

Bruckner and the Liedertafel Tradition: His Secular Music for Male Voices

by Andrea Harrandt



Anton Bruckner

Editor's note: This article is based on a paper presented in February 1994 at the first Bruckner conference held in the U. S. ("Perspectives on Anton Bruckner"), Connecticut College, New London.

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw a gradual shift from aristocratic to middle-class dominated social structure. One outgrowth of that shift was the establishment of male choral societies—Liedertafel-Gedanke—that permitted social contact and companionship regardless of class strictures. The development began in Germany where Carl Friedrich Zelter founded the Berliner Liedertafel in 1809. The Berlin model was followed in Leipzig (1815), Breslau and Magdeburg (1819), and Stuttgart (1824). In 1827 the first German festival of songs took place in Plochingen (Württemberg); the next big event was a festival in Würzburg (1845).

Male choral societies were initially banned in Austria by Prince von Metternich, Chancellor of State from 1809 to 1848, because of his political fear of such popular movements. Nevertheless the Vienna male choral society (Wiener Männergesang-Verein) was founded in 1843. Other societies followed in Waidhofen an der Ybbs (1843), Linz (1845), Graz (1846) and Salzburg (1847).

Anton Bruckner came into contact with music for men's voices in Kronstorf, where he founded a men's quartet in 1841. Later he founded a similar ensemble in St. Florian, where he was encouraged by Hans Schlager, a teacher and composer of men's choral music. Bruckner had much closer contacts with

men's choirs during his Linz period (1855 to 1868). After his appointment as town and cathedral organist in Linz, he became a member of the Liedertafel Frohsinn in March 1856. This society was the most important singing club in Linz. Bruckner sang second tenor, though in the archives of the Liedertafel he is listed as a first bass.¹ At the society's meeting of October 31, 1856, he was elected assistant librarian for the season.² In that position he was able to acquire first-hand knowledge of the standard Liedertafel repertory.

Repertory

The most popular pieces performed by mid-nineteenth-century Liedertafels are contained in a collection published by the Regensburger Liederkrantz, a male choral society founded in 1837 in the Bavarian city of Regensburg.³ The songbook, first published in 1863, could be found in most choral society libraries, including that of the Liedertafel Frohsinn. The types of pieces contained in this collection are listed in Figure 1 along with representative examples in each category.⁴ According to Bruckner biographers August Göllerich and Max Auer, the composer knew this book. After the First Upper Austrian and Salzburg song festival, Bruckner and his friend Engelbert Lanz spent a few days in June 1865 at the castle of Taxberg near Linz, where they sang songs of the Regensburger Liederkrantz.⁵

Bruckner also was interested in expanding his knowledge of the Liedertafel repertory. On March 23, 1861, he wrote to the Wiener Männergesang-Verein requesting copies of the following scores:

- *Champagnerlied*, August Schaffer
- *Warnung vor dem Rheine*, Niels Wilhelm Gade

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- *Steuermannslied* (tenor solo with chorus from the *Flying Dutchman*), Richard Wagner
- *Jagdlied*, Franz Abt
- *Landpartie*, Hans Schläger
- *Minnesänger*, Robert Schumann
- *Am See*, Franz Mair
- *Gesang der Geister über dem Wasser*, Franz Schubert

- *Heimweh*, Conradin Kreutzer
- *Reiterlied*, Ott⁶
- *Wanderers-Nachtlid*, Karl Gottlieb Reißiger
- *Morgenwanderung*, Heinrich Esser
- *In einem kühlen Grunde*, folk song
- *Schwäbisches Tanzlied*, folk song
- *Ständchen*, Würts⁷

Nature

Franz Abt, *Auf den Bergen*
Conradin Kreutzer, *Frühlingsnäh*
Friedrich Wilhelm Kücken, *Im Walde*
Felix Mendelssohn, *Sommerlied*

