

Hans GÁL

MUSIC FOR VOICES, VOLUME ONE

EPIGRAMS: FIVE MADRIGALS AFTER POEMS BY LESSING, OP. 27

FOUR MADRIGALS TO ELIZABETHAN POEMS, OP. 51

SATIRIKON: FOUR APHORISMS, OP. 72

FOUR BRITISH FOLK-SONGS

FOUR PART-SONGS

MOTET, OP. 19

Borealis
Bridget Budge and Stephen Muir, directors

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

THE BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

by Eva Fox-Gál

Hans Gál (1890–1987) was born near Vienna in 1890. Following considerable success as a composer during the 1920s, particularly with his second opera, *Die heilige Ente* ('The Sacred Duck'), he was appointed Director of the conservatoire in Mainz in 1929. A major blow to his career came with the Nazi accession to power in 1933: it led to instant dismissal from his post and a ban on all publication and performance in Germany. He returned to Vienna, but was forced to leave by Hitler's annexation of Austria to the Third Reich in 1938, fleeing to Britain. Donald Tovey brought him to Edinburgh, where he became a lecturer at the University, and where he remained until his death in 1987. In addition to his rich output as a composer, he was the author of books on Brahms, Schubert, Wagner, Verdi and Schumann. His compositions include four operas, four symphonies, large-scale cantatas and a host of chamber, piano and choral works. By the end of his long life, he had left a legacy of around 140 published works. Gál's gift was to be able to remain intact in his creative soul, regardless of external circumstances, and to remain true to his own inner values in everything that he wrote.

'Hans Madri-Gál'

Wherever Gál lived, whether in Vienna, in Mainz or in Edinburgh – the three main stations of his life – he involved himself in music-making in the community. In an article from 1928, entitled 'Vocal Chamber Music,' he wrote about the ever-increasing gap between the composer and his audience in contemporary music, and the importance of reconnecting the consumers of music, the audience, with the direct experience of practical music-making. He believed that vocal music, particularly in the form of *cappella* singing, could provide the most accessible form of musical activity:

What our musical life needs is [...] a revival of the joy in music-making, a fresh impetus for domestic music. But best suited to this is what has long slumbered: *a cappella* singing [...]: *vocal music-making as chamber or domestic music*. [...] It is only in the course of the last decade, with the decline of the massed orchestra and the move to chamber forms and the slim, transparent treatment of instrumental resources, that the interest in pure vocal music has again awoken. The chamber choir and madrigal group are starting their activities, a new *a cappella* literature is beginning to emerge. This more than any other form of music is dependent on a chamber-music effect. Its most precious effective means, the reciprocal support and interpenetration of words and music, demand, in order to succeed, an intimate space and a small, almost soloistic, number of singers to each part. [...] The secular music of the 16th century, the madrigal, which was almost exclusively chamber music, makes the richest and most felicitous use of these possibilities for effect. [...] Here is a treasure to be unearthed for practical music-making that can be compared in significance with what the musical life of the last century gained by the rediscovery of the life's work of Johann Sebastian Bach. But above all there is a task in this area for the creative musicians of our own time [...]: *a new vocal music* is to be created, music which, born of the spirit of our time and making use of the newly acquired expressive possibilities, leads back to the long-buried sources of genuine vocalism, a *chamber* music in the true sense of the word, which offers the joy and stimulus not only of listening but also of singing.¹

In Vienna, in 1925, he founded a madrigal choir, at that time the only mixed *a cappella* choir in the city. In Mainz, when he was appointed Director of the Music Conservatoire, he added a madrigal choir (as well as a women's-voice choir) to the existing college ensembles, earning him the nickname 'Hans Madri-Gál'; and within a remarkably short time from his moving to Edinburgh at the start of the War he formed a madrigal ensemble.

¹ Hans Gál, 'Vokale Kammermusik', *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, Vol. X (1928), Nos. 9–10, pp. 355–56; italics added.

Eva Fox-Gál was a lecturer in German literature in the Department of English and Related Literature, University of York, from 1971 to 2001. Since 1995 she has maintained a busy practice as a homeopath. As the daughter of Hans Gál, she grew up bilingually and imbibed much of the central European culture which her parents brought with them from Vienna to Edinburgh. She is an active musician, both as pianist and as violinist, and is a committed chamber-music player. She is Honorary Vice-President of The Hans Gál Society.

HANS GÁL: WORDS AND MUSIC

by Bridget Budge, Eva Fox-Gál and Stephen Muir

Although Hans Gál's earliest compositions included some hundred Lieder, he published only a set of five and discarded the rest, transferring his early mastery of word-setting to other vocal genres, in particular to opera and choral writing. All of the works in this album exemplify his profound interest in the relationship between words and music and in finding the appropriate musical form for each of the texts.

Motette, Op. 19 (1924)

The *Motette* ('Motet'), Op. 19 (1924) 1 is one of Gál's most ambitious and demanding *a cappella* works, and was in fact preceded by two earlier discarded motets. It was composed during a time when Gál's fortunes were rising rapidly, his music achieving widespread performance and recognition following the successful premiere of *Die heilige Ente* in 1923.

The text comes from 'Der Säemann säet den Samen' ('The sower soweth the seed') by the poet Asmus, a pseudonym for Matthias Claudius (1740–1815), who has survived for posterity through (among other things) Schubert's setting of his poem 'Der Tod und das Mädchen'. Originally entitled 'An ____, als ihm die ____ starb' ('To ____, on the death of his ____'), 'Der Säemann säet' combines the personal loss

of a loved one (possibly Claudius' sister Dorothea in 1766) with biblical echoes, both in the opening image of the sower and in the evocation of Psalm 103 ('as for man, his days are as grass'). It is essentially about the transience of human life, but also the transitory nature of death, as expressed in the image of a cloud. The final image of the eagle, a symbol of the human spirit, is a metaphor for immortality. In Gál's setting, every phrase of the poem is given full musical expression, each one forming a separate section. Subtle changes of pulse, key, mood or texture translate the pictorial and emotional content of the poem into a fluid musical form.

Motette is a substantial setting written in eight parts (each voice-part of the choir divided into two), resulting in a texture that is astonishing both in its subtlety and its power. The composer's contrapuntal language – absolutely integral to his style – is demonstrated here par excellence, and despite several nods in the direction of Bach, Brahms, even Mahler, the musical fabric is uniquely Gál's. The opening passage introduces a broad, flowing crotchet theme which gradually builds in intensity before subsiding into a new, much quieter section, 'Die Erd empfängt ihn' ('The earth receiveth it'). A short hiatus introduces the next passage, with the male voices uttering the words 'Du liebtest sie' ('You loved her') in sustained notes. The female voices, by contrast, sing a *rubato* motif in flowing quavers until they, too, broaden rhythmically into more extended, sustained notes enrobing the phrase 'Und sie entschlummerte dir!' ('and she slumbered away from you!'), heard moving through the three upper parts in turn.

The ensuing 'Was weinest du' ('Why weepst thou') has an inward agitation, with a more pressing tempo. The quaver theme previously heard accompanying 'Du liebtest sie' is now developed, gaining in intensity and drama towards a climactic cadence, which, however, rapidly subsides and overlaps a new theme, 'Wie Gras auf dem Felde' ('As grass in the field'), which closely echoes the very opening of the piece. Introduced by the baritones, the theme is passed seamlessly through the parts; its faster-moving countertheme is itself then combined with 'wie Blätter' ('as leaves') before the latter in turn is cleverly set against another new and broader melodic idea, 'Nur wenige Tage' ('For but a few days'). By this stage Gál is combining all these themes, gaining in pace and ultimately arriving at a massive climax over a pedal bass.

