DEEP DEVOTION:
Louise Reichardt and *Sechs geistliche Lieder*

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In early nineteenth-century Germany, women were generally confined to the domestic sphere and expected to prioritize marriage, motherhood, and household management over artistic pursuits. Even so, Louise Reichardt (1779–1826) pursued a professional career as a music teacher, choral director, and composer. She opened a music school for young women in Hamburg and formed a small women's choir decades before Johannes Brahms established the Hamburger Frauenchor in 1859.[1] Reichardt also collaborated with Heinrich Clasing to start the first choral society for amateur men and women in Hamburg and assisted with performances of Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem*. Her multi-movement SSAA composition *Sechs geistliche Lieder* [Six Sacred Songs], published in 1823, was likely inspired by her female voice students.

The year 2026 marks the two hundredth anniversary of Reichardt's death, yet significant research about her is still mostly available only in German. Her Lieder and Italian art songs have received increased attention in recent years, but English-language scholarship about her life journey and choral works is limited. With the help of modern technology, Reichardt's story has become more accessible, revealing a deeper understanding of how a woman in the early nineteenth century built a career in music.[2] This article will provide a biographical background and conclude with an analysis of *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, which represents a juxtaposition of Reichardt's passion for choral music, composition, and teaching.

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Sechs geistliche Lieder unserer besten Dichter, vierstimmig bearbeitet für 2 Sopran- und 2 Altstimmen

Early Years

Louise Caroline Reichardt was born on April 11, 1779, into a prominent musical family in Berlin.[3] Her mother, Juliane Benda Reichardt, was a talented singer, pianist, and composer; her father, Johann Friedrich Reichardt, was a noted violinist and composer who directed operas for Frederick II, King of Prussia. Unfortunately, Juliane died of complications from childbirth when Louise was only four years old.[4] In 1783, Johann married Johanna Alberti Hensler, and the newly blended family included Louise, her younger sister, and Johanna's three children from her first marriage. Johann and Johanna Reichardt had five children of their own, creating a combined family of twelve.

As a young child, Louise survived smallpox, which left prominent facial scarring. When she was older, she was tasked with raising her younger siblings and managing the household because her stepmother had little interest in either activity.[5] Louise's domestic responsibilities placed significant demands on her and fostered the independence she would need to pursue a music career.

Although Louise was born into a musical family, she did not receive a formal music education. Her mother had died, and her father was often away, either fulfilling obligations at court or traveling for other musical opportunities. When Johann was home, his pedagogical philosophy appears to have been largely hands-off. Louise later recalled his approach: "You have often said to me about many things, 'You just start, and I'll help you then.'"[6] She taught herself to play the harp, guitar, lute, and piano; she also had access to her father's extensive music library, which included works by Palestrina, Porpora, Pergolesi, Hasse, Bach, Handel, Mozart, and others.[7] These musical selections formed the foundation of her music aesthetics and instilled in her an appreciation of historical composers.

During extended trips to Paris, Johann grew sympathetic to the French Revolution and began speaking openly about his disapproval of monarchical governments.[8] In 1794, Johann was dismissed from his kapellmeister position for his political views, and the Reichardt family was suddenly left without a stable income. Two years later, Johann was pardoned and appointed director of a salt mine near Halle, restoring much-needed financial security. The family relocated to a small village just north of Halle called Giebichenstein, which was by the ruins of a medieval castle along the Saale River.[9] Their residence soon became a gathering place for poets, musicians, and philosophers, and was known as the "Hostel of Romanticism." The poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was among its guests; he described the Reichardt estate as *Dichter-Paradis*, or "Poet's Paradise."[10]

For fifteen-year-old Louise, the home became more than a place to live; it was an intellectual and artistic hub that nurtured her love of learning and music. She assisted her father with hosting duties and actively participated in discussions with guests—an opportunity not afforded to most young women her age. Evening performances offered Louise the opportunity to experience excellent music making by her father and visiting musicians, and to hear the works from Johann's extensive music library come to life. Although she was not permitted to perform in public, she was allowed to participate in these evening performances at home. It was noted that "all of Reichardt's daughters were gifted with beautiful voices; Louise's beautiful, very extensive soprano attracted a lot of attention from an early age."[11] One winter, she traveled with her father to Berlin so she could take voice lessons and have formal training. Unfortunately, she developed a lingering cough during the trip and was unable to benefit from the opportunity.[12]

During her time at Giebichenstein, Louise also began composing folk and art songs. Her future brother-in-law, Henrich Steffens, noted, "the songs she composed had something entirely unique about them and were by no means to be regarded as echoes of her father's."[13] Johann was a strong supporter of her work; four of her first songs were included in the 1800 publication *XII Deutsche Lieder von Johann Friedrich Reichardt und dessen Tochter Louise Reichardt* [XII German Songs by Johann Friedrich Reichardt and his daughter Louise Reichardt].[14] Researcher Iris Boffo-Stetter notes: "it is unlikely that another example can be found in the literature of that time of an artist father or a father at all recognizing his composing daughter in this way."[15] Johann continued to speak positively of his daughter's compositions; in an 1806 letter he praised one of her art songs, writing that she had set it "very beautifully and simply" and that "every stanza and every word fits the melody perfectly."[16]

Trouble in Dichter-Paradis

Between 1800 and 1803, Louise was engaged twice, but tragically both suitors died before the wedding day.[17] Heartbroken, she abandoned her desire to marry, devoting herself instead to her family. A few years later, her life was dramatically changed by the Napoleonic Wars. Johann was a vocal opponent of Napoleon and wrote popular publications critical of the dictator's leadership.[18] Napoleon demanded punishment of the professeur de musique, and in 1806, following the defeat of the Prussian army, the estate in Giebichenstein was attacked.[19] The Reichardt family fled to Berlin. In 1807, Louise, her stepmother, and her siblings returned to Giebichenstein to find their beloved home destroyed. Johann had continued north to aid the Prussian resistance.

Now twenty-eight years old, Louise felt a responsibility to financially support her family in her father's absence. She made handicrafts with her sisters and taught singing lessons to earn money.[20] She also formed small choral ensembles that performed Handel's *Messiah*, Bach chorales, and old Italian church music.[21] In 1807 she wrote to her father:

> I've gathered a bunch of all the sweetest girls here, two of whom come to me every morning and all of them on Tuesday afternoons, as well as a few pure bass and tenor voices that I found among our acquaintances, and together they form a pretty nice choir.[22]

Johann returned to the family estate in late 1807.[23] In 1808 he was recruited as kapellmeister for Napoleon's youngest brother, King Jérôme of Westphalia, a strategic move to keep the problematic composer under surveillance.[24] The family moved to the capital city of Kassel, where Louise developed a close friendship with author Wilhelm Grimm, of the fairytale-writing Brothers Grimm. Following an increase in artistic and political conflict at court, Johann left for Vienna in November 1808 under the guise of recruiting new singers for the Kassel theatre.[25] A few weeks later, he was formally terminated, and the family returned to Giebichenstein in dire financial straits.[26]

Louise wanted to find more teaching opportunities in larger cities, but relocating to a new city and choosing to pursue a career in music was complicated. After consulting with her close male friends, including Grimm, she devised a plan to teach in Hamburg.[27] The main obstacle was securing her father's approval, which was important to her. At first, Johann did not approve, believing his daughter could teach from their home in Giebichenstein, but after several months he changed his mind.[28] According to biographer Martin W.G. Brandt, Johann advised her on how much to charge for lessons and how to conduct herself in society.[29]

Music in Hamburg

In October 1809, Louise arrived in Hamburg and found patronage with a family friend, Louise Sillem. She lived in the Sillem residence for many years, and her patron helped her to secure students among bourgeois society.[30] By December, she had twenty-six female students whom she saw multiple times a week, and by 1811, the number had grown to forty-two.[31] She also started a small choral ensemble:

> Thank God I have now brought some of my students to the point where their singing refreshes and warms my heart, and I have a small choir of six perfectly pure voices, which I intend to expand.[32]

With her early teaching success and a set of newly published vocal collections, Louise was able to send money home to support her parents and the estate.[33] She also brought Fritz, her youngest half-brother, to Hamburg and paid for his education with a local pastor.[34] In 1814 she expanded her teaching activities and opened a music school for young women, where she taught piano and voice either at her students' homes or in the Sillem residence.[35]

Louise suffered another profound loss when her father died in 1814 after a stroke.[36] She wrote, "since I no longer have him, it is as if music has also been taken from me."[37] In the years following, she refrained from publishing her music, explaining that, "it had been my intention to publish nothing further after the death of my father."[38] Instead, she devoted her attention to teaching and developing new choral opportunities.