Night

Franz Abt, *Maiennacht*
Franz Xaver Chwatal, *Nachtgesang*
Felix Mendelssohn, *Abendständchen*
Franz Schubert, *Die Nacht*

Love

J. Rupprecht Dürner, *Treue Liebe; Heimliche Liebe*
Karl Friedrich Girschner, *Treue Liebe*

Drinking Songs

Franz Abt, *Trinklehre*
Felix Mendelssohn, *Liebe und Wein; Trinklied*
Heinrich Marschner, *Trinklied*
Albert Schröter, *Zechers Wunsch*
Karl Friedrich Zöllner, *Rheinweinlied; Trinklied*

Marching Songs

Karl Ludwig Fischer, *Wanderlied*
Felix Mendelssohn, *Der frohe Wandersmann*
Julius Otto, *Sängermarsch*
Karl Friedrich Zöllner, *Wanderschaft*

Soldier's Songs

Julius Stern, *Soldatenabschied*

Patriotic Songs

Karl Gottlieb Bellmann, *Wanke nicht mein Vaterland*
Joseph Hanisch, *Vaterlandslied*
Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda, *Das deutsche Lied*
Conradin Kreutzer, *An das Vaterland*
Julius Otto, *Das treue deutsche Herz*
Johann F. Reichardt, *Des deutschen Vaterland*

Folk Songs

Loreley

Farewells

Felix Mendelssohn, *Abschiedstafel*

Figure 1. *Regensburger Liederkrantz*, song types and representative works

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Bruckner received the works he requested but never performed them with the Liedertafel Frohsinn. He probably used these scores for study purposes.

Bruckner as Liedertafel Conductor

On September 2, 1858, Bruckner resigned from the Liedertafel as a singing member reportedly because he had problems with his voice.⁸ Only a few months after leaving the Liedertafel Frohsinn, however, Bruckner and his friend Lanz petitioned the government of Linz to found a new singing club called "Gesangs-Akademie." A month later they abandoned their plan.⁹

In April 1860, Anton M. Storch resigned as director of the Liedertafel Frohsinn; in August he moved to Vienna to become a conductor at the theater in the Josefstadt.¹⁰ In October 1860, Bruckner conducted one piece on a Liedertafel concert,¹¹ and one month later, he was officially elected as conductor.¹² According to reports of members, Bruckner carried out his duties energetically and set a high value on distinct articulation, breathing, and correct pitch.¹³ He chose music of good quality even for informal performances.¹⁴

He led the choir in successful festival performances in Krems (Lower Austria) and Nürnberg (Germany) in the summer of 1861. In September of that year, he left the Liedertafel for some mysterious, unnamed "offences" mentioned in a letter to his friend Rudolf Weinwurm.¹⁵ He nevertheless maintained cordial relations with the Liedertafel, often playing the piano in concerts as he had done in previous years. In January 1868, Bruckner was again appointed conductor of the Liedertafel.¹⁶ In a review of his first performance one month later, the press noticed the hallmarks of his choral interpretation, "extraordinary precision and singular tender shade."¹⁷

Bruckner's Music for Male Voices

Bruckner's output for men's voices is varied and extensive (Figure 2). Most pieces are for four unaccompanied voices; eight add soloists; six are accompanied by wind instruments; four use piano accompaniment; and two employ organ. Bruckner composed many of them in the