After a dramatic pause, a soft, linking passage leads to the final peroration, set in a triumphal A major perfectly counterbalancing the opening A minor. Here Gál paints in sound the idea of the eagle in flight: ‘Der Adler besuchet die Erde’ (‘The eagle visiteth the Earth’). Beginning serenely, the music quickly broadens and climbs to a *fortissimo*, with the sopranos soaring above the quaver movement in the rest of the choir as the eagle ‘Kehret zur Sonne zurück’ (‘returneth to the sun once more’). These quavers gradually fall and diminish; the final echoes of the word ‘zurück’ can be heard wafting through the voices in turn until the piece comes to rest in a magical *pianissimo* close.

Gál in Britain

Gál’s life is more or less divided in half between the German-speaking world (1890–1938) and Britain (1938–87). The Gáls fled to London as a result of the *Anschluss*, intending to emigrate from there to America. Meanwhile, having become attached to Britain, they renounced their visas, only to have their new-found stability shattered by the outbreak of war in the autumn of 1939. To escape the nightly siren-alarms in London, they decided to move to Edinburgh, where Gál had already spent six months cataloguing the Reid Music Library. Once more Gál was able to put down roots in an environment where he felt stimulated and able to involve himself, and others, in music-making. Within an extraordinarily short time, he had formed a madrigal ensemble, attracting support for its establishment on a more permanent basis:

A combination of five excellent and specially trained artists, the Edinburgh Madrigal Singers [...] under the leadership of distinguished expert, Dr Hans Gál, has been formed for the purpose of performing unaccompanied vocal music and vocal chamber music and already they have given some successful recitals.

Two of the signatories of this document were directly connected with Gál: Sir Donald Tovey had first brought him to Edinburgh and secured him a temporary work-permit; and Sir Herbert Grierson, a literary academic, had provided not only accommodation but also access to his extensive library, supplying Gál with some of the English-language settings featured here.

The War put an abrupt halt to Gál's musical and other activities, including the formation of an Edinburgh Madrigal Society: on 12 May (Whit Sunday) 1940, he was arrested and interned, along with all the other Austrian and German refugees in the Edinburgh area. Gál's internment diary, the only diary he ever kept, gives unique insight into the situation at this time. Within days of his first confinement, in Donaldson's Hospital, Edinburgh, Gál writes:

Yesterday people came who are hungry for music. There are about a dozen of the best people from my Refugee Orchestra [which he had founded soon after his arrival in Edinburgh]. We could quite easily have a small string orchestra, if we had the instruments. [...] I had a busy, productive winter, establishing an orchestra and an excellent madrigal group, gave lots of concerts, laid all sorts of foundations for further useful work. There are many people in Edinburgh who are receptive to music and a still rather rudimentary musical life. Now that has all been interrupted, possibly buried. Once more I am driven from my work. Will I ever be able to continue it?¹

Four Madrigals to Elizabethan Poems, Op. 51 (1939)

In contrast to the *Motette*, Gál's *Four Madrigals to Elizabethan Poems*, Op. 51 (1939), have a playfulness characteristic of the genre as it developed in the hands of the sixteenth-century English madrigalists, although in Gál's very distinctive harmonic idiom. Imitation abounds between the vocal parts, and the lightness of touch in the resulting textures (particularly in the first and fourth songs) makes for elegant readings of the texts. The second and third are more *legato* in texture, providing a rounded, warm and passionate tone.

No. 1, 'Youth and Cupid' [2], falls clearly into sections akin to the three stanzas of the text (composed by Queen Elizabeth I), each with a refrain 'Go, go, go' characterised by a more *sostenuto* tempo. The texture is transparent and airy at the opening of each verse, often without bass voices; the bass part remains in a relatively high tessitura throughout, contributing further to the overall lightness of sound.

¹ Entries for 16 and 17 May 1940, in Hans Gál, *Music behind Barbed Wire: A Diary of Summer 1940*, Toccata Press, London, 2014, pp. 52 and 53.

The structure of No. 2, 'True Love' [3], also mirrors its source text (this time by Sir Philip Sidney), the music of the second strophe working the same material stated at the outset with enriched harmony and more independent movement between the vocal lines. The tender character of Sidney's poetry is reflected throughout in the warmth and fullness of the vocal texture with all four parts singing together, largely in rhythmical unison – a fanciful portrayal of the two lovers united as one? The dynamics are delicate and sensitive, rising only to a single *forte* towards the close.

The tender emotion of 'True Love' is transformed into maternal affection in No. 3, 'A Cradle Song' [4], but it is probably the least madrigal-like of the group, leaning in style almost towards a Brahmsian lullaby. The dynamic scheme here, too, is understated, perhaps an unsurprising response to Thomas Dekker's well-known 'Golden slumbers' text. But the elegance with which Gál balances semiquaver motion in one part against long-held pedal notes in another makes for a simple and yet sophisticated and descriptively elegant sound fabric: apart from the single moment of repose before the second verse continues, the gentle movement of the cradle is constantly present.

The final madrigal in the set, No. 4, 'Foolish Love' [5], is another excellent display of musical imitation. The first theme, introduced by the sopranos, is repeated almost exactly by the tenors, altos and finally the basses. Marked *scherzando* to match Robert Greene's cynical view of human love (from 1589), and intended to be light and playful, the piece again falls into two clear sections containing similar musical material, but with harmonic alterations reflecting the text. The coda also uses the opening three-note theme, passed from voice to voice, moving down through the choir from top to bottom. The basses make the last cynical comment, 'Sour love, foolish love!', but all four voices are reunited with the final word: 'Love!'

Epigramme: Fünf Madrigale nach Gedichten von Lessing, Op. 27 (1926)

Gál's *Epigramme: Fünf Madrigale nach Gedichten von Lessing* ('Five Madrigals after Poems by Lessing'), Op. 27 (1926), were premiered in 1927 in Krefeld, at one of the annual festivals of new music organised by the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Tonkünstler Verein*, the German Society of Music. They were performed on this occasion by eight members of the

Krefeld Opera and they are, in fact, the most ‘operatic’ of the works recorded here. They have more of the satirical character associated with the Italian madrigal, with which Gál had been familiar since his early student days, and prompted the music critic of the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* to suggest that ‘even at the high point of the madrigal, in the 16th century, there was never such fresh and witty choral music-making.’² Lessing (1729–81) was a prominent figure of the Enlightenment era and is widely regarded as the first dramaturg in theatre history; he is often labelled ‘the father of modern dramaturgy’. It is therefore little surprise that in Gál’s setting the singers are suddenly required to be ‘in the action’, even assuming (in the first and third songs) the roles of featured characters in the text.

No. 1, ‘Stilleben’ (‘Still Life’) [6] is an exquisitely ironic title for a vignette of marital discord and hypocrisy. It is set in eight-parts, and opens with man and wife in mid-argument, escalating on rising dynamics. ‘She’ (represented by the sopranos and altos) seems to be shouting the loudest, complaining that ‘he’ (tenors and basses) is once again going out drinking, leaving her at home alone. He finally loses his cool in a sudden *fortissimo* outburst ‘Zank du alleine!’ (‘Nag to yourself!’) No sooner has he departed, however, than the male voices transform into the opportunist next-door neighbour, first heard uttering a tentative ‘hm, hm’, enquiring as to whether the coast is now clear. A complete change of mood in the upper voices ensues, with a flirtatious *grazioso* theme first sung by the altos: she will not be alone this evening after all.

As its title suggests, the opening of No. 2, ‘Hymnus’ [7], is written in quasi-religious style, peppered with quaver movement throughout the parts (one can clearly see the influence of Bach’s Lutheran chorale treatments) that contribute to its forward momentum and energetic flow. The opening culminates in a shout of praise to Solomon and all he represents: ‘Brüder, lobt den Salomon’ (‘Brothers, praise now Solomon’). The ensuing passage, faster and lighter, features a highly virtuosic *staccato* theme, ‘Brüder, lasst sein Lob erschallen’ (‘Brothers, let his praise sound purely’), announced first by the altos and then receiving the full imitative treatment from basses, sopranos and finally the tenors. A starkly contrasting,

² Adolf Aber, *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten*, date uncertain.

short, angular crotchet theme, 'Doch vor allen' ('Yet most surely'), introduces Lessing's ironic conclusion regarding the value of studying in comparison to love and wine: three broadened *fortissimo* chords promise much – 'Wer viel lernet' ('He who learns much') – only to be answered in sheer bathos by a series of hurriedly whispered *staccato* chords 'hat viel Verdruss!' ('is greatly frustrated!'). The opening hymn returns, this time leading to a *stretto* finish, the accumulating speed and dynamic reaching a tumultuous conclusion with four even more grotesquely whispered chords.