In addition to her teaching studio, in 1816, Louise

collaborated with pianist and composer Heinrich Clasing to form an amateur choral society in Hamburg.[39] She was already familiar with the Berlin Singakademie and its current director, Carl Friedrich Zelter, and was likely inspired to create a similar organization. The mixed choir, referred to either as *Musikverein* (Music Society) or *Gesangverein* (Singing Society), featured her female voice students in the soprano and alto sections. Reichardt prepared materials, helped rehearse the choir, and trained both male and female soloists, but she did not conduct for concerts. She may have partially conducted a large music festival in Lübeck,[40] although this was never confirmed in local reports.[41] For performances, Clasing or another male colleague directed.

The Musikverein performed sacred masterworks, especially those of G. F. Handel, for which Reichardt prepared rehearsal reductions and German translations.[42] She also made German translations of other works: "I have tried to add the wonderful psalms of our Lutheran Bible to the old Latin masses without changing a single line."[43] In doing so, she made music by composers such as Johann Hasse, Carl H. Graun, Carl F. C. Fasch, and Andreas Romberg more accessible to the local community.

In 1818, Reichardt played an important role in a massive two-day festival performance of both Handel's *Messiah* and Mozart's *Requiem* at St. Michael's Church in Hamburg. (One of six organs at St. Michael's Church appears in the opening artwork on page 7.) Five thousand people were in the audience for both concerts, and over 360 professional and amateur musicians from across the region performed in the orchestra and choir.[44] Clasing conducted the choir, and Wilhelm Grund, a local conductor and music teacher, led the orchestra. Reichardt was closely involved in preparing the ensemble, particularly in rehearsing and training the vocalists. According to August Gathy, she "paid attention to and influenced every single voice" during rehearsals, working directly with the singers despite not serving as the formal conductor.[45] A concert review in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* similarly acknowledged her contribution:

> First of all, the thoughtful artist, [Demoiselle] Louise Reichardt, worthy daughter of the unforgettable Kapellmeister Reichardt deserves to be mentioned here. Her tireless activity, her careful teaching, and her unselfishness in the training and cultivation of the female voices, have made it possible to form a choir and to place female singers at the head of the performances, which, although they want to be considered only for amateurs, true virtuosos are to be respected equally.[46]

Working Through Societal Constraints

By this time, Reichardt had established herself as a composer, music teacher, and choral director, and was recognized particularly for her expertise with treble voices. As mentioned previously, in the early nineteenth century, women were typically confined to a private, domestic life and expected to engage with music primarily as an accomplishment rather than a profession. Those who sought to compose or pursue music more seriously often struggled with limited educational opportunities and challenges related to publication and the promotion of their music. Reichardt navigated these constraints and built a musical career by working within what was considered socially acceptable.

Although Reichardt did not receive a formal music education, she benefitted from access to her father's extensive music library and thrived in the musically enriching environment cultivated in Giebichenstein. Further, she composed Lieder, a genre well suited to domestic music making, as it could be written and performed at home.[47] Teaching was also considered acceptable work within the domestic sphere, and she had already gained experience teaching her siblings and forming small choirs. At the same time, Reichardt's career still relied heavily on the support of others—particularly men—to access professional opportunities and achieve her musical goals. Her father promoted her compositions in his publications, helping to establish her reputation and work around barriers to publication.[48] Later, she also relied on friends and relatives to promote and sell her music on a subscription basis, avoiding booksellers who Reichardt says mistreated her.[49]

In Hamburg, the pattern continued. Reichardt depended on Clasing to help organize and lead the Musikverein, as this work extended into the public

sphere, where women were typically less welcome. He obtained the necessary permits for concerts and conducted the choir in performance, while she was still able to rehearse and prepare materials.[50] In this context, their collaboration was both practical and necessary. Her success reflected both her own initiative and the realities of the system within which she worked.

Return to Composing and Publishing

Although Louise had moved to Hamburg to help financially support her family, Johann left behind considerable debt after his death, and the Giebichenstein estate was auctioned in 1817.[51] She continued to support her younger brother, Fritz, until he completed his studies in 1825—a responsibility she repeatedly noted had cost more than she expected.[52]

In 1819, Reichardt traveled to England to visit friends and attempted to expand her opportunities as a music teacher. Unfortunately, illness prevented the venture from becoming profitable. After returning to Hamburg, she faced increasing competition from a newly established Singakademie directed by Grund and his colleague Jacob Steinfeldt, and she lost several students to the new school.[53]

Although she had sworn off publishing after her father's death, financial pressures forced Reichardt to reconsider. In the same year as her London trip, she published two works: a set of mostly secular vocal solos with piano accompaniment and a republished collection of solos accompanied by guitar.[54] As Reichardt returned to composing, she also developed an interest in four-part writing. In an 1821 letter to Wilhelm Grimm, she wrote:

> To my unspeakable joy, I have, in my old age, begun a serious study of harmony […] and hope, since no woman before me has ever achieved pure four-part composition, that I will thereby establish my reputation in Germany forever.[55]

She likely took her instruction from Daniel Gottlob Türk's *Anweisung zum Generalbaßspielen*, as she wrote to Zelter in 1822:

> [W]ith General Bass, Türk's instructions were very helpful to me and I would now like to have an equally good book for harmony and composition, because I fear that Clasing trusts my talent too much. You deserve God's reward if you would like to tell me your opinion, in which I have so much confidence, the more Clasing is absent and I now have to guide myself entirely.[56]

Türk would have been familiar to Reichardt, as he was a professor at Halle University and a visitor of Giebichenstein during her youth.

Evidence of her harmonic studies can be found in her choral compositions. *12 Christliche, liebliche Lieder*—a collection for two, three, and four voices—demonstrates a tendency toward homorhythmic texture and includes a reharmonization of *Adeste Fideles* ("O Come, All Ye Faithful").[57] An 1822 manuscript containing twelve chorales and one Lied is currently held at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky in Hamburg, Germany.[58] Works by Reichardt were included in a collection of chorales published in 1832 by her brother-in-law, Karl Raumer, although it is unclear which individual compositions belong to her.[59]

Reichardt also composed a collection of six sacred songs for SSAA voices that remains relatively unknown. Published in 1823, *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is a combination of her solo art songs and four-part harmonic studies, demonstrating both her interest in sacred choral music and experience teaching treble voices.

Sechs geistliche Lieder

Sechs geistliche Lieder unserer besten Dichter, vierstimmig bearbeitet für 2 Sopran- und 2 Altstimmen [Six sacred songs by our best poets, arranged for two soprano and two alto voices] was likely written with Reichardt's vocal students in mind. In 1820, she recalled her students performing works for treble voices:

> I had a pretty nice day on Wednesday. My four favorite students visited me, and God gave me the long-awaited joy of being able to accompany them on the organ in the small, pretty church here with the beautiful 51st Psalm, which Hasse beautifully composed for four female voices. [...] The ladies then all had to

> sing their solo from Messiah to us. [...] Finally, the lovely girls surprised me with my song by Novalis: 'Wenn ich ihn nur habe,' which they sang completely unaccompanied, deliciously pure, in 4 voices. This evening will remain forever unforgettable for me.[60]

In early 1823, Reichardt formed a select treble ensemble of six to eight singers that rehearsed weekly.[61] There is no record that her treble choirs performed publicly, although they may have sung in small, private gatherings.

Compositionally, *Sechs geistliche Lieder* blends elements of Reichardt's early *Lieder* style with four-part harmonic writing. Each movement features a decorative soprano 1 melody, reminiscent of her solo melodies, and the lower three voices form a homorhythmic harmonic foundation using limited vocal ranges and simpler rhythmic patterns. The alto 2 line is typically more melodically interesting than the soprano 2 or alto 1 part, and voice-crossing is common. Most movements are short and strophic, except for the final song, "Tiefe Andacht," which is through-composed.