Year	Work	Number	Voicing/Instrumentation
<i>Kronstorf</i>			
1843	<i>An dem Feste</i>	WAB 59	Four-part men's chorus
1843	<i>Festlied</i>	WAB 67	Four-part men's chorus
1843	<i>Tafellied</i>	WAB 86	Four-part men's chorus
<i>St. Florian</i>			
1845	<i>Das Lied vom deutschen Vaterland</i>	WAB 78	Four-part men's chorus
1846	<i>Ständchen</i>	WAB 84	Men's quartet, men's chorus (humming), tenor soli
1847	<i>Der Lehrerstand</i>	WAB 77	Four-part men's chorus
1848	<i>Sternschnuppen</i>	WAB 85	Men's quartet
1851	<i>Das edle Herz</i>	WAB 65	Four-part men's chorus
1851	<i>Die Geburt</i>	WAB 61	Four-part men's chorus
1851	<i>Zwei Sängersprüche</i>	WAB 83	Four-part men's chorus
1854	<i>Laßt Jubeltöne laut erklingen</i>	WAB 76	Four-part men's chorus, wind instruments
1855	<i>Des Dankes Wort sei mir vergönnt</i>	WAB 62	Five-part men's chorus, tenor and bass soli
<i>Linz</i>			
1861/62	<i>Der Abendhimmel</i>	WAB 55	Men's quartet
1863	<i>Germanenzug</i>	WAB 70	Four-part men's chorus, French horns
1866	<i>Der Abendhimmel</i>	WAB 56	Four-part men's chorus
1866	<i>Vaterländisches Weinlied</i>	WAB 91	Four-part men's chorus
1866	<i>Vaterlandslied</i>	WAB 94	Four-part men's chorus, tenor and bass soli
<i>Vienna</i>			
1870	<i>Mitternacht</i>	WAB 80	Four-part men's chorus, tenor solo, piano
1876	<i>Das hohe Lied</i>	WAB 74	Four- to eight-part men's chorus (humming), tenor and baritone soli
1877	<i>Nachruf</i>	WAB 81	Four-part men's chorus, organ
1877	<i>Trösterin Musik</i>	WAB 88	Four-part men's chorus, organ
1882	<i>Sängerbund</i>	WAB 82	Four-part men's chorus
1882	<i>Volkslied</i>	WAB 94	Four-part men's chorus
1886	<i>Um Mitternacht</i>	WAB 90	Four-part men's chorus, tenor solo
1890	<i>Träumen und Wachen</i>	WAB 87	Four-part men's chorus, tenor solo
1892	<i>Das deutsche Lied (Der deutsche Gesang)</i>	WAB 63	Four-part men's chorus, brass
1893	<i>Helgoland</i>	WAB 71	Four-part men's chorus, wind instruments, bass drum, cymbal, strings

Figure 2. Bruckner's works for men's voices

Liedertafel style of his time—strophic, homophonic, top-voice dominated.

Throughout his male-chorus output, the text themes are often representative of those in the *Regensburger Liederkrantz*. The following fall in the category of festive songs: *An dem Feste*, *Festlied*, *Laßt Jubeltöne laut erklingen*, and *Tafellied*. Bruckner wrote them for occasions such as birthdays (*An dem Feste*) or name days or for special occasions such as the welcome of the emperor's bride (later empress Elisabeth of Austria) to Linz in 1854 (*Laßt Jubeltöne laut erklingen*). One of Bruckner's earliest choruses, *An dem Feste*, is written in four-

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1

Tenori

Bassi

mf *f*

1. An dem Fe - ste, das uns heu - te zu dem fro - hen
 2. Er, an des - sen Hand nicht Bür - de, sanf - tes joch die
 3. Gu - ter De - chantt nicht in Tö - nen, nein, im Her - zen

4. Brin - gen sie vom Her - zens grun - de, all den gu - ten
 5. Freund und Va - ter hier der Dei - nen, Al - ler uns Dir

Kreis ver - eint, Wallt em - por das Herz in Freu - de,
 Tu - gend ist, Er hat heut, der Mann der Wür - de,
 brin - gen wir, am Er - inner - ungs lag dem schö - nen

Lie - ben Dein, Se - gen Dein - er er - sten Stun - de
 an - ver - traut, ist in ew' - gen Frie - den hai - nen,

f

das es lie - bend e - del meint.
 die - ses Sein zu - erst be - grüßt.
 al - le uns - re Wün - sche Dir.

durch der Jah - re lan - ge Reih'n!
 Dir die Ruh - stätt' schon ge - baut.

Figure 3. *An dem Feste*

measure, homophonic phrases in a simple homophonic style (Figure 3).