Lessing's original title for Epigram No. 3, 'Vita brevis' [8], was 'Lied aus dem Spanischen' ('Spanish Song'), though no Spanish precursor has been identified. Gál's chosen title is a nod to the opening lines of Hippocrates' *Aphorismi* in Latin translation, 'Ars longa, vita brevis.' His initial response is to draw out the opening line of the text into a long, tortuous (but effective) melodic theme, first introduced by the sopranos in an extremely exposed unaccompanied passage, the rising contours of which closely mirror the progression of the text. The slow tempo highlights the sombre nature of the opening words, and the bass entry even seems funereal in style. The tenor entry, however, is accompanied by a syncopated exploration of small, disconcerting fragments of the thematic material, adding a disturbing element to the texture. Last to enter, the altos lead a gradual build-up of dramatic tension mirroring the increasing intensity of the text, culminating in a full-blooded *fortissimo* climax, one of Gál's most powerful choral statements on 'morgen sterb' ich' ('tomorrow I die') – although, as if to belie the prevailing angst suggested by the title, a lyrical coda reflects upon the more positive second half of the poem: 'Dennoch denk' ich' ('Yet I gladly think'), releasing the tension by initially exploiting the upper three voices alone in a *dolce* texture (also seen briefly in the *Motette*) and concluding in the relative major key.

A total contrast, musically as well as poetically, No. 4, 'Irrtum' ('Mistake') [9], pushes choral virtuosity almost to the extreme as Gál's ingenious word-painting again comes to the fore. By means of relentless, accelerating quaver movement and a slightly ambiguous harmonic undercurrent, the composer effortlessly creates an aural image of two whispering friends hurrying after the retreating figure of an attractive woman in the hope of catching a glimpse of her face. As the music further accelerates and rises in pitch (requiring some

extraordinarily angular vocal gymnastics from the choir), the excitement builds until finally their goal is reached. The music comes to a dramatic halt, as suddenly, shocked, the friends realise their error, as uttered by a baritone soloist: ‘Was war’s, das mich entzückt gemacht?’ (‘What was it that my eyes impressed?’). Far from being ‘a Venus or a Phyllis’, the woman is, in fact, ‘Ein altes Weib in junger Tracht’ (‘An older maid in youthful dress’).

While studying medicine at Leipzig University, Lessing had taken additional classes in botany; therefore, it could be no coincidence that in the two poems Gál combines in Epigram No. 5, ‘Grabschrift’ (‘Epitaph’) [10], which has the tempo designation *Alla Marcia funeбра*, the recently deceased dedicatee was named Mimulus – for the *Mimulus* (or *Mimelus*) *guttatus* is the Monkey Flower, and indeed, the singers find themselves plunged further into the realms of the absurd as they intone a sorrowful song for their sorely missed simian friend. The two poems that Gál amalgamates are from Lessing’s 1771 collection of ‘Sinngedichte’ (‘Meaningful Poems’), Nos. 55, ‘Auf den Tod eines Affen’ (‘On the Death of a Monkey’), and 56, ‘Grabschrift auf ebendenselben’ (‘Epitaph for the same’), though Gál reversed their order. The basses grandly introduce the opening funeral theme, extending it in a repeated, drone-like ostinato pattern of three notes on the name Mimulus in their lowest range. The ostinato becomes an underlying, incantatory funeral dirge, the upper male voices contributing a cushion-shroud of swaying *legato* crotchets, above which the female voices exchange short interjections regarding the various attributes of the lamented Mimulus – each apparently more worthy than the last. As the cortege fades into the distance, the second half of the piece (now in the tonic major, E) is lighter in musical texture, but deliberately sentimental, verging on the saccharine. The final twist in the tale is delivered as the song ends with a whispered but richly scored ‘Pavian’ (‘baboon’) set to the dotted rhythm of the initial bass ostinato.

Four Part-Songs (1966)

Composed in 1966, these *Four Part-Songs* were first performed in February 1967 by the Edinburgh University Singers under Herrick Bunney (1915–97), University Organist and Master of Music at St Giles’ Cathedral, and again in April 1967. They were then not

performed again in Gál's lifetime and remained unpublished, most probably because they stem from a time when such music was deeply unfashionable.

No. 1, 'To Spring' [11], sets the first of the *Poetical Sketches* by William Blake (1757–1827), a collection conceived between 1769 and 1777. Blake's impassioned exhortation to Spring that it might 'scatter thy pearls upon our lovesick land', thereby banishing Winter, is followed by poems addressing the other three seasons. Gál's modest opening phrase, introduced by the sopranos lightly accompanied by the altos and tenors, builds voluptuously to the first resting point, the four voices interweaving a rising quaver motif to herald the arrival of Spring. The tenors introduce a second theme at 'The hills tell one another', characterised by its triplets, an idiosyncratically Gálian use of dissonance, and suggestions of quite exotic keys like C flat and G flat major (within a prevailing E flat major tonality). A textural change at 'Come o'er the eastern hills' sees a shift towards a more homophonic rather than contrapuntal style – a wistful *dolcissimo* passage ending in a drawn-out *pianissimo* that expresses the text with profound sensitivity: 'scatter thy pearls upon our lovesick land that mourns for thee'. As Blake's final stanza, 'O deck her forth with thy fair fingers', once more addresses Spring more directly, so Gál reiterates the opening theme, this time starting with the tenors accompanied by the outer parts.

Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1603–4) is often termed one of his 'problem plays' because of its ambiguous tone and dark-hued comedy. No. 2 of the *Four Part-Songs*, 'Madrigal' [12], focuses on the more pensive aspects of the play. The source is the well-known love-song 'Take, oh take those lips away', from Act IV, Scene i, one of the most frequently set of Shakespeare's texts. In *Measure for Measure*, the song is intoned by a boy, and so Gál's opening theme is introduced by the altos with appropriately child-like innocence. This slow, four-bar theme meanders across a wide-ranging ninth and is subsequently taken up by the other voices in a fugal-style imitative passage. As with 'To Spring', Gál varies the texture with a chordal passage at 'and those eyes: the break of day'; his innate awareness of the subtleties of text is demonstrated beautifully at 'lights that do mislead the Morn', with a wrenching cadence, complete with pungent false relations, that does indeed 'mislead' the listener in a manner characteristic of Gál.

Unsurprisingly, it is not long before the music again breaks back into counterpoint, the opening theme reintroduced by the tenors leading to another deliciously unexpected closing cadence.

No. 3, 'Hymn to Diana' [13], draws upon Act V, Scene vi. of *Cynthia's Revels; or, The Fountain of Self-Love* by Ben Jonson (1572–1637), described by its author as 'A comical satyr'. The play is rich in musical content: its first performers – at the Blackfriars Theatre in 1600 – were the Children of the Chapel Royal of Queen Elizabeth I. Gál's title notwithstanding, Diana – Roman goddess of hunters, the countryside, and, significantly, the moon – never actually appears in Jonson's song. Instead, he used one of Diana's Greek equivalents, Cynthia, who ordains the 'solemn revels' of the title of the play. 'The Hymn', as it was designated by Jonson, is sung by the Greek god Hesperus, the personification of the evening star Venus. The references to 'Cynthia's shining orb', a light 'entreated' by Hesperus, thus make perfect sense, especially given that as early as 1580, Sir Walter Raleigh had begun using Diana and Cynthia to represent his queen, Elizabeth I.