Sechs geistliche Lieder explores several Christian themes and events, ranging from Christ's birth ("Weihnachtslied") to a prayer for the dying ("Fürbitte für Sterbende"). As she explained, "I tried to treat the songs as differently as the subject matter permitted, three cheerful and three serious ones."[62] Most movements are given expressive descriptions instead of tempo markings to reflect the character of the chosen text. Dynamics are only notated for two movements: "Weihnachtslied" and "Tiefe Andacht" (Table 1).

Several modern editions of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* have been published, although the work has not achieved widespread popularity. An edition by Carolyn Raney,

Table 1. Movements of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* by Louise Reichardt

Title	Translated title	Text by	Expressive text	Key	Total Measures	Number of verses
1. "Dem Herrn"	To the Lord	Johannes Gossner (1773-1858)	*Erhaben* (exalted)	D♭ Major	13	3
2. "Bußlied"	Penance song	Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1750-1819)	*Demüthig* (humble)	E harmonic minor	35	2
3. "Morgenlied"	Morning song	Johann Kaspar Lavater (1741-1801)	*Kindlich* (childlike)	B♭ Major	12	3
4. "Fürbitte für Sterbende"	Intercession for the dying	Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803)	*Sehr Langsam* (very slow)	D minor	19	3
5. "Weihnachtslied"	Christmas Carol	Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg	*Unschuldig* (innocent)	F Major	21	3
6. "Tiefe Andacht"	Deep Devotion	Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock	*Versunken* (sunken)	G Major	44	2 (through-composed)

published by Broude Brothers in 1979, is out of print. A more recent edition, edited by Renate Moering, Ursula Reichert, and Bettina Strübel, was published in 2016 by Reichert Verlag; however, the program notes and performance instructions are available only in German. Individual movements have also appeared in nineteenth-century German hymnals, and in some cases are adapted for SATB voicing.[63]

The following excerpts are taken from an edition prepared by the author from the 1823 original publication, accessed through the libraries at Harvard and Yale universities. Ornamentation—including appoggiaturas, turns, and trills—have been carefully notated to aid rhythmic clarity. Tempos were selected based on meter and the character of the music.[64] Efforts were made to adhere to classical-period performance practice, reflecting Reichardt's harmonic studies and the early influence of her father. This edition is available through the Choral Public Domain Library (CPDL).

"Dem Herrn"

Lord! look down on us, our songs sound for you,
you are our heart's desire!
oh, to have you as a friend is more than any gift,
is eternal life, blessed rest! [65]

Like an opening hymn or prayer, "Dem Herrn" begins the set with a song of praise and adoration. Reichardt marks the music *erhaben*, meaning exalted or sublime, and the 3/2 time signature implies a broad tempo. Although the song is strophic, subtle text painting shapes the overall character. Each phrase begins with an anacrusis, creating a sense of forward momentum that pulls toward the following measure. The gesture is particularly effective in the opening verse, with the accented *Herr!* [Lord!] calling God to hear the prayer (Figure 1 on the next page). Harmonically, frequent secondary dominants also create a sense of forward motion, as if the harmonic progression itself were striving toward God.

"Dem Herrn" demonstrates the common texture and voicing treatments of *Sechs geistliche Lieder*. The lower three voices form a homorhythmic accompaniment for the soprano 1 melody. The ranges for soprano 2 and alto 1 are small, spanning a fifth, whereas alto 2 covers a wider range of a ninth (G♭3 to A♭4). Voice-crossing is demonstrated in measure 5, as alto 2 rises above the middle voices.

"Bußlied"

For "Bußlied" [Penance song], singers are directed to sing *mezza voce*, or half-voice, and *Demüthig* [Humble] for their plea for forgiveness. Set in E harmonic minor, the repeated pitches and carefully placed descending steps imply a crying sensation and emphasize syllabic stress of the text. The soprano 1 melody and text are echoed down the octave in the alto 2 line at measure 4 (Figure 2 on page 15). This overlap creates practical challenges within the otherwise homorhythmic texture, as two different texts are heard simultaneously. The section closes with a dramatic octave leap in the alto 2, followed by voice-crossing pairing at the cadence, emphasizing *meine Schuld* [My guilt].

After the opening section, the harmony moves to the relative G major, providing a moment of hope, and features music that resembles a hymn or chorale. "Bußlied" ends in resignation with a return to E harmonic minor and an optional E3 in alto 2.

"Morgenlied"

You, the source of grace and blessing,
Everyone rushes for a first glance of you;
Eyes, hands, and hearts desire to rise only for you,
You, cover us with your wings,
And refresh and awaken us with peace.

"Morgenlied" [Morning Song] is a light, joyful part-song praising God. The soprano 1 melody is playful and more ornamented than the previous movements. In the original work, the soprano melody is notated with appoggiaturas and turns. Considering this ornamentation, a simplified melodic option is provided for developing singers while still retaining the character of the music (Figure 3 on page 15). Marked *Kindlich* [Childlike], the movement conveys a sense of innocence and renewal. Though the text is not explicitly about the morning time, the text evokes the joy of waking to a new day and being grateful for God's blessings. "Morgenlied" is only twelve measures long but has three verses.
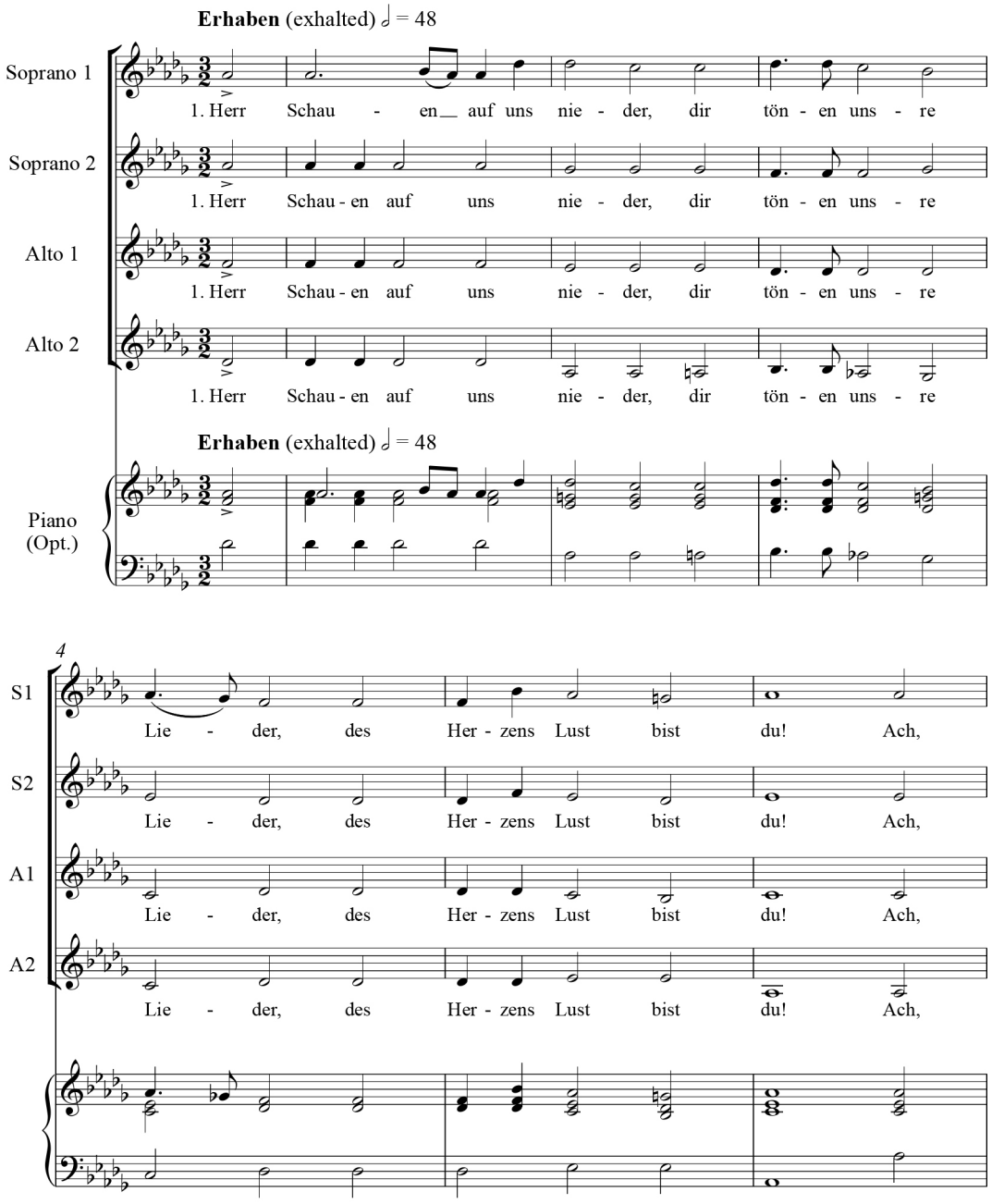


