



(LYRCD 6007)

BRAHMS: DIE SCHONE MAGELONE OPUS 33 PAUL MOW, TENOR ERIC MALSON, PIANO

Johannes Brahms's song collection Romanzen aus Tiecks Magelone is, for me, one of the great masterworks of the song literature. From the first invitation to the adventure of life to the final hymn of blissful contentment in a love that was hard-won indeed, these fifteen songs leave no emotion connected with love (with the exception of jealousy) unexpressed. It's like a rich tapestry depicting an epic tale, where the protagonists are the voice and the landscape is the piano. There is nothing comparable in all of music; its only serious rivals are Schubert's Die schöne Müllerin and Winterreise.

But the Magelone songs are a different animal altogether. The Schubert sets- unquestionably towering masterpieces-are true song cycles, where Magelone is a collection of intermezzi to a story of adventure and the pursuit of one great love. And while the Schubert cycles both portray a downward spiral of emotion with almost clinical vividness, Brahms's overall vision is much larger; his scope embraces not only the characters' emotions, but the entire surrounding landscape as well. And the happy ending to the story certainly helps make the whole experience more accessible to the average listener.

There is an autumnal feel to most of Brahms's music, and one could argue that Brahms was at his best in that arena of expression. The Magelone songs contain two outstanding examples of this mood. Toward the end of the first song, beginning with the text “Und Berge und Felder” (depicting the almost bittersweet completion of the young man's journey), the music “opens up”, becoming simultaneously tranquil and expansive, sweeping the listener along with it-an invitation to a journey that is almost impossible to refuse. And in the last song, Brahms finds the perfect tone for this song of and about love, sung by the Count Peter and the fair Magelone to each other on every anniversary of their reunion.

Almost since their first appearance, the Magelone songs have been called “problematic”, as if to suggest there is something wrong with the music itself. The problems presented, however, are those that must be solved by the performers and not flaws inherent in the songs. In terms of purely technical considerations, the piano part is, obviously, difficult, rife with thick textures, and must be played in a way that does not drown out the singer, while retaining musical strength. Although these songs have long attracted baritones, in modern times-and on modern pianos-transposing the songs down to accommodate lower voices creates the almost insurmountable difficulty of muddiness of textures and tone color. Although Brahms made the lower transpositions himself, the leaner tone of the piano of his time made the prospect more feasible than it is today.

The vocal part, in turn, is full of long, arching lines that demand real legato and a beautiful, solid upper register; it also spends enough time in the lowest part of the range to make a strong command of the low register an absolute necessity. The songs demand power and tonal splendor on the part of the singer-in short, the kind of voice and technique not normally associated with lieder singing of today. Julius Stockhausen, the dedicatee and singer of the first performance of these songs, was, after all, a pupil of Manuel Garcia.

- Eric Malson

“Pains of Sorrow or Joy?”

“Keinen hat es noch gereut, der das Roß bestiegen, Um in frischer Jugendzeit Durch die Welt zu fliegen.....” begins this masterwork by Brahms. Or, in simple English paraphrase, “No one has yet regretted getting on his horse in his fresh youth to speed through the world”. This initial folk song sung to the Count Peter before his journey into adult life foretells of the peaks and valleys of both joys and sorrows he might have along the way. Indeed, throughout his journey he finds true love, only to lose it, and finally regain it through unabashed faith and perseverance.

When my colleague, friend and pedagogue Eric Malson first presented me with the proposition of working on this magnificent cycle of lieder, I quickly understood its challenges musically, but not fully emotionally. Sometimes, a singer's emotions tend to get the better of him if he isn't always on his toes, or isn't fully rehearsed in order to combat the emotions that may arise in live performance. Only when we began to set vocal line down with piano in rehearsals did I realize how truly “painful” Brahms's own

life voyage must have been. But what kind of pain are we talking about? “Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden, Die durch meinen Busen ziehn?” begins the third piece in this fifteen song cycle, asking whether those pangs in Peter's breast are “pains of sorrow or pains of joy”? Throughout, we follow along on Peter's emotional journey of faith. Whether in saying goodbye to his homeland through the metaphor of his lute; rushing off to fight whatever might get in his path towards ultimate happiness; his ultimate desires being fully reciprocated by his one true love; or finally being lost at sea possibly to never see his love again (but continuing his love for her all the while), we feel these pangs of love on either side of Brahms's “waves of pain”. Even before he is finally reunited with his love in “Treue Liebe”, he sails aimlessly, full of faith and love with the belief he will once again find his betrothed. Although he leaves his fears behind, he holds onto this steadfast faith and pleads with the waves to carry him home. This cycle truly speaks to me at an early part of my adult life, both as an artist and a citizen of the world on my own “young man's journey into life”. It's with this faith in myself and belief in the world that I keep focused with a healthy dose of optimism. Brahms and Tieck have only helped to solidify these ideals in me, and for that, I am forever in their debt.