Once again, Gál's understanding of and respect for his text is immediately apparent; the basses (Hesperus) open with a two-bar figure echoed by the other three parts in an answering phrase that becomes a recurring pattern in the first couple of strophes. The second part of each strophe uses a rising-third figure, first heard at 'Hesperus entreats thy light'. A change of key at 'Lay thy bow of pearl apart' introduces a *dolce* quaver figure (a variant of the opening theme), which is echoed in delightful solo, duo and trio combinations. At the reinstatement of the original key, the rising-third figure returns at 'thou that mak'st a day of night', finally broadening out to a brilliant, 'excellently bright' *forte* finish.

In the last of the songs, No. 4, 'Invocation' [14], Gál selected four of eight stanzas from the poem 'Song' by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), first published by Shelley's second wife, Mary, in *Posthumous Poems* (1824). 'Song' is one of a handful of Shelley poems that recall the ancient Greek literary form *hymnos kletikos*, a rhetorical hymn in which the supplicant entreats a god-like figure to appear and bring relief or assistance. Whether consciously or not, Gál's choice of verses from the poem enabled him to preserve the essence of this structure while constraining it within the proportions required of one

in a set of four songs. Shelley's 'Spirit of Delight' is addressed directly and eulogised, though here such praise is tinged with a wistful irony, since this 'Spirit false' shuns pain and (in stanzas 3 and 4, omitted by Gál) sorrow, grief, reproach and pity, in favour of joy, freedom, merriment and pleasure. A direct connection with the Spirit is confirmed by association – 'I love all that thou lovest, Spirit of Delight!' In Shelley the protagonist's bond with the Spirit, mainly a shared love of nature and tranquillity, extends across three stanzas. Gál's judicious selection (stanza 5) allowed him to move directly to stanza 8, the final supplication to the Spirit.

The evolving mood, from respectful invocation, via wistful admiration, to a direct plea, is captured expertly in the almost exotic musical setting. As in No. 1, 'To Spring', the understated dotted-crotchet pattern of the atmospheric *dolce* opening is emphasised by the delay of the bass entry for several bars, and only once the upper voices have uttered the words 'Spirit of Delight!' do the basses begin in direct imitation of the opening melody. The charming quaver figure representing the Spirit is deceptively innocuous. Melodically, it is introspective, doubling back on itself with a delicate, elusive quality, while harmonically it is latent with both suppressed joy and unresolved expectation. These two musical ideas form the basis of the setting, undergoing restlessly complex harmonic development that can be resolved only in an ecstatic peroration. Beginning with a relentless accumulation of harmonic tension, 'But above all other things, Spirit, I love thee', the suppressed joy and unresolved expectations are finally attained. A magnificent chord sequence (A flat major–F flat major–C flat major) declares 'Thou art love and life!', heralding a breathtaking exhortation to the Spirit – 'O come! Make once more my heart thy home!' – and driving thrillingly to the conclusion. Inventive to the last, however, Gál evokes the tender simplicity of the opening, retreating rapidly to a closing *pianissimo* via one of his signature chromatic plagal cadences.

Satirikon: Vier Aphorismen für 4 Männerstimmen a cappella, Op. 72 (1956)

With his *Satirikon* Gál returned to his German-language roots; indeed, all of his writing for male voices, which includes some of his very earliest published work (from 1910–11), is in German. Stimulated by a commission from the Mainzer Liedertafel for its

150th-anniversary celebrations under his former student, the conductor Otto Schmidtgen, Gál had recently completed one of his most monumental compositions, *Lebenskreise*, a symphonic cantata based on texts by Goethe and Hölderlin, which had wholly absorbed him for the best part of a year and had clearly reignited his joy in writing for voices. In a letter to Schmidtgen, dated 31 August 1956, he wrote: ‘You’d hardly be able to guess what I’m occupying myself with right now: I’m doing the most amusing pieces for male voices I know’. Nine days later he wrote to him again: ‘I can’t resist the pleasure of sending you the texts of the new male choruses – they’re now finished’.

These four aphorisms have considerable stylistic affinity with the Lessing *Epigramm*. Gál had a profound and unusually extensive knowledge of Goethe and Heine and had clearly lighted upon miniatures that fired his humorous imagination. He had previously published two groups of settings of Wilhelm Busch (1832–1908), both for male-voice choir (*Drei Porträtstudien* and *Drei Idyllen*, Opp. 34 and 40, in 1929 and c. 1932). Busch is probably the most universally known German humourist through his illustrated cautionary tales for children, particularly *Max und Moritz* (1865), which modern commentators cite as among the most important influences on future generations of comic-strip artists. To Busch he added humorous and profoundly ironic texts by Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) and Christian August Fehre (1744–1823).

Gál’s choice of *Satirikon* for the title is revealing, a nod towards one of the earliest Roman novels, the *Satyricon* by Gaius Petronius (c. 27–66AD), an extraordinarily bawdy romp satirising life under the reign of Emperor Nero and described by critics as blasphemous, sophisticated, rude, comic, and even downright obscene. Although there is no suggestion that Gál intended his own *Satirikon* to provoke any sort of outrage, the selected texts are certainly full of colourful local language, and No. 3, ‘Von der Schicklichkeit’ (‘On Propriety’), even hints, although extremely benignly, at the spicier antics of Petronius’ *Satyricon*. As in *Epigramme* twelve years earlier, word-painting abounds and the music is full of the wit so typical of Gál in what seems an endless stream of invention in response to the texts.

In the first lines of No. 1, ‘Weisheit des Schöpfers’ (‘Wisdom of the Creator’) [15], Heine’s preposterous implication – that humans might have two mouths – requires a

bold introduction, and Gál provides a two-bar *forte* gesture from the second basses, the theme subsequently imitated in hurried double time by the other voices in turn. A second musical idea is introduced in the line ‘mit dem einen Maule schon’ (‘even having just one such’), once again developed through imitation. The pace picks up, with much quaver and semiquaver movement painting the idle chatter that ensues. The chattering gradually culminates in an exaggerated *crescendo* before a final *dolce* utterance; in the score Gál instructs that the final unison cadence, on ‘löge er sogar beim Fressen’ (‘Lie would he, even while eating’), should be sung ‘Handrücken vor dem Mund’ (‘with the back of the hand in front of the mouth’), underlining the intrinsic dramatic impulse behind *Satirikon* and other such comedic works.

No. 2, ‘Gute Vorsätze’ (‘Good Intentions’) [16], is a setting of Goethe’s Parable No. 10, ‘Die Frösche’ (‘The Frogs’), of 1821, one of a group of similarly witty and astute verses entitled *Sechzehn Parabeln* (‘Sixteen Parables’). Goethe, in fact, wrote over 40 such poems, published together as *Parabolisch*. His short motto preceding the collection says much about both his and Gál’s style of humour: ‘Was im Leben uns verdriesst, Man im Bilde gern genießt’ (‘That which fills our life with sadness, Written down brings joy and gladness’). Such satirical, almost gallows, humour shines through in this scintillating musical interpretation of Goethe’s text. The tenors open the tale *legato* and pursue the narrative, while the basses by contrast, in bare fifths, become the croaking frogs trapped beneath the ice, dreaming of the springtime when they will leap to the bank and sing like nightingales. The amphibians’ fantasies are painted by an extended trill-like figure on the word ‘Nachtigall’ (‘nightingale’), after which the basses, *fortissimo*, announce the warm wind which melts the ice and heralds the frogs’ ascent and emergence from their watery prison. But their optimism is misplaced: rather than warbling like nightingales as they had imagined, they instead resume their ostinato open fifths, croaking like frogs for evermore.

For No. 3, ‘Von der Schicklichkeit’ (‘On Propriety’) [17], Gál selected a text by Christian August Fehre. Although Fehre’s aphorism ‘Ihr Mädchen, stehet ja nicht still’ (‘You maidens, take due note of this’) is familiar, much less is known about Fehre himself, beyond the facts that he was born in Burgstädt, Mittelsachsen, and died in

Dresden, having worked there as a financial clerk and legal advisor. He is mentioned as a contributor to a 1765 volume of literary miscellany – *Geschenke für meine Freunde und Freundinnen* ('Gifts for my Friends'); Gál's published score indicates that 'Ihr Mädchen' was written in 1770.