Figure 1. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Dem Herrn," mm. 1-6.
All musical examples in this article are edited by Carrie E. Hall and available in CPDL.
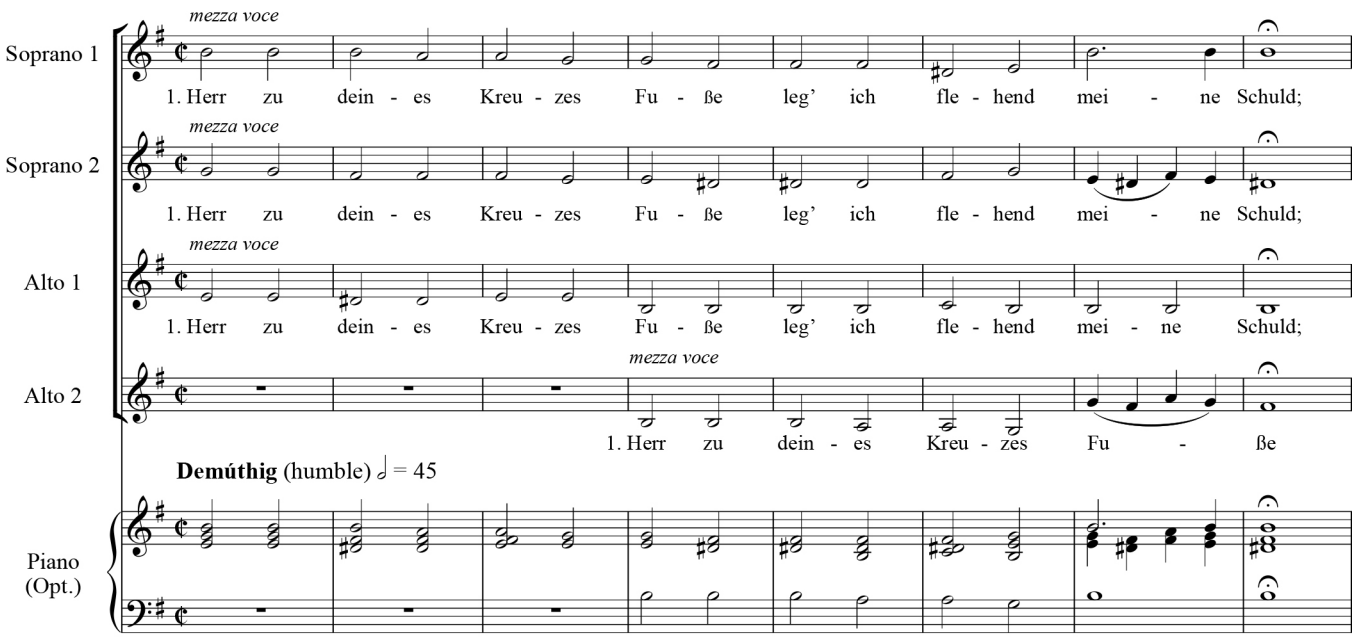


Figure 2. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Bußlied," mm. 1–8.
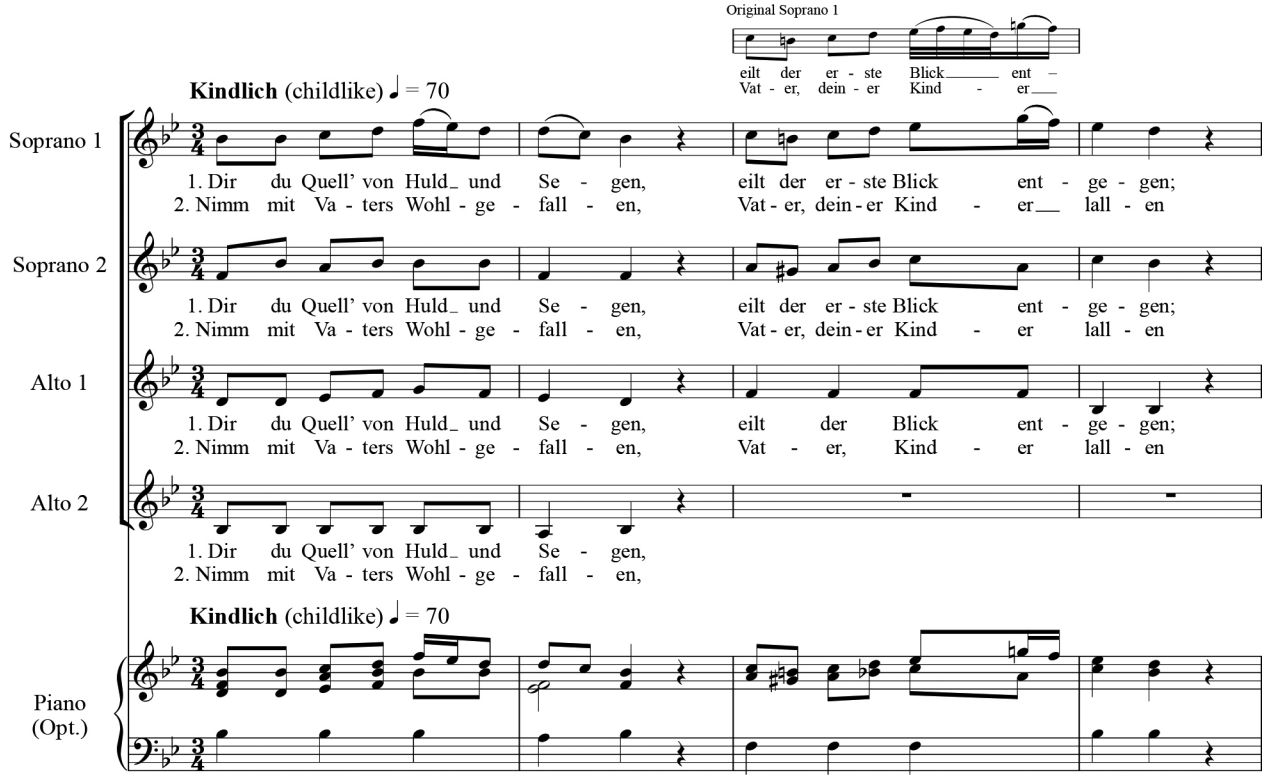


Figure 3. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Morgenlied," mm. 1–4.

"Fürbitte für Sterbende"

Hear their prayers, God,
Don't subject them to judgement,
Those who are so close to your eternity,
To be freed soon from this vanity.

"Fürbitte für Sterbende" [Intercession for the Dying] is a solemn plea for mercy. It is the only movement with a direct tempo indication; *Sehr Langsam* [Very Slow]. The simple rhythms and homorhythmic texture allow focus of the harmonic progressions and declaration of text. Written in D harmonic minor, the work opens simply, maintaining a m3 drone in the alto voices for the first three and a half measures (Figure 4). A viiø/V V cadence in mm3-4 emphasizes *ihr Flehn* [their plea], while the next phrase moves toward the relative major in measure 8, lifting the prayer to God. The chromatic alto 2 melody leads into a m7 leap, representing an inner struggle beneath the soprano 1 melody.

Though most of *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is homorhythmic, the ending for "Fürbitte für Sterbende" offers some variety in texture. The last six measures feature an imitative motif passed between soprano 2, soprano 1, and alto 2 (Figure 5 on the next page). The accent on B♭ to A leans into a crying motion as Reichardt brings the movement to a close. Note the alto 2 voice crossing for the last three measures as it sits higher than the other three voices.

The verse cadences in measures 18–19 with trills in the soprano 1 and 2 lines. During the Classical era trills began with an appoggiatura and were shorter than their Baroque predecessors.[66] For clarity, this edition notates the trill simply as an appoggiatura, though more experienced singers may choose to add additional ornamentation.

