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# Modern Antiquity: Modern Interpretations of Folk Sources in Gustav Mahler's Songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn

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MODERN ANTIQUITY: MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF FOLK SOURCES IN  
GUSTAV MAHLER'S SONGS FROM *DES KNABEN WUNDERHORN*

by

Alyson Vaaler

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May 2013

ABSTRACT  
MODERN ANTIQUITY: MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF FOLK SOURCES IN  
GUSTAV MAHLER'S SONGS FROM *DES KNABEN WUNDERHORN*

by

Alyson Vaaler

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013  
Under the Supervision of Professor Mitchell Brauner

Between 1805 and 1808, Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) compiled a three-volume collection of German folk poetry entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* or “The Youth’s Magic Horn.” The collection had an especially mystical appeal for composer Gustav Mahler who set songs to twenty-four of the *Wunderhorn* poems.

Mahler published his *Wunderhorn* songs in fin-de-siècle Vienna, and was contemporary with a league of artists, writers and philosophers who were attempting to combat the city’s fascination with the past and tradition. By analyzing the history of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, as well as the ideals behind its creation, this project aims to move beyond the text of the *Wunderhorn* songs and explore the musical and social implications contained in Mahler’s settings. Philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder’s concepts of *Volk* and *Volkslied* are discussed, as well as original letters concerning the collection’s creation written by the compilers of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. In addition to this historical background, fin-de-siècle Vienna and Mahler’s interaction with *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* are detailed. Interpretations of two songs, “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” and “Der Tambour’sell,” are offered with an emphasis on “traditional” and “modern” elements in

each song. This is done with the aim of exploring how the tensions between “modern” and “traditional” were described by Mahler and his critics, and in an attempt to draw parallels with similar tensions in the environment of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

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## Introduction

Between 1805 and 1808, Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) compiled a three-volume collection of German folk poetry entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* or “The Youth’s Magic Horn.” Unsurprisingly, the collection became a resource for many composers, but had an especially mystical appeal for composer Gustav Mahler who set twenty-four of the *Wunderhorn* poems to music. Mahler’s *Wunderhorn* songs and their use in his first four symphonies have become a connected period (1887-1901) in Mahler’s life labeled as “The Wunderhorn Years.” Donald Mitchell detailed the chronology and interconnectedness of these songs to Mahler’s symphonies.<sup>1</sup> Mitchell’s concentrated study underscores the importance that *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* had for this period in Mahler’s life.

Undoubtedly, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* served as an important influence from the past on Mahler’s compositions. However, Mahler, publishing his *Wunderhorn* songs in fin-de-siècle Vienna, was contemporary with a league of artists, writers and philosophers who were attempting to combat the city’s fascination with the past and tradition. In 1897 the painter Gustav Klimt and eighteen other artists began an entire artistic movement, the Vienna Secession, based on a rebellion against traditional artistic teachings. What were Mahler’s motivations for using *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, a collection steeped in tradition, during the modernization that occurred during fin-de-siècle Vienna? How did the traditional *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* collection inform the composition of his *Wunderhorn* songs? As Mahler remarked to his confidant Natalie Bauer-Lechner, “It is

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005).



rather different with songs, but only because you can express so much more in the music than the words directly say. The text is actually a mere indication of the deeper significance to be extracted from it, of hidden treasure within.”<sup>2</sup>

My project aims to move beyond the texts of the *Wunderhorn* songs and explore how Mahler’s settings are a reflection of both the tradition of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and the modernization of fin-de-siècle Vienna. This modernization gives new meaning to the traditional sources and themes that Mahler uses to inspire his songs.

Chapter 1 begins with philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder’s introduction of his concepts of *Volk* and *Volkslied* in his original writings of 1767-93.<sup>3</sup> These concepts had a direct influence on *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and steered the ideology of the collection’s compilers.

Chapter 2 looks at how Arnim and Brentano compiled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as an intended cultural agent of change. As many of their letters show, Brentano and Arnim perceived German culture to be in danger, and that perception propelled them to

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<sup>2</sup> Natalie Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Dika Newlin; ed. Peter Franklin (London: Faber Music, 1980), 32.

<sup>3</sup> See Johann Gottfried Herder, “Letters for the Advancement of Humanity” (1793-7) in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 377; Johann Gottfried Herder, “Fragments on Recent German Literature” (1767-8) in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50; Herder, “Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient People” (1773), trans. Joyce P. Crick, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, and Goethe*, ed. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 155.

formulate a collection of folk poems to educate German-speaking people about their shared heritage.<sup>4</sup> To create an accessible collection, Arnim and Brentano “modernized” the folk poetry by standardizing the language and in some instances, writing new additions to the poems. Critics including Jacob Grimm, J.D. Falk and Friedrich Schlegel disagreed with their editorial reworking of the poetry, complaining that folk poems should not be modernized, but should remain in their original state.<sup>5</sup>

Chapter 3 looks at the rapid social changes in fin-de-siècle Vienna that give a rich social context to Mahler’s *Wunderhorn* songs and their reception.<sup>6 7</sup> In 1900, Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick remarked on a tension he heard at the premiere of the *Wunderhorn* songs:

Mahler, one in the forefront of modernism, shows a desire, as often happens, to seek refuge in the opposite extreme, in naivety, in unremitting sentiment, in the terse, even awkward language of the old folk song...It is impossible to ignore the fact that there is a contradiction, a dichotomy between the concept of the “folk song” and the artful, superabundant orchestral accompaniment.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Reinhold Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche, 1894).