A finely crafted miniature, this setting portrays the idea of the maidens fleeing through close imitation and liberal use of quaver movement. The whispered two-crotchet staccato motif 'flieht, flieht' ('flee, flee'), combined with the enunciation of the consonants and the hurried repetition of 'flieht', shows Gál in fine word-painting form. The composer's detailed attention to his texts is again highlighted towards the end of the setting, where the understated dynamics suggest the breathless anticipation of secretive kisses.

The poem set in the last of these aphorisms, No. 4, 'Von der Wahrheitsliebe' ('On the Love of Truth') [18], was published in 1874 as part of Wilhelm Busch's first collection of verse entitled *Kritik des Herzens* ('Critique of the Heart'). Moving away from the comic-strip genre towards more serious satirical writing, Busch modelled *Kritik des Herzens* on Immanuel Kant's 1781 *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* ('Critique of Pure Reason'). Gál evidently found such dark humour irresistible. His interpretation of the text is robust but also rather suave, reflecting Busch's sardonic contention that were we exclusively to tell the truth, we would end up fighting one another. The syllabic rhythm and closely spaced, chorale-like homophony at the opening conveys the almost resigned acceptance of the text. A key change, brighter tempo and gentler dynamic seem to herald a less cynical mood at 'Und überall im weiten Land' ('And everywhere throughout the land'). But the relief is temporary: Gál follows the text closely, leading to one of Busch's signature onomatopoeic archaisms, 'Knotenknittel' ('club'; possibly also 'bunch of fives'), repeated timidly in the upper parts, only to be hammered out in a sudden outburst by the low basses. A repeat of the opening musical material finally broadens out towards the final exaggeratedly self-satisfied declaration 'Du weisst Bescheid, ich weiss Bescheid; Und allen macht's Vergnügen' ('You know what's what, I know what's what, And all are then contented'), as the open secret – that ultimately it is for the best that everyone tells lies – is willingly accepted.

Four British Folk-Songs (1969)

Gál's *Four British Folk-Songs* were published in 1969 at the behest of the publisher Schott, Mainz, to provide German-language arrangements of these popular folk-songs; Gál provided the musical setting with translations from English, and all titles and texts were printed in German. At least two of the settings, though, were older: a concert of the St Andrew's Singers 'led by Hans Gál', in Dunfermline on 31 October 1942, included *Scottish and English Folk-Songs*, with Gál's own 'Ye Banks and Braes' and 'Early One Morning' (in English), alongside 'O can ye sew Cushions' (Granville Bantock) and 'The Agincourt Song' (Geoffrey Shaw). Gál most probably came across these folksongs during his work cataloguing the Reid Library of Edinburgh University in 1938. Back in 1935 in Vienna he had presented a charity concert with his Madrigal Society, featuring songs from eight European countries in his own arrangements along with others by Reger and Bartók. It was the melodic purity and authenticity of folksong, rather than national identity, that had an immediate appeal for Gál as a composer, and the title *Britische Volkslieder* will have been deliberately inclusive. But the provenance of each song is given: 'Early One Morning' is English, 'An Eriskay Love Lilt' and 'Ye Banks and Braes' Scottish, and 'O can ye sew cushions' Celtic. In these settings, Gál is perhaps at his most traditional, demonstrating a subtly restrained respect for the vernacular songs of the part of Britain that would remain his professional and family home for the remainder of his life. The folksongs are lightly scored (mostly in four parts) and gentle in terms of dynamic range, and yet still rich in texture and poetic expression, and by no means devoid of the unmistakable harmonic and contrapuntal hallmarks of his style.

The text of No. 1, 'Early one morning' [19], dates back at least to the 1780s, since when it has appeared in several guises (and textual variants) as 'The lamenting maid', 'The forsaken lover' and similar such titles. The melody became widely known after its publication by William Chappell in *National English Airs* in the late 1850s. Chappell, in turn, had heard the melody sung by domestic servants in a wide range of locations, especially Hereford, parts of Devon and Leeds – so that this recording is bringing it home. Gál's version is set in the bright key of G major. In his setting, the familiar

melody can be heard moving through the upper three parts after its initial statement by the sopranos. The quaver movement found in the melody is woven in and out of the texture by the accompanying parts, resulting in a gently undulating quality imbued with a level of wistfulness that perfectly expresses the text.

Gál almost certainly knew the text and melody of No. 2, 'An Eriskay Love Lilt' [20], from one of numerous publications based upon *The Songs of the Hebrides* (1909; 1917; 1921), a highly influential three-volume set of songs collected and arranged (rather controversially) by the Perth-born singer and pianist Marjory Kennedy-Fraser (1857–1930). An important figure in the Celtic Revival, Kennedy-Fraser recalled her first visit to the Outer Hebridean island of Eriskay in her autobiography *A Life of Song*:

August 1905: We were landed about a mile from [...] the only modern house in the Isle [...] and I was seated at supper by about 9 o'clock. I had hardly drawn breath when John Duncan brought me a little girl, Mary McInnes, who sat on my knee and sang Island songs to me. In a little over twenty-four hours I had sailed, I felt, out of the twentieth century back at least into the 1600s.³

Among young Mary McInnes' songs was 'Gràdh Geal Mo Chrìdh' ('Fair Love of my Heart'), which in the translation by Kennedy-Fraser's distinguished folklorist collaborator Kenneth Macleod (1871–1955) became 'An Eriskay Love Lilt'. Kennedy-Fraser went on to enjoy a remarkable and rather adventurous career as a folksong collector and international recitalist; her other achievements included contributing to the libretto of Granville Bantock's opera *The Seal Woman* (1924), and two major honours: a CBE from the British government (1924), and an Honorary Doctorate in Music from the University of Edinburgh (1928), where her voluminous notes and wax-disc recordings were archived shortly before her death in 1930.

Gál set the love-lilt in E flat major, the lower choral pitch allowing for a richer expressive palette than in 'Early one morning' (G major), and it is perhaps the most harmonically complex of the set. The much-loved melody is introduced in the warmest alto tessitura (a soloist is used in this recording), followed immediately by a held tonic

³ Oxford University Press, London, 1929, pp. 95–96.

pedal note, over which the basses assume the melody, mirrored in thirds by the tenors. Snatches of the tune are subsequently heard distributed among the sections of the choir. The first phrase receives particularly close attention, appearing in various guises and at different pitches throughout the accompanying parts. An extended cadence at the close brings the music back to the home key, but not without a surprise twist typical of Gál's choral style.

The final two songs are both closely associated with Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns (1759–96). In No. 3, 'O can ye sew cushions?' [21], a mother sings a gentle lullaby to her 'bonnie wee lamb'; a number of the words take the form of soothing onomatopoeic baby-talk without specific meaning ('hee and haw birdie, and hee and haw lamb'; 'Hee-o, wee-o, what wou'd I do wi' you?'). The text and melody appear as song 444 in Vol. 5 of *The Scots Musical Museum*. This important six-volume anthology (1787–1803) was initially a labour of love for James Johnson (1753–1811), an Edinburgh-based engraver and music-dealer. Burns became his editor, and as a major folksong-collector he contributed 184 of the 600 songs in the collection, along with several of his own new texts and compositions.

In Burns' original fourth verse of 'O can ye sew cushions?', the mother laments the fact that her husband is away at sea, but Gál omitted any such hint at melancholy, setting only the first two of Burns' verses. Returning from Eriskay's mellow E flat to the brighter key of G major, the piece once again exchanges snippets of the familiar melody between the vocal parts, supported by a soft but full-bodied harmonisation as befitting a lullaby. Both verses are followed by a slower chorus, the rocking of the cradle perfectly imitated by a lilting three-note figure rising and falling by the interval of a fifth in the bass line. The extended chromatic cadence at the end is, once more, a Gál hallmark.