"Weihnachtslied"

"Weihnachtslied" [Christmas Song] (Figure 6 on the next page) depicts the night of Christ's birth. Performed *Unschuldig* [Innocent], the first section of the song is sung by solo SSAA quartet, followed by a contrasting tutti SSSAAA chorus refrain. The quartet is presented as the narrators, and the full chorus acts as either characters or provides commentary. The range expands in the full chorus section, with an F3 in alto 2,
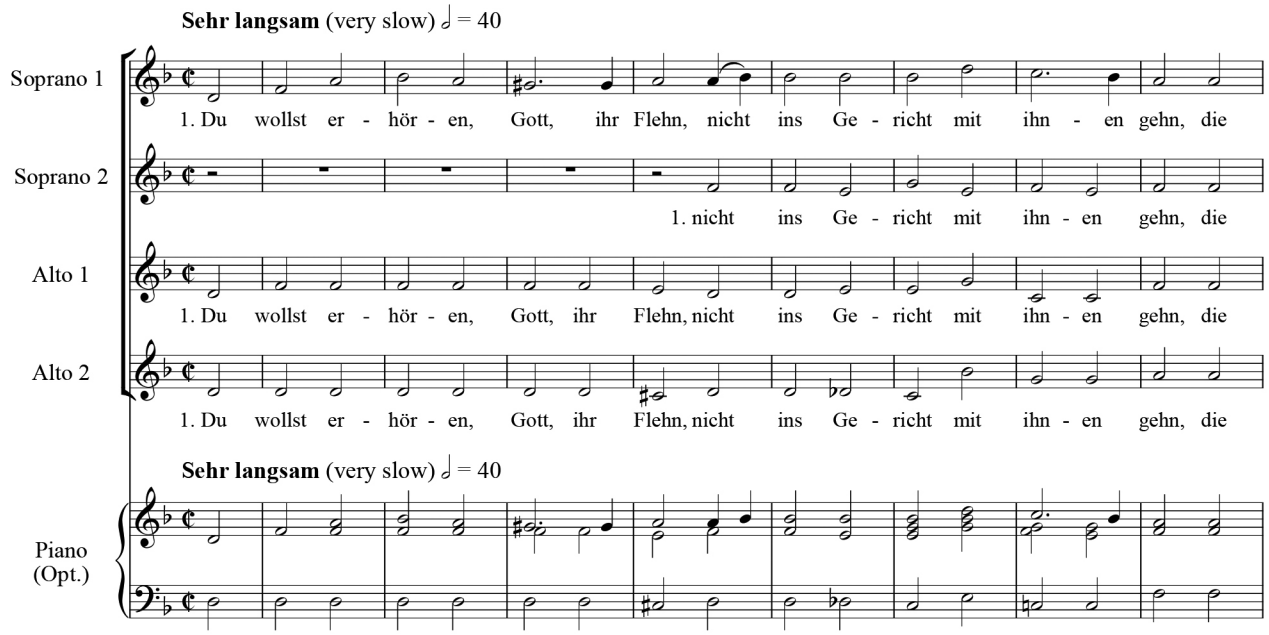


Figure 4. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Fürbitte für Sterbende," mm. 1–8.
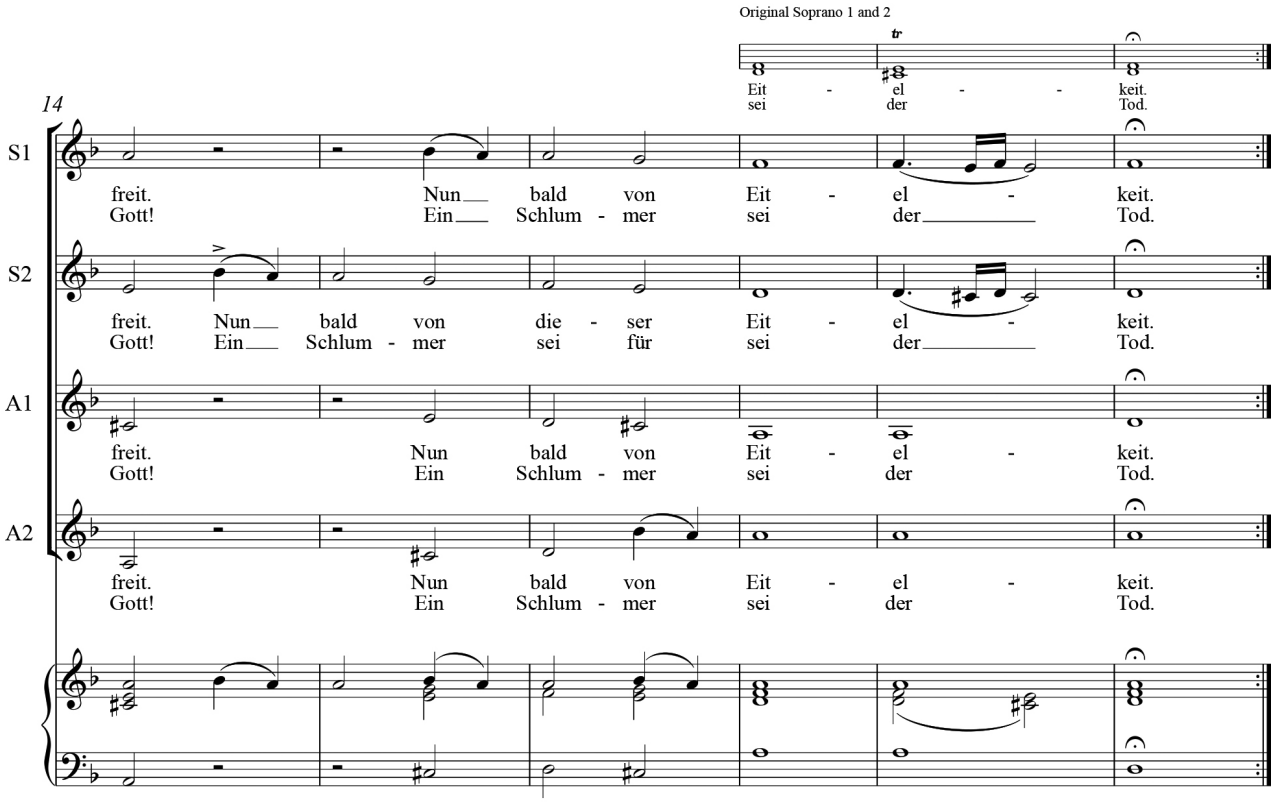


Figure 5. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Fürbitte für Sterbende," mm. 14–19.

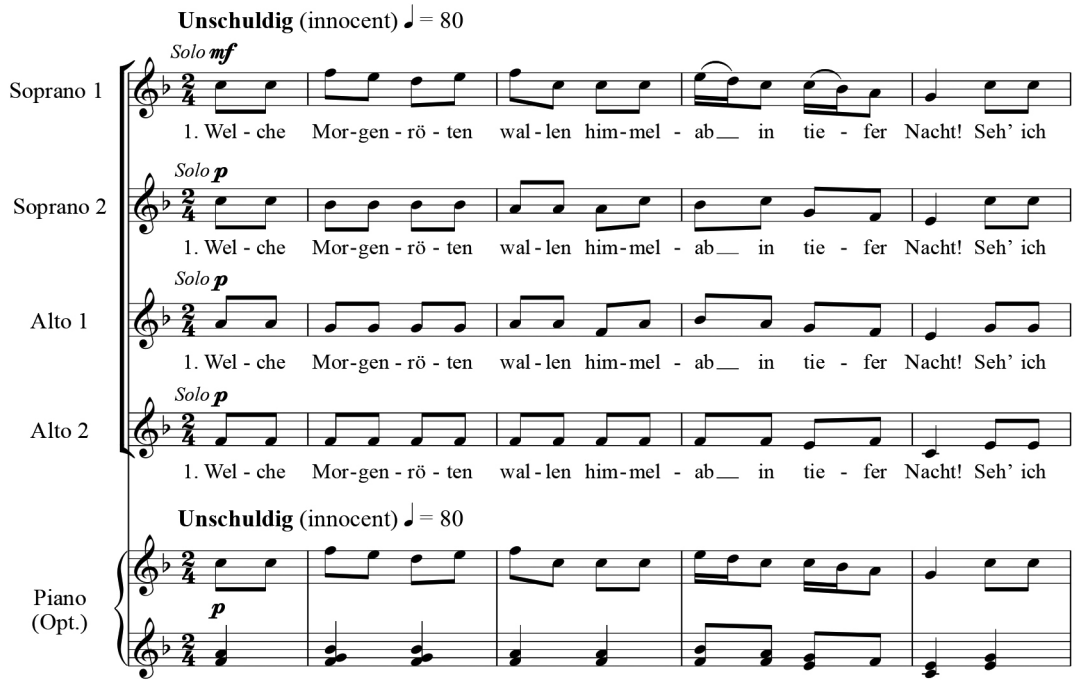


Figure 6. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Weihnachtslied," mm. 1–4.

and an A5 in soprano 1 (Figure 7). Harmonically, this movement seems more straight-forward. While there are a few secondary dominant chords in the opening section, the tutti chorus uses only diatonic harmonies. The purity in chord progressions emphasizes the innocence and joy in the birth of Christ.