<sup>5</sup> Oscar Fambach, ed., *Der Romantische Rückfall in der Kritik der Zeit* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag Berlin, 1963), 1-48.

<sup>6</sup> See William J. McGrath, *Dionysian Art and Populist Politics in Austria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981); Steven Beller, *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001)

<sup>7</sup> See Sandra McColl, *Music Criticism in Vienna, 1896-1897: Critically Moving Forms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Kevin C. Karnes, *Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> Eduard Hanslick, “Theater- und Kunstnachrichten,” *Neue Freie Presse* (January 16, 1900), p.8; translated in Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 430-431.

Richard Aldrich, writing for the *New York Times*, also described the perceived tension in Mahler's style:

There are curious contradictions in Mahler's style as a composer. He is intimately familiar with all the modern resources of musical expression, with the refinements of orchestral technique as well as with the most daring of modern harmonic combinations and the manipulation of thematic material. With this goes an unmistakable predilection for the naïve, the folk-tune, the simplicity and sometimes the bareness of the archaic...the whole work is, in a certain way, an expression of the time and place and atmosphere to which the verses take us back...<sup>9</sup>

Modern scholars hear this persistent dichotomy in Mahler's folk-inflected music differently. In Chapter 4, I will outline examples of "traditional" and "modern" elements in two *Wunderhorn* songs, explore how the tensions between them were described by Mahler and his critics, and draw parallels with similar contemporary tensions in the environment of fin-de-siècle Vienna.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Aldrich, "Gustav Mahler – His Personality and His New Symphony," *New York Times*, November 6, 1904, 4.

**PART ONE: The Historical Beginnings of *Des  
Knaben Wunderhorn***

## Chapter One The Beginnings of *Volk*

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) was a philosopher who wrote prolifically on religion, literature, and politics. Herder was born in Mohrunen in East Prussia (now Morag, Poland) and his father was a teacher and sexton of the church. Despite a childhood of limited means, Herder acquired a thorough education. In 1762, Herder attended the University of Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russia) where he studied with Immanuel Kant. He paid for his education by working in a bookshop, which further fueled his interest in writing. In 1764, Herder accepted a teaching position in Riga, located in present day Latvia. Here Herder started his writing career.<sup>10</sup>

In 1769, Herder resigned from his teaching position and traveled to Strasbourg where he became friends with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832.) Both became associated with the *Sturm und Drang* movement in German literature, of which Goethe's novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* or "The Sorrows of Young Werther" is a signature work.

*Sturm und Drang* or "Storm and Stress" refers to a literary, music and theater movement extending from the 1770s to the early 1780s. The movement takes its name from Friedrich Maximilian Klingner's play of the same name. Klingner named his play *Sturm und Drang* (1776) at the urging of his friend Christoph Kaufmann (1753-1795), who most likely got the idea for the term from a scene in Hamlet.<sup>11</sup> Although short lived,

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Reinhold Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 51-61.

<sup>11</sup> David Hill, "Introduction," in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*, ed. David Hill (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 2.

this movement had an important influence on European Romanticism and German nationalism. Enlightenment conventions championed order and reason, as opposed to human knowledge and feeling as reliable tools for understanding a person's place in the world. Herder's writings about human communities (*Volk*) and nation, among other topics, opened up avenues of self-realization that did not rely solely on rationalism.<sup>12</sup> These ideas helped shape and form the *Sturm und Drang* movement.

Even though the *Sturm und Drang* movement challenged the Enlightenment, recent scholarship warns against reducing the movement to a simple reaction against the Enlightenment. *Sturm und Drang* still used the values of reasoning prevalent in the Enlightenment and shared similar goals of self-realization and improvement. Instead of a reaction, *Sturm und Drang* functioned as an internal critique of the Enlightenment's dedication to strict reason and order.<sup>13</sup>

The movement *Sturm und Drang* encouraged independent reasoning and critiqued those who blindly accepted reasoning dictated by authority. In a sense, the movement encouraged people to construct their own identity, instead of adhering to the ideas of those around them. As Herder described in his *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity*, "Light, enlightenment, sense of community; noble pride in not letting oneself be

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<sup>12</sup> Wulf Koepke, "Herder and the Sturm und Drang," in *Literature of the Sturm und Drang*, ed. David Hill (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 69.

