  
 Each in a more loving form to envelop,  
 And what forever would flee, they unite.

—translated by Marianna Wertz