There are two thoughts on how to treat the meter transition from *alla breve* to 2/4 in measure 15 of Figure 7. In his 1771 treatise, music theorist Johann Philipp Kirnberger suggests *alla breve* is slower than 2/4.[67] Two paragraphs later Kirnberger claims, "2/4 meter has the same tempo as *alla breve* but is performed more lightly." Considering the texture of "Weihnachtslied," the second suggestion would work nicely with the alternating ensembles.

"Tiefe Andacht"

The final movement, "Tiefe Andacht" [Deep Devotion], is through-composed and more musically complex than the preceding works (Figure 8 on the next page). Reichardt described it as a demonstration of her compositional capabilities, remarking, "I have elaborated on the last one in order to show roughly what can be expected from a larger work that I am very happy to be occupied with."[68]

Considering Reichardt's life, the text seems more personal, explaining her deep devotion to God after the darkness of losing her two fiancés and her family's hardships. When considering the German text, the word ihr can be translated to [her], [it], [you] (informal plural), or [their], depending on the context. Looking at the first two lines of text, one can infer the *ihr* refers to *die Seel'* or [the Soul]:

Wenn die Seel' in tiefe Stille versunken ist,
wenn ganz ihr Wille der Wille dess ist, der sie liebt,

When the soul has sunk into deep stillness,
When the soul's will is the will of the one who loves it,

The second line may also be translated as [when *her* will is the will of the one who loves her], allowing for a more personal interpretation of the text. Notably, Reichardt repeats the text *wenn sie wieder liebt* [when it/she loves again] and ornaments the soprano 1 reiteration (Figure 9 on the next page). Reichardt rarely repeats text, giving this phrase particular emphasis.

The final phrase of the first verse ends with a plea: *o Herr, versöhn' auch sie* [O Lord, reconcile it/her too].

A particularly triumphant section occurs between measures 35–39 (Figure 10 on page 20), where a fortissimo, hymn-like texture leads into an alto 1 call and response with the rest of the choir. Reichardt includes markings not used in previous movements, including *marcato* and *tenuto* articulations. This passage functions as a Christian doxology, with its declarative text praising God.

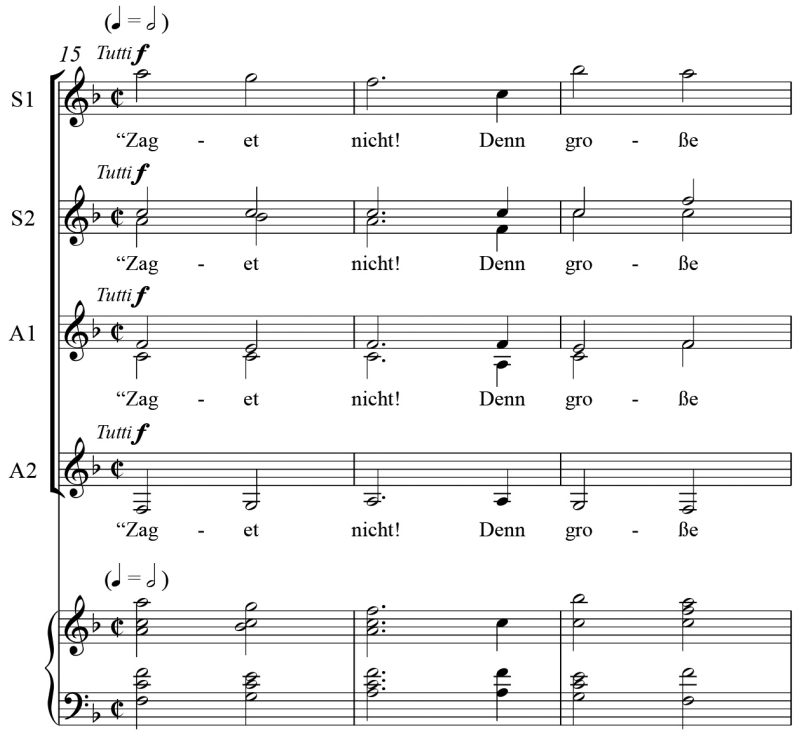


Figure 7. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Weihnachtslied," mm. 15–17.

Performance Considerations

Sechs geistliche Lieder could be performed unaccompanied, like how Reichardt's students performed "Wenn ich ihn nur habe," or with the written piano accompaniment. The full title and publication give clues to Reichardt's intention for instrumentation. Reichardt was clear in other publication titles whether accompaniment would be used: *Zwölf Gesänge mit Begleitung des Forte-Piano komponiert* (1810), *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte* (1819). For *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, Reichardt mentions the arrangement is for two soprano and two alto voices, leaving out any mention of other instruments. At the end of the collection, Reichardt isolated and printed each voice part separately like a Renaissance part book for unaccompanied madrigals or motets.

The movements could also be performed with accompaniment. Reichardt wrote a mostly *colla parte* piano part with figured bass; however, given the overlapping voice parts and SSAA range, this is not the most natural accompaniment. In the edition available on CPDL, the lowest pitch in the piano is occasionally notated an octave lower to create a more balanced sound, and the rhythm is simplified in the faster movements

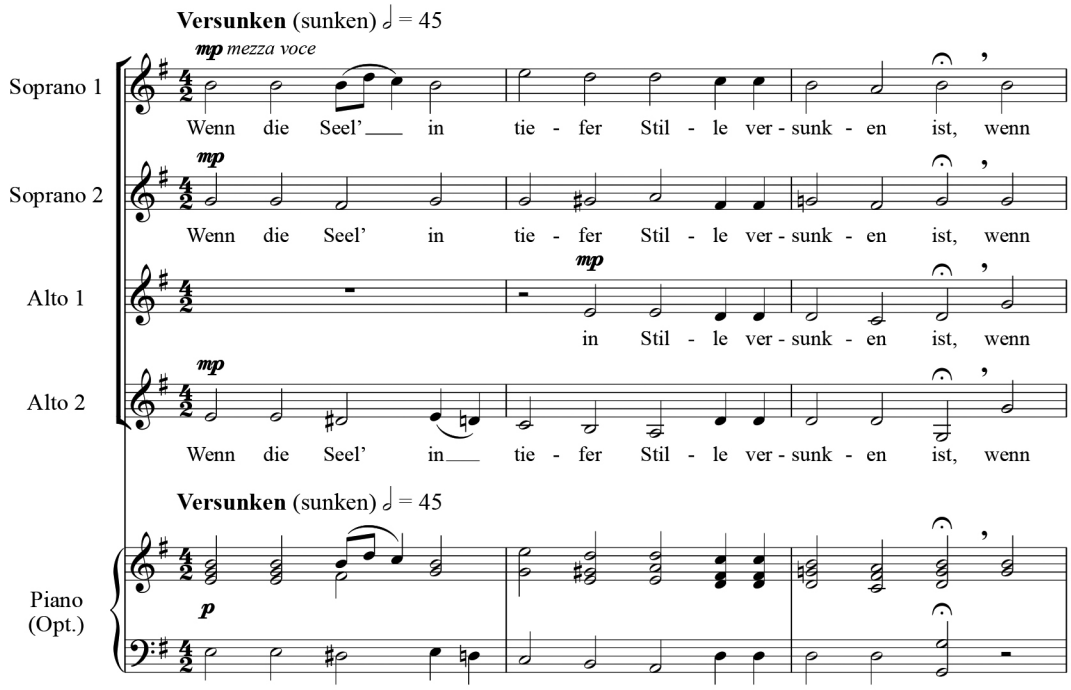


Figure 8. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 1–3.
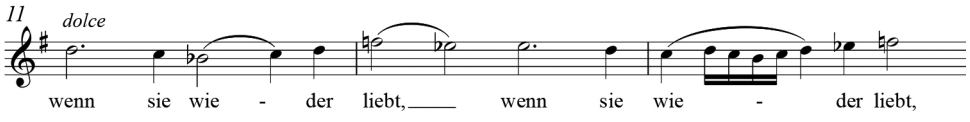