I am truly fortunate to have been able to make music with such a fine musician as my friend, coach and colleague, Eric Malson, in such an amazing and historic setting as New York City's Town Hall. Eric's understanding of the textures in the piano, vocal line, and the text combined with his own knowledge of my instrument are ultimately what led us to this beautiful project. I can never thank him enough for all his hard work and artistry, as well as his devotion and friendship. I would also very much like to thank an entire household of Vermonters for taking me in one snowy Thanksgiving a couple of years ago. This is when this project was conceived and acted upon through a collaborative effort between both the good people at Lyrichord and Multicultural Media. Thank you SO much to Stephen & Rickey, Nick & Lesley and especially Karol. Thank you also to John Ostendorf for his help in producing and editing this album. Special thanks to Theresa Fritsch and to her brother Robert Walsh. Ms. Fritsch's generous support made this project a reality. Also to my good friend, graphic designer Saxton Rose. I would like to make a special acknowledgement to the most important musicians in my life, Dr. Jerry Blackstone, Martha Sheil, Martin Katz, Arthur Levy, Evelyn Lear and the late Thomas Stewart and of course, Mrs. Pamela Pierson. Thanks to my entire family, all of my friends and colleagues, and everyone else who has continued to believe in me along the way.

Finally, I'd like to dedicate this album to the memory of my father, Archie Harold Mow (1934-1985).

“Treue Liebe dauert lange,
Überlebet manche Stund',
Und kein Zweifel macht sie bange,
Immer bleibt ihr Mut gesund.”
Thanks Dad, for showing me the way.

- Paul Mow

THE TRACKS:

1. Keinen hat es noch gereut - 3:57
2. Traun! Bogen und Pfeil - 1:23
3. Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden - 5:28
4. Liebe kam aus fernen Landen - 4:53
5. So willst du des Armen - 1:27
6. Wie soll ich die Freude - 5:53
7. War es dir, dem diese Lippen bebten - 2:45
8. Wir müssen uns trennen - 3:58
9. Ruhe, Sussliebchen im Schatten - 6:49
10. Verzweiflung: So Tonet Dann Schaumende Wellen - 2:26
11. Wie schnell verschwindet - 3:55
12. Muss es eine Trennung geben - 3:07
13. Geliebter, wo zaudert - 2:02
14. Wie froh und frisch mein Sinn sich hebt - 2:36
15. Treue Liebe dauert lange - 4:54

PAUL MOW, Tenor

Quickly establishing himself as one of America's most promising young performers, tenor Paul Mow began his third consecutive season with the New York City Opera in 2003-2004 by performing the lead role of Lennie Small in Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice And Men*. Mr. Mow has been on the roster of the New York City Opera for over four years, performing both leading & secondary roles as well as covers in a multitude of productions. Besides NYCO at Lincoln Center, Mr. Mow has also enjoyed debuts at both Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall in New York City. Mr. Mow has performed many other leading tenor roles in the operatic repertoire, including Don Jose in *Carmen*, Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia*, Max in *Der Freischütz*, Tristan in *Tristan und Isolde*, and Herodes in *Salome*.

In addition to the NYCO, he has performed with a multitude of opera companies, including the Opera Orchestra of New York, Glimmerglass Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Bard Summerscape, Berkshire Opera, Brooklyn Opera, Opera Company of North Carolina, Anchorage Opera, Tulsa Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Summer Opera of Washington, D.C., Lyric Opera Colorado and internationally with the Folkstheater Rostock in Germany in 2005.

