

MADELEINE DRING Trio for Flute, Oboe and Piano

(1) Allegro con brio

(2) Andante semplice

(3) Allegro giocoso

MADELEINE DRING (1923–1977) Trio for Flute, Oboe and Piano (1970)

Multi-faceted artist Madeleine Dring was an English actress, mime, cartoonist, violinist, pianist, singer, and composer. At age 10, she earned a violin scholarship to the junior department of the Royal College of Music. She continued studies as a senior composition student of Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob. In addition to composing concert pieces, Dring sustained her love of theatre by acting, singing, playing piano, and composing incidental music. She died at age 53 of a brain aneurysm.

Dring composed several chamber works, including the Trio for flute, oboe, and piano (1968) for her husband Roger Lord, a professional oboist who played with the London Symphony Orchestra. Flutist Peter Lloyd, Lord, and André Previn premiered the Trio in the United States. Dring admired Francis Poulenc, and her works often exhibit similarities in melodic structure and rhythmic wit.

Poulenc's influence is clearly heard in the Trio. The first movement consists mainly of homorhythmic lines between the flute and oboe, though cheeky mixed meter passages elude a strong rhythmic pulse. The magical melodic simplicity of the second movement is reminiscent of the second movement of the Poulenc Flute Sonata, containing solo passages for both the flute and the oboe as well as melodic lines that interact conversationally. The similarities to the Poulenc Flute Sonata continue in the third movement of Dring's Trio as both exhibit an energetic brilliance. The piece concludes with a double cadenza and an exuberant ensemble finish.

Storchenbotschaft (1888) – Hugo Wolf (1860 – 1903)

No. 48 of his celebrated Mörike-Lieder, a collection of 53 songs setting poems by Eduard Mörike.

The poem tells of a shepherd visited by two storks who bring the news that he is to become the father of twins, and Wolf's music vividly captures the comic storytelling and the storks' characteristic clattering.

The storks tell the shepherd that they have "die Mutter gebissen" ("bitten the mother"). This is not meant literally. It alludes to an old German folk belief that storks bring babies, and in some regional traditions the stork was said to bite or peck the mother to make her pregnant or to signal that she would soon have a child. The phrase functions as a humorous euphemism for conception rather than a literal action.

Stork's message

The shepherd's house stands on two wheels –
stands high on the heath, from morning to night;
if only more people had such night lodgings!
Then a shepherd would not exchange his bed with a king.

And if something strange came about by night,
he would make a little prayer and lay down on his ear;
a spirit, a witch, and other such airy creatures
may knock on his door, but he will not answer.

But once it became just too much:
the banging on the shutter, the whining of the dog;
so my shepherd draws back the bolts – and behold!
there stand two storks, a male and a female.

The couple makes a nice bow
and wish to speak, alas, if only they could!
What do poultry want of me? Has anyone heard of such a thing?
Yet they bear me a joyful message.

You live in that house back there by the Rhine?
You have bitten my maiden in the leg?
now the child is weeping and the mother as well:
she wishes for her beloved to come home.

And she wishes also to arrange a baptism:
a lamb, a sausage and a purse of money?
well, tell her I'll come in two or three days,
and greet my boy and stir his porridge for me!

But wait! why have you both come?
but it won't, I hope, mean twins?
The storks give a great rattle with a merry sound;
they nod and bow, and fly away.

Das irdische Leben (1899) by Gustav Mahler (1860 – 1911)

One of the most powerful and disturbing songs by Gustav Mahler. It is the fifth song in his collection *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, which sets poems from the famous anthology compiled by Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano.

The song is a dialogue between a starving child and its mother.
The child repeatedly cries:

"Mother, mother, I'm hungry! Give me bread!"

The mother answers that the bread is not ready:

First the grain must be harvested.
Then it must be milled.
Then the flour must be baked.

Each time the child begs more desperately, while the mother postpones relief with another necessary step in the process.

By the time the bread is finally ready, the last line reveals:

"Meanwhile the child had died."

The ending is stark and unemotional, which makes it especially devastating.

Mahler was deeply attracted to texts that juxtaposed ordinary life with profound questions about suffering, mortality, and fate. "Das irdische Leben" is one of his bleakest examples.

The earthly life

"Mother, oh Mother! I'm hungry;
Give me bread, or I shall die!"
"Wait a little, my darling child;
Tomorrow we shall harvest quickly."

And when the corn had been harvested,
The child wailed again:
"Mother, oh Mother! I'm hungry;

Give me bread, or I shall die!"
"Wait a little, my darling child;
Tomorrow we shall thresh quickly."

And when the corn had been threshed,
The child wailed again:
"Mother, oh Mother! I'm hungry;
Give me bread, or I shall die!"
"Wait a little, my darling child;
Tomorrow we shall bake quickly."

And when the bread had been baked,
The child was lying on the funeral bier.