Burns wrote three versions (all in 1791) of the text selected by Gál for the final song, No. 4, 'Ye banks and braes' [22]. Originally entitled 'The Banks o' Doon', the third version (the one Gál preferred) appeared in Vol. 4 (1792) of *The Scots Musical Museum* (as song No. 374), alongside the melody 'The Caledonian Hunt's Delight' by one James Miller of Edinburgh. This marriage of Miller's tune and Burns' poetry would later be used by the Bengali poet-musician Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) as the

basis of the song 'Phule Phule' from Scene 2 of his 1882 operatic drama *Kalmrigaya* ('The Fatal Hunt'). Gál, in turn, used translations of three poems by Tagore for his Op. 5, *Phantasien nach Gedichten von Rabindranath Tagore* (1919). It is little surprise, then, that Tagore's adaptation of 'The Banks o' Doon' and Gál's choral setting take very similar approaches, both avoiding the pervading atmosphere of melancholy and betrayal that are present in Burns' sorry tale (based on a true story) of a marital and paternity scandal involving the former MP for Wigtonshire.

Gál captured the gentle nature of 'Ye banks and braes' partly by smoothing out Miller's characterful 'Scotch snap' rhythms in 'The Caledonian Hunt's Delight'. Set in the rich key of A flat major, the piece gently lilts from the start with overlapping imitative entries from the highest voices to the lowest. There is a subtle use of dotted quavers within the texture, highlighted towards the end of the song 'with lightsome heart' heard in the female voices. The piece draws to a *pianissimo* close with the lower voices (altos and basses) carrying the final utterance of the text 'the thorn wi' me' at the cadence.

Bridget Budge was born in Devon and, after falling in love with music at school, went on to read music at Trinity College, Cambridge, where she was a Choral Exhibitioner under the late Richard Marlow. She then specialised in solo singing, subsequently studying at both the Guildhall School of Music, London, and the Royal College of Music, where she was the recipient of several prizes. After early forays into opera (Cambridge Handel Opera Group, Scottish Opera), she decided to concentrate, as a contralto, on concert repertoire, performing as a soloist in oratorio and recital programmes throughout the UK and Germany. She has recorded with the Geoffrey Mitchell Choir in London and has also performed worldwide as a member of the West Deutscher Rundfunkchor and Berliner Rundfunkchor under such conductors as Abbado, Boulez, Bychkov, Neeme Järvi, Levine and Stockhausen. Latterly, in addition to occasional



solo appearances in recital and with the Black Dyke Band, she has been much in demand as a vocal coach (Huddersfield Choral Society, Mirfield Community of the Resurrection), concert facilitator (Square Chapel for the Arts, Halifax, Brighouse Festival), choral leader and conductor (Pennine Spring Festival, Halifax Chamber Choir), and has gone on to found several choirs in Yorkshire (including Orion and Borealis), where she now lives.

Born in Zambia in 1972, **Stephen Muir** gained B.Mus. and Ph.D. degrees from Birmingham University, specialising in singing and percussion at Birmingham Conservatoire, and studying conducting under George Hurst at the Canford Summer School Conducting Academy (now Sherborne). As Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Music at the University of Leeds, his research focuses on choral repertoire and performance, nineteenth-century Russian music and Jewish liturgical music in the diaspora, particularly southern Africa. From 2014 to 2018 he was Principal Investigator for the £1.8m AHRC-funded international research project *Performing the Jewish Archive* (ptja.leeds.ac.uk), resulting in performances in Sydney, Cape Town and Prague, and, closer to home, in the Wigmore Hall, and at the Holocaust Memorial Day Annual Commemoration of the UK Parliament. He has worked extensively in the UK as a singer, percussionist and conductor, including recordings and broadcasts for BBC Radio 3 and Classic FM. With the Leeds Baroque Choir and Orchestra under the direction of Peter Holman, he has sung the role of Bach's Evangelist on several occasions, and recently appeared alongside trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins as timpanist for the debut of the new hand-crafted kettle drums of Leeds Baroque. He is Assistant Director of The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds and Co-Director/Founder of Borealis, the new professional chamber choir of the north of England.



Borealis: A Chamber Choir for the North

Borealis is a professional chamber choir based in the north of England, drawing membership from among the finest singers in or from the region. Its mission is to give performances of the highest quality, building audiences across northern England while also touring further afield and abroad. Alongside the standard choral repertoire, it aims to present ambitious and exciting programmes and similarly innovative recordings, often bringing to light music and composers who have not received the recognition they deserve. This first recording by Borealis embodies this mission, and is the first in a series comprising the complete *Music for Voices* of Hans Gál, who has featured prominently in recent Borealis concert programmes, notably the Gala Evening at the Grassington Festival, 2019.¹

Although Borealis was formally established as recently as 2016, most of its singers are or have been leading members of three of the most accomplished and long-standing ensembles in the region, the Clothworkers Consort of Leeds, the Orion Chamber Choir and Manchester Chamber Choir. Its members also perform with a variety of other high-profile ensembles and cathedral choirs. United as a single choir of sixteen to twenty singers, and directed by Bridget Budge and Stephen Muir, these voices combine to produce a uniquely rich yet agile sound, a perfect blend of youthful vibrancy built upon a solid bedrock of experience.

Singers

<i>Sopranos</i>	<i>Altos</i>	<i>Tenors</i>	<i>Basses</i>
Hannah Peace	Ruth Aldred	Martin Barry	Tim Gillies [§]
Nicki Sapiro	Emily Beringer ^{*†}	Sam Hubbard	Stuart O'Hara [*]
Alison West	Esther Colman [§]	Stephen Muir	Benjamin Palmer
Sarah Wickham	Milette Riis [§]	Christopher Trenholme	Andrew Tawn
	Connie Reif		Robert Webb [‡]
	Ruth Taylor		

* [19–22] only

§ Except [19–22]

‡ Soloist [9]

† Soloist [20]

¹ For more information on the conception and development of the *Music for Voices* project, cf. Stephen Muir's posting on the Toccata blog, 'Songs of Love, Sorrow and Satire (and not forgetting the Baboon!)': Recording Hans Gál's *Music for Voices*', at <https://toccatoccatoclassics.com/recording-hans-gals-music-for-voices/>.

Texts and Translations

1 *Motette*

Text: Matthias Claudius

Der Säemann säet den Samen.
Die Erd empfängt ihn, und über ein kleines
Keimet die Blume herauf –

Du liebtest sie. Was auch dies Leben
Sonst für Gewinn hat, war klein dir geachtet,
Und sie entschlummerte dir!

Was weinest du neben dem Grabe
Und hebst die Hände zur Wolke des Todes
Und der Verwesung empor?

Wie Gras auf dem Felde sind Menschen
Dahin, wie Blätter! Nur wenige Tage
Geh'n wir verkleidet einher!

Der Adler besucht die Erde,
Doch säumet nicht, schüttelt vom Flügel den
Staub und
Kehret zur Sonne zurück!

Motet

English translation: Anthony Fox

*The sower soweth the seed.
The earth receiveth it and soon
the flower groweth up.*

*You loved her. Whatever else this life
hath as a reward was considered small,
and she slumbered away from you.*

*Why weepest thou by the grave
and liftest up thy hands to the cloud
of death and devastation?*

*As grass in the field, as leaves,
men are gone. For but a few days
we come here disguised.*

*The eagle visiteth the earth,
but tarrieth not, shaketh the dust from his wing
and returneth to the sun once more.*

Four Madrigals to Elizabethan Poems

[2] No. 1, Youth and Cupid

Text: Queen Elizabeth I

When I was fair and young, and favour graced
me,

Of many was I sought, their mistress forth to
be.

But I did scorn them all, and answered them
therefore:

'Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere, importune
me no more.'