Figure 9. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 11–13.
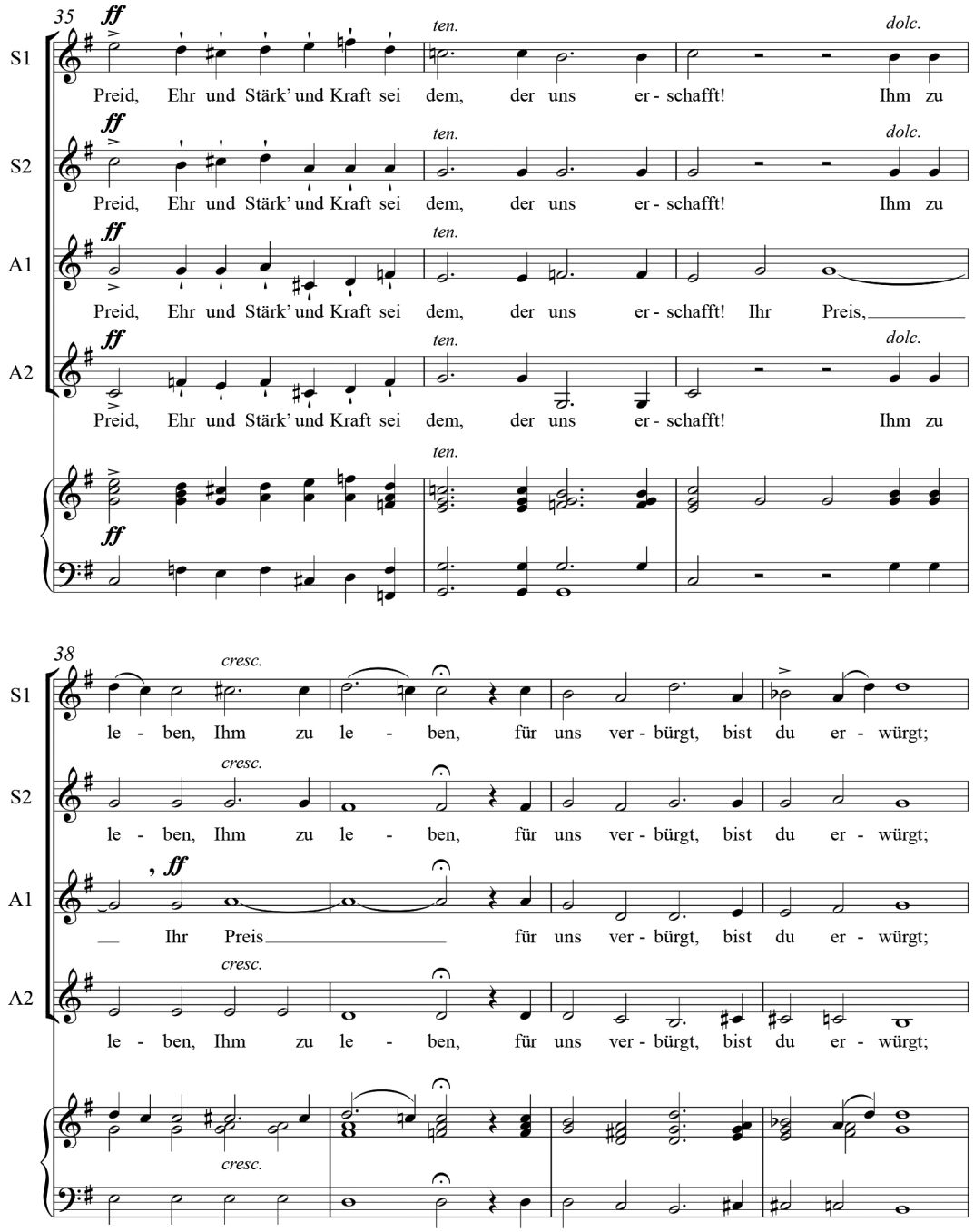


Figure 10. Louise Reichardt, *Sechs geistliche Lieder,* "Tiefe Andacht," mm. 35–41.

("Morgenlied" and "Weihnachtslied") to improve clarity. Ultimately, conductors must consider their performers, performance space, and the music to determine if unaccompanied or accompanied is most appropriate.

The songs can be performed as a set, or individual movements could be extracted and performed alone. For example, "Weihnachtslied" would be a nice addition to a Lessons and Carols program for Christmas. Another option would be to program this music with other songs that Reichardt's students would have performed, including Psalm 51 by Hasse or solo or treble works by Handel, or to include works of other 19th-century German female composers, including Clara Schumann or Fanny Hensel-Mendelssohn.[69]

Complications and Death

Louise Reichardt died on November 17, 1826, at the age of forty-seven. Throughout her life, she struggled with chronic illness, facial pain, and headaches, frequently noting in letters to friends that she felt unwell.[70] During her final year, she also faced housing and food insecurity. In 1825, Fritz completed his training and was able to support himself, relieving his older sister of financial responsibility. Reichardt began working less and gave most of her income away to charity as part of her deepening Christian beliefs.[71] Her financial situation deteriorated further after the death of her patron Louise Sillem in early 1826 and some ill-advised financial decisions.[72] She moved several times, struggling to pay for rent and food. In an effort to raise money, she arranged for a composition by her father to be published. However, the publisher printed three hundred copies of Johann's *Christmas Cantelina* without collecting subscriptions in advance, leaving her responsible for a substantial bill.[73] The resulting financial strain, combined with her weakened physical condition, left her increasingly vulnerable. Reichardt collapsed on November 15 and remained unconscious until her death two days later.

Conclusion

Louise Reichardt dedicated her life to music making and pushed herself to create something worthy of being remembered in the history books. She started a music school for young women and co-directed the first amateur mixed choir in Hamburg when society expected women to simply stay home and mind the household. Her composition *Sechs geistliche Lieder* is a rare example of choral music written by a woman for women in the early nineteenth century. Unfortunately, the details of her trailblazing life and career have not been as accessible in the English language, and her full story is not widely known. Hopefully, with the addition of this research and a renewed interest in *Sechs geistliche Lieder*, Reichardt will find the recognition she deserves. CJ

NOTES

[1] "At first, Friedchen [Wagner] sang folksongs arranged by Brahms with [her sisters] Thusnelda and Olga. Then, she invited other young women…until circumstances drew many more music lovers into the original intimate group." See Sophie Drinker, "The Origin of the Hamburger Frauenchor 1856–1858," in *Brahms and his Women's Choruses* (Musurgia Publishers, 1952), 9–13, accessed July 9, 2026, https://dn720508.ca.archive.org/0/items/brahmshiswomensc00drin/brahmshiswomensc00drin.pdf.

[2] Although some information is available in English, the most detailed research of Louise Reichardt's life and career remains in German. Google Translate was used to translate some sources in this article from German to English. In addition, the author thanks the *Frau und Musik Archiv* in Frankfurt, Germany, for their early assistance in research.

[3] Iris Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin: Untersuchungen zu den Bedingungen beruflicher Musikausübung durch Frauen im frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Gmbh, 1996), 54. Two spellings of her name were used: Louise is the French spelling, Luise is the German. Reichardt used both spellings during her lifetime.

[4] Juliane developed puerperal fever and died nearly six weeks after giving birth. Ellen Freyburg, "Juliane Reichardt," *Musik und Gender im Internet*, March 27, 2012, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000675.

[5] Martin G. W. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt: nach Quellen dargestellt*, 2nd ed. (Basel: Bahnmeier, 1865), 14.

[6] Gabriele Busch-Salmen, Renate Moering, and Walter Salmen, *Nur nicht lesen! immer singen—: Musik und Musiker im Umfeld Goethes* (Germany: Freies Deutsches Hochstift, 2003), 73.

