

Preface

David Popper (1843–1913) achieved international renown as a solo cellist, a status which brought his own compositions to a wide and appreciative audience. He became a student of Julius Goltermann (1825–1876) in Prague at the age of twelve, auditioning on the violin but switching instruments due to a shortage of cello students at the conservatory. His studies were succeeded by a number of prestigious orchestral posts, and in 1868 he was appointed principal cellist at the Vienna Hofoper and in the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, remaining to this day the youngest player ever to have held that post. He eventually resigned from his orchestral position in 1873 in order to pursue an accelerating solo career throughout Europe. Popper was held in high esteem by his fellow musicians and maintained close personal and artistic associations with composers such as Bruckner, Brahms and Liszt, as well as with the leading performers of the day.

Most of Popper's compositions were for his own instrument and testify to an intimate knowledge of how to marry virtuoso technique with the rich sonorities and expressive capacities of the cello. His compositional output became highly regarded, and many of Popper's works would come to have pride of place among the concert repertoire of all cellists during his lifetime. They continue to do so to the present day.

At the point of this publication, David Popper's Opus 1 has to be considered lost, which makes his *Fünf Gesänge* Op. 2 his earliest surviving work. Its dedicatee is Elisabeth Metzdorff, opera singer at the Prussian Royal Court Opera. From the looks of Popper's handwriting on the title, the dedication was not made at the time of the composition. It is quite likely that Popper first met Metzdorff when he, then still principal cellist at the court in Löwenberg, appeared as a soloist at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig on 13 October 1863. Records show that Miss Metzdorff also sang in Leipzig around the same time, although today we can only speculate about the exact circumstances and nature of Popper's and her acquaintance.

Three of the poems that Popper set to music had also been used by Schumann: Heine's *Im wunderschönen Monat Mai* as well as *Und wüssten's die Blumen, die kleinen* and *Ich will meine Seele tauchen* appear in *Dichterliebe*. Eichendorff's *In einem kühlen Grunde* had been used by Gluck before. Leipzig-born Adolf Böttger (1815–1870), author of *Wie Schmetterlinge*, translated Byron and many others to German, and the fact that his complete poems were published in Leipzig between 1864 and 1866 add weight to the theory that Popper composed these songs during or after his visit there.

Note on the Edition

The aim of paladino music is to produce practical modern editions that also provide historical insight. This edition is based on a manuscript that is preserved in the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Popper's handwriting is clear and easy to read, and in most cases very consistent in articulation, dynamics, notes and expression markings.

Modern notational conventions have been employed, resulting in the omission of unnecessary accidentals and redundant slurs as well as adding "safety accidentals" where applicable and today's convention. Consecutive dynamic markings, often the result of printing limitations, have been combined where appropriate.

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Vienna, March 2015