Bruckner wrote six male chorus works on nature topics: *Abendhimmel*, *Das hohe Lied*, *Mitternacht*, *Ständchen*, *Sternschnuppen*, and *Um Mitternacht*. These pieces express their texts through a variety of imaginative means: use of soloists, piano accompaniment, distant or hidden choirs, humming, and wind instruments. Only three of them are unaccompanied.

In some choruses describing night, nature, and imitations of natural phenomena Bruckner used "Brummstimmen," humming voices, which was very common in the nineteenth century. In *Um Mitternacht* the tenor soloist sings above a humming chorus that creates the dreamy atmosphere of midnight. The text tells of consolation (Figure 4).

In the traditional category of fatherland songs for men's voices, Bruckner composed the following: *Das deutsche Lied*, *Germanenzug*, *Helgoland*, *Das Lied vom deutschen Vaterland*, *Vaterländisches Weinlied*, *Vaterlandslied*, and *Volkslied*. Songs of this type were popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. *Germanenzug* was performed at the Sängerbundes-Fest in Linz in 1865. The principal interest of this and other festivals was the "deutsches Lied," a celebration of nationalism expressing the desire for unification of the German people. *Germanenzug* was Bruckner's first work as a professional composer after he had finished his studies. The piece is cast in the form of a cantata in three parts: opening chorus with an instrumental introduction ("Germanen durchschreiten des Urwaldes Nacht"), a lyric solo quartet accompanied by French horns ("In Odins Hallen ist es licht") (Figure 5), and a closing chorus ("Da schlagen die Krieger mit wilder Gewalt").¹⁸

Germanenzug was apparently not well received by the festival judges who awarded first prize to Bruckner's friend Rudolf Weinwurm for his piece *Germania*. In spite of this initial failure, *Germanenzug* became one of Bruckner's most performed works.

In November 1866 after the War between Prussia and Austria and after the disintegration of the German federation, Bruckner composed both *Vaterlandslied* and *Vaterländisches Weinlied*. It was a time of new Austrian patriotism. On February 13, 1868, Bruckner first performed

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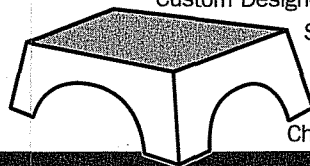
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Vaterländisches Weinlied, a twelve-measure patriotic ballad with a text by August Silberstein, author of *Germanenzug* and *Vaterlandslied*. It is a work with unexpected harmonic changes and chromatic parallel octaves (Figure 6).

The Chormaster Moves to Vienna

On July 6, 1868, Bruckner was appointed to a teaching position at the conservatory of music in Vienna. The Liedertafel did not want to accept the loss:

Our own destiny was hanging in the air: the question of the chorusmaster! Hardly had Mr. Bruckner become chorusmaster, hardly had he conducted the Liedertafel in some glorious performances, a misfortune befell us as we would again lose this man because he received an honorable call to Vienna. The Liedertafel owes great thanks to him, the exquisite shade and the great effect we got to know with him and the precision in the performances he conducted. He was elected unanimously an honorary member of the society.¹⁹

On September 29, 1868, the Liedertafel Frohsinn held a farewell celebration for their beloved chorusmaster. In a letter the members apologized for the problems he had experienced as their conductor, thanked him for his untiring efforts on their behalf, and wished him well in his new prestigious position.²⁰ An important chapter in Bruckner's compositional development came to a close.

NOTES

¹ Membership journal of "Frohsinn" 1855–56, Linzer Singakademie, Frohsinn-Archiv.

² Linzer Singakademie, Frohsinn-Archiv, and *Linzer Zeitung*, November 18, 1856.

³ *Regensburger Liederkrantz* (Regensburg: Ludwig Liebe, 1863).

⁴ Alfred Coppenrath, ed., *Regensburger Liederkrantz* 10th ed. (Regensburg: Ludwig Liebe, 1885).