No stranger to the concert stage, he has performed with the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra, Annapolis Orchestra, Smith College Orchestra, Wichita Falls Symphony Orchestra, and with his hometown ensemble the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra on many occasions. Mr. Mow holds a bachelor's degree in Voice Performance from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor

where he studied voice with Martha Sheil., and has completed coursework towards his Master's Degree from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Mr. Mow has also worked very closely with Evelyn Lear and her husband, the late Thomas Stewart, as well as coaching with Martin Katz, John Wustman, Howard Watkins, and studying voice for several years with Arthur Levy. Paul has won numerous awards, most notably in 2002 when he won the George London Award for the Kirstin Flagstad Memorial Prize as well as the Eastern Regionals of the Metropolitan Opera Competition.

ERIC MALSON, Piano

Eric Malson is an active soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician whose activities have taken him throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe. As soloist, he has appeared with the North Carolina Symphony, Columbus (Ohio) Symphony, Manhattan Mozart Orchestra, Orquestra da Fundação Gulbenkian, Orquestra Metropolitana de Lisboa, Oak Ridge Symphony, and Prince William Symphony orchestras. As a collaborating pianist with the Steans Institute for Young Artists, he has appeared frequently at the Ravinia Festival, as well as the Tanglewood, Norfolk (Conn.), Wexford (Ireland), Caramoor (N.Y.), Scotia (Halifax), Chautauqua, Évora (Portugal), and Verso il Millennio (Riva del Garda, Italy) festivals. Mr. Malson works extensively with singers, and has appeared in recital with soprano Deborah Voigt, baritone Christophoren Nomura, and tenor Thomas Studebaker, among others. He has served on the musical staff of various opera companies, including the Bühnen der Stadt Köln, Teatro Nacional São Carlos (Lisbon), Seattle Opera, Washington Opera at Kennedy Center, Opera Zuid (Netherlands), Theater der Stadt Heidelberg, The Dallas Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Cleveland Opera.

He has served on the opera faculties of the Juilliard School of Music and the Mannes College of Music, as well as the accompanying and chamber music faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music. Mr. Malson has served as official accompanist for various competitions, including the Eurovision Young Musicians Competition, Carnegie Hall International American Music Competition, and the Metropolitan Opera National Council District Auditions.

Eric Malson has resided in Portugal, where he concertized throughout the country, as well as serving on the faculties of the Academia Nacional de Orquestra and the Escola Superior de Musica de Lisboa. He participated in the Portuguese premieres of numerous works, including the Piano Concerto in A-flat Major, Op. 113 of Hummel, Roger Sessions' First Piano Sonata, Dohnanyi's Sextet, Op. 37, and Wolfgang Rihm's La Lugubre Gondola/Das Eismeer (Musik in memoriam Luigi Nono, for double orchestra and 2 pianos). Mr. Malson holds degrees from Indiana University and the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where his teachers included Menahem Pressler, Gilbert Kalish, and John Wustman.

JOHN OSTENDORF - producer

John Ostendorf turned to record producing following a long career as a bass-baritone, specializing in the works of Handel, Bach and Mozart. He performed with all the major orchestras and festivals in the U.S. and many opera companies as well, and sang on many recordings. He has uncovered, assembled and then recorded a large number of baroque

works, many of them Handel operatic premieres on CD. In the dozen or so years since the end of his active performing career, Ostendorf has been responsible for more than 150 classical recordings for a host of labels, including many for Lyricord.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

1.
No one has yet regretted
getting on his horse
In his fresh youth,
To speed through the world.

Mountains and meadows,
Lonely forests,
Maidens and women,
Splendrous in their attire,
Golden jewelry,
Everything delights him with its fair form.

Miraculously fly
Forms past him,
Rapturously glow
the desires in his youth-drunk senses.

Fame strews roses
Swiftly in his path,
Love and caresses,
and laurels and roses
Lead him higher and higher onward.

Around him: joys,
His enemies envy him,
And succumb to the hero.
Then he chooses contentedly
The maiden who, of all, most pleases him.

And Mountains and fields
And lonely forests
He soon leaves behind him.
His parents in tears,
Ah, after all of their longing -
They are all reunited in loving happiness.
Years have slipped past;
He tells his son
In a comfortable moment,
And points to his scars,

The rewards of bravery.
Thus old age remains yet young,
A beam of light in the dusk.

2.
Verily! Bow and arrow
Are useful against the enemy,
Ever helpless,
The weak and wretched man will weep;
Health blooms for the noble man
Wherever the sun may shine:
The cliffs may be steep,
But Luck is his friend.