Then spake fair Venus' son, that proud,
victorious boy,

And said: 'Fine dame, since that you be so coy,

I will so pluck your plumes that you shall say
no more:

'Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere, importune
me no more.'

When he had spake these words, such change
grew in my breast

That neither night or day since that I could
find any rest,

Then lo! I did repent that I had said before:

'Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere, importune
me no more.'

[3] No. 2, True Love

Text: Sir Philip Sidney

My true love hath my heart and I have his,

By just exchange one for the other given:

I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss;

There never was a bargain better driven.

His heart in me keeps him and me in one;

My heart in him his thoughts and senses
guides:

He loves my heart, for once it was his own;

I cherish his because in me it bides.

4 No. 3, A Cradle Song

Text: Thomas Dekker

Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles awake you when you rise;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby,
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

Care is heavy, therefore sleep you,
You are care, and care must keep you;
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby,
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

5 No. 4, Foolish Love

Text: Robert Greene

Some say love, foolish love,
doth rule and govern all the gods:
I say love, inconstant love,
sets men's senses far at odds.
Some swear love, smooth-faced love,
is sweetest sweet that men can have;
I say love, sour love,
makes virtue yield as beauty's slave.
A bitter sweet, a folly worst of all,
That forceth wisdom to be folly's thrall.

Love is sweet. – Wherein sweet?
In fading pleasures that do pain.
Beauty sweet: is that sweet
That yieldeth sorrow for a gain?
If Love's sweet, herein sweet,
that minute's joys are monthly woes:
'Tis not sweet, That is sweet
nowhere but where repentance grows.
Then love who list, if beauty be so sour;
labour for me, love rest in prince's bower.

**Epigramme: Fünf Madrigale nach Gedichten
von Lessing**

Texts: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

6 No. 1, Stillleben

Zankst du schon wieder? sprach Hans Lau
Zu seiner lieben Ehefrau.

‘Versoff’ner, unverschämter Mann’ –
Geduld, mein Kind, ich zieh mich an –
‘Wo nun schon wieder hin?’ Zu Weine.
Zank du alleine.

‘Du gehst? – Verdammtes Kaffeehaus!
Ja! Blieb er nur die Nacht nicht aus!
Gott! ich soll so verlassen sein? –
Wer pocht? – Herr Nachbar? – nur herein!
Main böser Teufel ist zu Weine:
Wir sind alleine.’

**Epigrams: Five Madrigals after Poems by
Lessing**

Translations: Anthony Fox

Still Life

*‘Why all this nagging?’ said Jack Grey
To his beloved wife one day.*

‘You are a drunken, shameless lout.’

‘Be patient, child, I’m going out.’

*‘Where are you off to now?’ ‘To booze now.
Nag if you choose now.’*

*‘You’re off? – O wretched is my plight!
Yes! he will stay out all the night.*

God! Why am I abandoned here? –

Who’s there? – O neighbour? Do come near!

My wicked devil’s gone to booze now.

Come if you choose now!’

7] No. 2, Hymnus

Lobt mir Davids weisen Sohn!
Auch bei Lieb' und Wein und Scherzen
War er doch nach Gottes Herzen.
Brüder, lobt den Salomon.
Brüder, lasst sein Lob erschallen,
Doch vor allen
Lobt mir seinen Weisen Schluss:
Wer viel lernt, hat viel Verdruss!

Dieses lasst mir Wahrheit sein!
Diese Wahrheit stets zu lieben,
Hat mich die Natur getrieben,
Die Natur und Lieb' und Wein.
Ehrt mit mir den weisen König!
Lernet Wenig!
Brüder, and erwägt den Schluss:
Wer viel lernt, hat viel Verdruss!

8] No. 3, Vita brevis

Gestern liebt' ich,
Heute leid' ich,
Morgen sterb' ich.
Dennoch denk' ich
Heut' und morgen
Gern an Gestern.

Hymn

*Praise be given to David's son!
Who in love and wine, we hear it,
Kept the Lord's commands in spirit.
Brothers praise now Solomon!
Brothers let his praise sound purely;
Yet most surely,
Praise him for his wise decree:
Learning brings but misery.*

*Let this truth be aye upheld!
I have cherished and adored it,
Nature has itself implored it,
Nature, love and wine compelled.
Honour then this monarch cunning!
Learning shunning!
Brothers heed this wise decree:
Learning brings but misery.*

Vita brevis

*Last night loving,
This night weeping,
Next night dying.
Yet I gladly,
This and next night,
Think of last night.*

Sieh, Freund! Sieh da! Was geht doch immer
 Dort für ein reizend Frauenzimmer?
 Der neuen Tracht Vollkommenheit,
 Der engen Schritte Nettigkeit,
 Die bei der kleinsten Hindrung stocken,
 Der weisse Hals voll schwarzer Locken,
 Der wohlgewachsne, schlanke Leib
 Verrät ein junges, art'ges Weib.

Komm, Freund! Komm, lass uns schneller
 geh'n,
 Damit wir sie von vorne seh'n.
 Es muss, trägt nicht der hintre Schein,
 Die Venus oder Phyllis sein.
 Komm, eile doch! – O, welches Glückel!
 Jetzt sieht sie ungefähr zurücke.
 Was war's, das mich entzückt gemacht?
 Ein altes Weib in junger Tracht.

Mistake

*Look friend! Look there! Look what I'm seeing:
 A most attractive female being,
 Her dress is of the latest mode,
 Just see her walk along the road,
 With dainty steps and manner chaste.
 Her perfect form and slender waist,
 Her ivory neck with jet black curl
 Betray a youthful pretty girl.*

*Come, friend, let's quicken now our stride,
 And see her from the other side.
 Unless her rear view lies must she
 A Venus or a Phyllis be.
 Come hurry on: Could fate be kinder?
 She's turning round to look behind her.
 What was it that my eyes impressed?
 An older maid in youthful dress.*

Hier faulet Mimulus, ein Affe.
Und leider! leider! welch ein Affe!
So zahm, als in der Welt kein Affe;
So rein, als in der Welt kein Affe;
So keusch, als in der Welt kein Affe
So ernst, als in der Welt kein Affe;
So ohne Falsch. O, welch ein Affe!
Damit ich's kurz zusammenraffe:
Ein ganz originaler Affe.

Hier liegt er nun, der kleine, liebe Pavian,
Der uns so manches nachgetan!
Ich wette, was er jetzt getan,
Tun wir ihm alle nach, dem lieben Pavian.

Epitaph

*Here moulders Mimulus, a monkey.
Alas, alack, oh what a monkey;
So tame as never was a monkey;
So pure as never was a monkey;
So chaste as never was a monkey;
So earnest as ne'er was a monkey;
So without guile, Oh what a monkey!
Express'd in rather neater shape:
A quite unusual kind of ape.*

*Here now he lies, the lovely little sweet baboon;
Who aped us all, alas, alack, now he is gone.
I bet in what he now has done
We all will ape him too, the lovely, sweet baboon.*

Four Part-Songs

[11] No. 1, To Spring

Text: William Blake

O thou with dewy locks, who lookest down
Through the clear windows of the morning,
turn
Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,
Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring!

The hills tell one another, and the listening
Valleys hear; all our longing eyes are turn'd
Up to thy bright pavilions: issue forth
And let thy holy feet visit our clime!

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our winds
Kiss thy perfumed garments; let us taste
Thy morn and evening breath; scatter thy
pearls
Upon our lovesick land that mourns for thee.

O deck her forth with thy fair fingers; pour
Thy soft kisses on her bosom; and put
Thy golden crown upon her languish'd head,
Whose modest tresses are bound up for thee.

[12] No. 2, Madrigal

Text: William Shakespeare

Take, oh take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn,
And those eyes: the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the Morn;
But my kisses bring again,
Seals of love, but sealed in vain.
Take, oh take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn!

13 No. 3, Hymn to Diana

Text: Ben Jonson

Queen and huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep:
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess excellently bright.