⁵ August Göllerich and Max Auer, *Anton Bruckner. Ein Lebens und Schaffensbild* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1922–1937); reprint (Regensburg: Bosse, 1974), 3:321.

⁶ Maybe Julius Otto.

⁷ Maybe Richard Würst. Letter from Anton

Figure 4. *Um Mitternacht*



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37 Langsamer, würdevoll

1. 2. in F Hörner *p cresc.*

3. 4. in D *p cresc.*

Langsamer, würdevoll *p cresc.*

Tenor I *p* In O-din's Hal - len ist es licht und fern der Er - den - *pp*

Tenor II *p* In O-din's Hal - len ist es licht und fern der Er - den - *pp*

Baß I *p* In O-din's Hal - len ist es licht und fern der Er - den - *pp*

Baß II *p* In O-din's Hal - len ist es licht und fern der Er - den - *pp*

pein, aus Frey-as' - Won - ne - strah - len bricht die Se - lig-keit her -

pein, aus Frey-as' - Won - ne - strah - len bricht die Se - lig-keit her -

pein, aus Frey-as' - Won - ne - strah - len bricht die Se - lig-keit her -

pein, aus Frey-as' - Won - ne - strah - len bricht die Se - lig-keit her -

Figure 5. "In Odins Hallen ist es licht," from *Germanenzug*

Bruckner to the Wiener Männergesang-Verein, March 21, 1861, Archive of the Wiener Männergesang-Verein 86.

⁸ Letter to the Liedertafel Frohsinn September 2, 1858, Linz, Linzer Singakademie, Frohsinn-Archiv, quoted in Anton Bruckner, *Gesammelte Briefe. Neue Folge*, ed. Max Auer (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1924), 29.

⁹ Elisabeth Maier, "Anton Bruckner's 'Gesangs-Akademie.' Zum biographischen Umfeld eines bisher unbekannten Dokumentes," *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1982/83* (Linz: Gutenberg 1984), 89-94.

¹⁰ Chronik der Liedertafel "Frohsinn" in Linz über den 50jährigen Bestand vom 17. März 1845 bis anfangs März 1895, 31.

¹¹ *Welser Anzeiger*, October 27, 1860.

¹² Chronik der Liedertafel "Frohsinn" in Linz, umfassend den Zeitraum vom 17. März 1845 bis Ende März 1870 (Linz 1870), 58.

¹³ Theodore Albrecht, "Anton Bruckner and the Liedertafel Movement," *American Choral Review* (January 1980): 12.

¹⁴ *Linzer Abendbote*, February 2, 1861, quoted in Chronik der Liedertafel "Frohsinn" 1845-1870, 59.

¹⁵ Letter from Anton Bruckner to Rudolf Weinwurm, October 3, 1861, quoted in Auer, *Gesammelte Briefe*, 39.

¹⁶ Göllicher and Auer, 3:429.

¹⁷ *Linzer Abendbote*, February 15, 1868.

¹⁸ For further information see Paul Hawkshaw, "From Zigeunerwald to Valhalla in Common Time. The Genesis of Anton Bruckner's *Germanenzug*," in *Bruckner-Jahrbuch 1987/88* (Linz: Gutenberg, 1990), 21-30.

¹⁹ Chronik "Frohsinn" 1845-1870, 128.

²⁰ Letter from the Liedertafel Frohsinn to Anton Bruckner, September 29, 1868, Linzer Singakademie, Frohsinn-Archiv.

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Tenöre

Bässe

1

Wer möch - te nicht beim Re - ben-saft des Va - ter - lands ge - den - ken? Ein

Le - ben hoch aus vol - ler Kraft wol - len wir ihm schen - ken! Wie die

ff Wie die Re - ben

Re - ben, mög' sich's he - ben in dem Stre - ben auf zum Licht, auf zum Licht!

mög' sich's he - ben in dem Stre - ben **fff**

Figure 6. *Vaterländisches Weinlied*

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