3.
Are they sorrows or are they joys
Which tug at my breast?
All the old desires leave;
A thousand new flowers bloom.

Through the dusk of tears
I see suns standing in the distance, -
What languishing, what longing!
Do I dare? Shall I move closer?

Ah, and when my tears are falling,
It is dark around me;
Yet if my desires do not return,
The future is empty of hope.

So beat then, my ambitious heart,
So flow down then, my tears,
Ah, joy is only a deeper pain,
Life is a dark grave, -

Without guilt,
Should I then suffer?
How is it that in my dreams
All my thoughts
Tremble up and down?
I scarcely know myself any more.

O, hear me, kindly stars,
O hear me, green meadow,
And you, my love, hear my holy oath:
If I remain far from her,

I will die gladly.
Ah, only in the light of her gaze
Dwell life and hope and happiness!

4.
The goddess Love came from a far-off land
And not a creature followed her,
And the goddess waved at me,
And bound me with sweet ribbons.

Then I began to feel the pain;
Tears darkened my gaze.
Ah! What is Love's happiness,
I lamented; why this game?

I have not found anyone in my wide travels,
Said the lovely shape,
You will now feel the power
That binds other hearts.

All of my desires fled
Into the blue expanse of air,
Glory seemed to me a daydream,
Only the lament of ocean waves.

Ah! Who will loosen my fetters now?
For my arms are bound,
About me flies a swarm of worries;
Will no one rescue me?

May I gaze into the mirror,
Which Hope is holding before me?
Ah, how misleading is the world!
No, I cannot believe in it.

Oh, and yet, do not be shaken
In what gives you strength;
If your one-and-only does not love you,
There remains only sickness and bitter death.

5.
Will you then, on a poor man
graciously take pity?
So it is no dream?
How the spring does trickle,
How the waves do ring,

How the trees do rustle!

Deep I lay, within fearsome
Walls imprisoned,
Now daylight greets me!
How the sunbeams do play!
They dazzle and paint
My timid face.

Should I believe it?
Will no one rob me
Of this delicious delusion?
Yet dreams float away
And only love distinguishes life;
I welcome my fate!

How free and cheerful!
There's no more hurry;
Put away your pilgrim's staff!
You have won,
You have discovered it -
The most blissful place!

6.
How can I endure the joy,
How can I then endure the bliss -
That under all the throbbing
Of my heart, my soul will not part from me?

And if now the hours
Of love have vanished,
Why the urge
In dreary desolation,
To drag further a joyless life
When by the shore the flowers will not bloom?

Which what tarrying feet does Time pass,
Step by deliberate step!
And if I must part,
How feather-light does its step then fly!

Throb, o yearning power,
In my deep, true breast!
Like echoes of a lute, fading away,
Do the finest joys of life flee.
Ah, how soon

Till I am hardly aware of bliss.

Rush, rush ever forth,
Deep stream of time,
Soon you will wander off, today or tomorrow,
And go from place to place;
Since you have taken me this far,
Now merrily, now quietly;
I will now venture further,
However it may turn out.

I must not think myself wretched,
Since my Darling beckons;
Love will not let me languish
Until this life has sunk!
No, the stream will ever broaden,
Heaven will remain ever clear,
Joyously I row farther;
I'll bring love and life together to the grave.

7.
Was it you for whom these lips trembled,
For you, that sweet, offered kiss?
Can an earthly life be so enjoyable?
Ha! how the light and radiance danced before my eyes,
All my senses aspired to those lips!

From those clear eyes shone
a yearning which tenderly beckoned me;
All echoed again in my heart
My gaze sank low
And the breezes whispered love songs.

Like a pair of stars
Gleamed your eyes, your cheeks
Cradled by golden hair;
Your gazes and smiles took
wing, and your sweet words
awoke a deep longing:
O Kiss, how burning red your mouth was!
I died, and first found life in fairest death.

8.
We must part,
Beloved lute,
It is time to chase

After a far-off, longed-for goal.

I am off to battle,
Off to plunder;
And when I have my loot,
Then I shall fly home.

In the red gleam
I fly with her,
and my lance protects us,
and my steel armor here.

Come, dear weapons,
In jest so often donned:
Defend now my happiness
On this new road!

I throw myself into the waves,
I greet the glorious course;
Many have been dragged under,
But the brave swimmer remains on top.

Ha! What joy it is to spill
Noble blood!
To protect my happiness,
My precious property!
Not to suffer scorn,
Who lacks courage for that?