[7] Johann Friedrich Reichardt, *Verzeichniss der von dem zu Giebichenstein bei Halle verstorbenen Herrn kapellmeister Reichardt hinterlassenen bücher und musikalien* (Halle: n.p., 1815). This book is a record of books and musical repertoire in J. F. Reichardt's library.

[8] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 74, 80.

[9] Busch-Salmen et al., 90.

[10] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 55.

[11] G. W. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 17.

[12] Boffo-Stetter, 56.

[13] Henrich Steffens, *Was ich erlebte, 1802–1814: Knechtschaft und Freiheit*, ed. Dr. Th Landsberg (Leipzig: F. Eckardt, 1913), 185.

[14] *XII Deutsche Lieder von Johann Friedrich Reichardt und dessen Tochter Luise Reichardt* (Zerbst: C. C. Menzel, 1800). Publication details from Ellen Freyburg, "Louise Reichardt," *MUGI: Musikvermittlung und Genderforschung—Lexikon und multimediale Präsentationen*, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg, https://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/receive/mugi_person_00000676.

[15] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 120.

[16] From an April 22, 1806, letter J. F. Reichardt wrote to poet Achim von Arnim. Renate Moering, "Arnims künstlerische Zusammenarbeit mit Johann Friedrich Reichardt und Louise Reichardt," in *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, ed. Roswitha Burwick and Bernd Fischer (P. Lang, 1990), 232.

[17] Boffo-Stetter, 58–59; Ruth Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen: Zur Rezeption von Komponistinnen in Deutschland um 1800* (Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag, 2016), 165. Her first fiancé, poet Friedrich Eschen, died on a hike in the Swiss Alps in 1800. Her second fiancé, painter Franz Gareis, died of dysentery on a trip to Italy in 1803.

[18] Eric Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies: Johann Friedrich Reichardt und die Herberge der Romantik* (Halle: Gebauer-Schwetschke Verlag Nachf, 1949), 96–97.

[19] Steffens, *Was ich erlebte, 1802–1814*, 98; Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, *Weil nicht alle Blütenträume reiften: Johann Friedrich Reichardt, Hofkapellmeister dreier Preussenkönige: Porträt und Selbstporträt* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1992), 345–46.

[20] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 32.

[21] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 99. The "old Italian church music" was not specified, but separately the Reichardt daughters were noted to perform music by Leonardo Leo and Giovanni Palestrina (Neuss, 48).

[22] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 73.

[23] Renate Moering, "Introduction," Louise Reichardt (1779–1826) *Lieder romantischer Dichter für Singstimme und Klavier, Band 1* (Kassel: Furore Verlag, 2007), 8.

[24] Busch-Salmen et al., *Nur nicht lesen!*, 110.

[25] Busch-Salmen et al., 213.

[26] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 212, 255.

[27] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 61–62.

[28] Reinhold Steig, "Die Familie Reichardt und die Brüder Grimm," *Euphorion: Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte*, Fünfzehntes Ergänzungsheft (1923): 31–32.

[29] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 34.

[30] Franz Lorenz, *Franz Benda und seine Nachkommen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), 128.

[31] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 75.

[32] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 263f.

[33] Reichardt's publications during this time include *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung des Forte-Piano* (Hamburg: Johann August Böhme, 1810); *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung des Fortepiano*, Op. 3 (Hamburg: Böhme, 1811); and *Sei Canzoni di Metastasio coll Piano-Forte*, Op. 4 (Hamburg, 1811). See Freyburg, "Louise Reichardt," MUGI.

[34] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 82.

[35] Boffo-Stetter, 78.

[36] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 110.

[37] Moering, *Neue Tendenzen der Arnimforschung*, 269.

[38] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 99.

[39] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 105–06.

[40] Steffens, *Was ich erlebte*, 98.

[41] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 107.

[42] Boffo-Stetter 107, 110. Handel masterworks performed include "O be Joyful in the Lord" (HWV 246) and Judas Maccabeus in 1817, Jephthah in 1818, Samson in 1819, Saul in 1820, and Athalia in 1823.

[43] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 81.

[44] Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, *Geistliches Musikfest in Hamburg*, no. 41 (October 14, 1818), 713; Josef Sittard, *Geschichte des Musik- und Concertwesens in Hamburg vom 14. Jahrhundert bis auf die Gegenwart* (Altona: A. C. Reber, 1890), 292. AmZ estimates 360–400 performers; Sittard's research claims

there were 500.

[45] August Gathy, *Erinnerungen an das erste Norddeutsche Musikfest zu Lübeck: den theilnehmenden Kunstfreunden gewidmet* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1840), 16.

[46] AmZ, 714.

[47] Marcia J. Citron, "Women and the Lied, 1775–1840," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane M. Bowers and Judith Tick (University of Illinois Press, 1986), 224.

[48] Citron, "Women and the Lied," 232.

[49] Steig, "Die Familie Reichardt und die Brüder Grimm," 46. Reichardt writes: "My friends here are persuading me to publish songs on subscription because the booksellers are mistreating me so much."

[50] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 106–07. Permits were required for concerts in Hamburg. Robert von Zahn, *Musikpflege in Hamburg um 1800: Der Wandel des Konzertwesens und der Kirchenmusik zwischen dem Tode Carl Philipp Emanuel Bachs und dem Tode Christian Friedrich Gottlieb Schwenkes* (Hamburg: Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 1991), 141.

[51] Neuss, *Das Giebichensteiner Dichterparadies*, 114.

[52] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 98.

[53] Helen Kastinger Riley, *Die weibliche Muse: sechs Essays über künstlerisch schaffende Frauen der Goethezeit* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1986), 141. This organization would later be known as the Hamburg Singakademie.

[54] *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte* (Hamburg: Böhme) and *XII Gesänge mit Begleitung der Gitarre* (Breslau: C.G. Forster). The latter was originally published in 1810.

[55] Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 126–27.

[56] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 206.

[57] Louise Reichardt, *12 Christliche, liebliche Lieder* (Hamburg: August Cranz, n.d.).

[58] Although the title is simply *Choralbuch*, it is listed as 13 Sacred Songs in the RISM Catalog Online (RISM ID no.: 451513425).

[59] Karl von Raumer and Louise Reichardt, *Choralbuch: Lehret Und Vermehret Euch Selbst Mit Psalmen Und Lobgesängen* (Basel: Spittler, 1832). In the introduction, Raumer admits adding works by additional composers, but there is no distinction in the book as to who composed which songs.

[60] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 114–15. There is an SATB setting of "Wenn ich ihn nur habe" in *Sechs Lieder von Novalis mit Begleitung des Piano-Forte*. It is assumed her students performed a treble arrangement.

[61] From a letter Louise Reichardt wrote on June 2, 1823. Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 133–34.

[62] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 207.

[63] See, for example: Friedrich Eickhoff, ed., *Theomele*, Zweites Heft (Gütersloh: Carl Bertelsmann, 1836), 31–32 ("Bußlied"), 32 ("Tiefe Andacht"); R. W. Enslinhaupt, ed., *Liederkränz* (Würzburg: J. R. Richter, 1861), 23 ("Dem Herrn"); E. Linder, ed., *Unsre Lieder für Schule und Leben* (Reading, PA: Pilger Buchhandlung, 1893), 38 ("Welche Morgenröten wallen," an SATB arrangement corresponding to "Weihnachtslied" from *Sechs geistliche Lieder*).

[64] Dennis Schrock, *Performance Practices in the Classical Era* (GIA Publications, 2011) 78–89, 113–17.

[65] Daniela Nguyen assisted with translations of the lyrics for *Sechs geistliche Lieder* for this article.

[66] Schrock, *Performance Practices*, 351.

[67] Schrock, *Performance Practices*, 83.

[68] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 207.

[69] Although Clara Schumann did not compose for treble choir, several of her Lieder have been arranged for treble voices.

[70] Heckmann, *Tonsetzerinnen*, 192; Boffo-Stetter, *Luise Reichardt als Musikpädagogin und Komponistin*, 137.

[71] Boffo-Stetter, 146.

[72] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 48. Sillem had left her 3,000 marks; however, Reichardt invested the sum in an annuity in London and received only a small portion of the money.

[73] Brandt, *Leben der Luise Reichardt*, 200–01.