Earth, let not thy envious shade
Dare itself to interpose;
Cynthia's shining orb was made
Heaven to clear when day did close:
Bless us then with wishèd sight,
Goddess excellently bright.

14 No. 4, Invocation

Text: Percy Bysshe Shelley

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

Lay thy bow of pearl apart,
And thy crystal shining quiver;
Give unto the flying hart
Space to breathe, how short soever:
Thou that mak'st a day of night –
Goddess excellently bright.

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh earth in new leaves drest
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

**Satirikon: Vier Aphorismen
für 4 Männerstimmen a cappella**

15 No. 1, Weisheit des Schöpfers
Text: Heinrich Heine

Gott gab uns nur einen Mund,
weil zwei Mäuler ungesund.
Mit dem einen Maule schon
schwätzt zu viel der Erdensohn.
Hat er jetzt das Maul voll Brei,
muss er schweigen unterdessen,
hätte er der Mäuler zwei,
löge er sogar beim Fressen.¹

I love Love – though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee –
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!

**Satirikon: Four Aphorisms
for 4 a cappella male voices**

Wisdom of the Creator
English translation: Anthony Fox

*Just one mouth has giv'n us God,
For two mouths would be most odd;
Even having just one such,
Humankind still talks too much!
When his mouth is full of bread,
He must silence all his bleating;
If he had two mouths instead
Lie would he, even while eating.*

¹ In the score, Gál indicates that the last two words should be sung 'with the back of the hand in front of the mouth'.

16 No. 2, Gute Vorsätze

Text: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Ein grosser Teich war zugefroren;
Die Fröschelein, in der Tiefe verloren,
Durften nicht ferner quaken noch springen,
Versprachen sich aber im halben Traum:
Fänden sie nur da oben Raum,
Wie Nachtigallen wollten sie singen.
Der Tauwind kam, das Eis zerschmolz,
Nun ruderten sie und landeten stolz
Und sassen am Ufer weit und breit
Und quakten wie vor alter Zeit.

17 No. 3, Von der Schicklichkeit

Text: Christian August Fehre

Ihr Mädchen, stehet ja nicht still,
Wenn euch ein Jüngling küssen will.
Wie bald kann's der und jener sehen!
Flieht, flieht und ahmt Dorinden nach;
Um Damons Küssen zu entgehen,
Floh sie geschwind ins Schlafgemach –
Und liess die Türe offenstehen.

Good Intentions

English translation: Anthony Fox

*A pond was frozen, covered in white frost;
The frogs now in deep water were quite lost,
Could no longer be croaking or springing,
So half in a dream together they swore,
That if they could get out once more,
Like nightingales they would be singing.
The thaw-wind came to melt the ice,
They all rowed out to land in a trice,
And far and wide sat around the shore,
And like old times just croaked once more.*

On Propriety

English translation: Anthony Fox

*You maidens, take due note of this,
If you a youth should want to kiss,
Do not stand still where all may see;
Flee, do what Dorinda did,
When she from Damon's kisses hid:
She swift to her bed-chamber fled,
And left the door unlocked instead.*

18 No. 4, Von der Wahrheitsliebe

Text: Wilhelm Busch

Wer möchte diesen Erdenball
Noch fernerhin betreten,
Wenn wir Bewohner überall
Die Wahrheit sagen täten.

Ihr hiesset uns, wir hiessen euch
Spitzbuben und Halunken,
Wir sagten uns fatales Zeug,
Noch eh' wir uns betrunken.

Und überall im weiten Land
Als altbewährtes Mittel
Entsproste aus der Menschenhand
Der treue Knotenkittel.

Da lob' ich mir die Höflichkeit,
Das zierliche Betrügen.
Du weisst Bescheid, ich weiss Bescheid;
Und allen macht's Vergnügen.

On the Love of Truth

English translation: Anthony Fox

*Who'd wish upon this earthly ball
In future to be walking,
If residents we one and all
The truth were always talking!*

*You would call us, we would call you
A fool or else a robber.
We'd talk about quite dreadful things
While we were still quite sober.*

*And everywhere throughout the land,
A custom to our liking,
There'd spring forth from each human hand
The faithful club for striking.*

*And so politeness I prefer,
So daintily invented,
You know what's what, I know what's what,
And all are then contented.*

Four British Folk-Songs

[19] No. 1, Early One Morning

Text: British folksong

Early one morning, just as the sun was rising,
I heard a maid sing in the valley below.
'Oh, don't deceive me, oh, never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so.'

Remember the vows that you gave to your Mary,
Remember the bow'r where you vowed to be
true.
'Oh, don't deceive me, oh, never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so.'

O gay is the garland, and fresh are the roses
I've culled from the garden to bind on thy
brow.
'O don't deceive me, O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so.'

Thus sung the poor maiden, her sorrow
bemoaning,
Thus sung the poor maid in the valley below;
'O don't deceive me! O never leave me!
How could you use a poor maiden so.'

[20] No. 2, An Eriskay Love Lilt

Text: Hebrides Scots Gaelic folksong

Vair me oro van o,⁵
Vair me oro van ee,
Vair me oru o ho,
I am sad without thee.

When I'm lonely, dear heart,
Black the night and the sea,
By love's light, my foot finds
The way to thee.

O music of my heart,
O harp of joy,
Moon of guidance by night,
Strength and light to me.

⁵ 'I've gone away, o dear one.'

[21] No. 3, O can ye sew cushions

Text: Scots folksong

O can ye sew cushions? And can ye sew sheets?
And can ye sing balloolo when the bairn
greet's?
And hee and haw birdie, and hee and haw lamb;
And hee and haw, birdie, my bonnie wee lamb!

I biggit the cradle upon the treetop,
The wind it did blow and the cradle did rock.
And hee and haw birdie, and hee and haw
lamb;
And hee and haw, birdie, my bonnie wee lamb

Hee-o, wee-o, what would I do wi' you?
Black's the life that I lead wi' you;
Monny o' you, Little for to gi' you.
Hee-o, wee-o, what would I do wi' you?

[22] No. 4, Ye Banks and Braes

Text: Robert Burns

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
how can you bloom so fresh and fair?
How can ye chaunt, ye little birds,
and I'm so weary, full of care?
Ye'll break my heart, ye warbling birds
that wanton on the flow'ry thorn,
ye mind me o' departed joys,
departed, never to return.

Oft hae I rov'd by bonnie Doon,
to see the rose and woodbine twine.
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
and fondly sae did I o' mine.
With lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
fu' sweet upon its tree.
But my false lover stole my rose,
and ah! he left the thorn wi' me.



Recorded on 4–7 January 2019 (*Motette, Four Madrigals to Elizabethan Poems, Epigramme, Four Part-Songs and Satirikon*) and on 5–6 January 2020 (*Four British Folk-Songs*) at Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall, University of Leeds, England

Producer-engineer: Simon Fox-Gál

Editors: Jonathan Stokes and Simon Fox-Gál

Publishers: Simrock (*Motette, Epigramme*), Schott (*Four British Folk-Songs*), Kistner & Siegel (*Satirikon*), Novello (*Four Madrigals*).

Acknowledgements

Sofia Aleph, Dave Barraclough, Michael Beckerman, Robert Crowe, Bradley Cunningham, Paul Fawcett, Jane Ford, Anthony Fox, Tanya Fox, Eva Fox-Gál, Daniel Gordon, Claire Marsh, Luke Marsh-Muir, Dan Merrick, Chris Pelly, Martin Pickard, Robert Ulrich

Booklet notes: Eva Fox-Gál, Bridget Budge and Stephen Muir

Cover design: David M. Baker (david@notneverknow.com)

Typesetting and lay-out: Kerrypress, St Albans

Executive Producer: Martin Anderson

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Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

Hans Gál: Music for Voices is an outcome of the international research project 'Performing the Jewish Archive', which was funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (<https://ahrc.ukri.org>).



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HANS GÁL Music for Voices, Volume One

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Borealis

Bridget Budge 1–14 19–22

and Stephen Muir 15–18, **directors**

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