Let fall your reins,
Happy Night!
Spread your wings;
Over the far-off hills,
Upon us morning already smile!

9.
Rest, my love, in the shade
Of green, darkening night;
The grass rustles on the meadow,
The shadows fan and cool thee
And true love is awake.
Sleep, go to sleep!
Gently rustles the grove,
Eternally am I thine.

Hush, you hidden songs,

And disturb not her sweetest repose!
The flock of birds listens,
Stilled are their noisy songs.
Close thine eyes, my darling,
Sleep, go to sleep;
In the twilight
I will watch over thee.

Murmur on, you melodies,
Rush on, you quiet stream.
Lovely fantasies of love
do these melodies evoke:
Tender dreams swim after them.
Through the whispering grove
Swarm tiny golden bees
which hum thee to sleep.

10.
Resound, then, foaming waves
And twine around me!
May misfortune bay loudly about me,
The cruel sea let loose its fury!

I laugh at the stormy weather,
I scorn the wrath of the tide;
O, may the rocks dash me to pieces!
For never will it turn out well.

I will not lament, even if I founder,
And perish in the watery deeps!
My gaze will never more be cheered
By the sight of my darling's star.

So send hurtling down your thunder,
And tear at me, o Storm,
Until rock shatters upon rock!
I am a lost man.

11.
How quickly disappear
Light and radiance;
The morning finds
A withered garland,

That only yesterday glowed
In all its splendor.

For it has faded
In the dark night.

Like a wave does
Life drift away,
As bright as it has painted itself:
It has gained nothing;

The sun sets,
The redness flees,
The shadows climb,
And darkness draws in.

So love floats
Into the wastelands,
Ah, would that it might remain
Until the grave!

Yet we awake
To deep pain:
The skiff breaks,
The light is extinguished.

From the beautiful land
We are brought far away,
To a desolate shore
Where night surrounds us.

12.
Must there be a parting
That will cause true hearts to break?
No, that I do not call living:
Dying is not so bitter.

When I hear a shepherd's flute,
Inside I grieve;
When I gaze at a sunset,
I think passionately of you.

Is there then no true love?
Must there be pain and parting?
If I'd remained unloved
I would then have at least a glimmer of hope.

But so I must now lament:
Where is Hope, but in the grave?

Far away must I bear my misery,
In secrecy, my heart breaks.

13.

My love, where tarries
Your wrongly-treading feet?
The nightingale chatters
About yearning and kisses.

The trees whisper
In the golden luster,
Dreams slip in
Through my window.

Ah! Do you know the pining
Of a throbbing breast?
- these thoughts and hopes
full of pain and full of joy?

Give wing to your haste
And rescue me,
While it remains night;
We shall fly from here.

The sails, they swell,
Fear is but a trifle:
There, beyond the waves
Is our homeland.

Our home recedes.
So let it!
Love draws
the thoughts powerfully.

Hark! ecstatically resound
the waves in the sea.
They bounce and jump
Cheerily along.

And should they lament?
They call for you!
They know that they are carrying
Love from here.

14.

How happy and fresh my thoughts soar,
Behind me I leave all my fears,
My heart strives with new cheer,
And new yearnings awoken.

The stars are mirrored in the sea,
And golden gleams the tide.
I ran dizzily hither and thither,
And was neither bad nor good.

Yet weighed down
Are doubts and indecisive thoughts;
O carry me, you rocking waves,
To my homeland, long yearned-for.

In the dear, darkening distance,
There call the songs of home,
From every star
She gazes down with gentle eyes.

Smooth yourself, o trusty wave,
Lead me on the long road
To that well-beloved threshold,
To my Happiness at long last!

15.

True love lingers long,
Outlives many an hour,
And no doubts will make it shrink;
Always will its spirits remain healthy.

They menace it in thick hordes,
Promoting vacillating doubt,
Storm and Death, these dangers
true blood opposes with Love.

And, like mist, starts back
What has held captive the senses,
And to the merry gaze of spring
the wide world opens itself.

Achieved,
Mastered,
by Love is Happiness,
Vanished

are those hours,
but back again they fly,
And blissful delight,
becomes quiet
and fills
the intoxicated, throbbing, joyful breast;
They part
from pain
forever,
and never
will this lovely, ecstatic, heavenly joy disappear!

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