<sup>13</sup> John H. Zammito et. Al., "Johann Gottfried Herder Revisited: The Revolution in Scholarship in the Last Quarter Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no. 4 (2010): 668-669.

organized by others, but organizing oneself, as other nations have done from time immemorial...”<sup>14</sup>

Herder used *Sturm und Drang* as a platform for his ideas about people, culture and their place in the world. The ideas Herder cultivated during the *Sturm und Drang* movement, specifically his thoughts on German *Volk*, would later inspire the creation of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

The influence of the foreign French culture on the Holy Roman Empire (962-1806) made the German speaking population of Europe particularly susceptible to Herder’s nationalistic ideas about *Volk*. Until the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, German speaking parts of Europe were small, fragmented portions that were not unified politically. In this environment, the middle and lower classes spoke German and the aristocracy spoke French. Along with the French language, the aristocracy also embraced French culture, fashion, and literature.<sup>15</sup>

The Holy Roman Empire also embraced French culture because of its progressiveness. Compared to the industrial revolutions occurring in England and France, German-speaking areas were not as advanced economically or socially.<sup>16</sup> Industrial revolutions in England (1770-1850) and France (1789-1819) improved the

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<sup>14</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, “Letters for the Advancement of Humanity,” in *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 377.

<sup>15</sup> Hans J Hahn, *German Thought and Culture: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Present Day* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 60-72.

<sup>16</sup> Hahn, *German Thought and Culture: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Present Day*, 71.

economies and industries in these countries. German speaking areas, in contrast, had a poor economy, underdeveloped industry and sharp social divisions.<sup>17</sup>

Herder, along with other adherents to the *Sturm und Drang* movement, viewed French culture as superficial and not representative of their own unique German culture. Herder's solution to the invasion of French culture was to turn to places in German culture he believed harbored more culturally authentic values. These values were often equated with *Volk* (lower and middle classes) and nature, and became dominant themes during the *Sturm und Drang* movement.<sup>18</sup>

Herder's ideas about nationality and *Volk* are defined in his essay "Fragmente über die deutsche Literatur" (Fragments on Recent German Literature), written in 1767. In this essay, Herder remarks that the imitation of French culture has slowed the progress of German culture:

The literature of foreign peoples and languages is often imported among other nations as a foreign colony; and because of this mixing together of ideas, of ethics, of manners of thinking and seeing, of languages, and of sciences, everything has necessarily had to take on such a different form...a language which has received its literature from various climates and regions, from many sorts of languages and peoples, must naturally be a mixture of equally many foreign manners of representation.<sup>19</sup>

Herder says that developing a national identity that is not an imitation of another culture is important, not only for German-speaking areas, but for other nations as well. Instead of solely promoting German culture, he says that national diversity among

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<sup>17</sup> Hahn, *German Thought and Culture: From the Holy Roman Empire to the Present Day*, 55-60.

<sup>18</sup> Ergang, *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism*, 55.

<sup>19</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, "Fragments on Recent German Literature," in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 50.



nations is both acceptable and desirable in order to facilitate the sharing of different ideas and viewpoints. At the same time, the development of culture, of which language and literature are a vital part, is important in order to establish a national identity and place of belonging. For Herder, associating with the values of the German-speaking *Volk* was a way for German-speaking people to enliven a forgotten German culture and promote a cultural self-identity amongst the heavy influence of French culture.

For Herder, *Volk* is an “Ursprungskategorie” or category of origin.<sup>20</sup> In a geographical sense, it refers to people located in the same area who share common language and cultural history. In Herder’s usage, *Volk* meant low and middle class people who, because they had a greater affinity to German culture, were free from the prevalent influence of the French, unlike the aristocracy, and were “creatures that are closer to nature than scholars.”<sup>21</sup>

Herder thought that the *Volk* had admirable values because they were unburdened by the restrictions and expectations of upper class society. He saw these values most clearly articulated in *Volkslieder*, a product of the *Volk*. Herder considered *Volkslieder* to be pure and natural because they had not been influenced by the modern world.

Herder introduced the word *Volkslied* for the first time in his essay “Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker” or (Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient Peoples) (1773). This essay praises

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<sup>20</sup> Gerhard Sauder, “Herder’s Poetic Works, Translations, and Views on Poetry,” in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, ed. Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), 322.

<sup>21</sup> As quoted in Stefan Grief, “Herder’s Aesthetics and Poetics,” in *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, ed. Hans Adler and Wulf Koepke (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), 160.

*The Work of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* (1765), a collection of supposed Scottish poems translated into English by James Macpherson. In the essay, Herder is critical of the translation of this collection *Die Gedichte Ossians, eines alten celtischen Dichters* (1768) by Michael Denis. Herder stresses that the German translation of the collection takes away the authenticity of the original poems and makes them sound too modern:

What I wanted to do was to remind you that Ossian's poems are songs, songs of the people, folksongs, the songs of an unsophisticated people living close to the senses, songs which have been long handed down by oral tradition. And is that what they are when clad in our find epic form?<sup>22</sup>

Herder continues to say that the original spirit of the poems has not been captured in the translation. He proposes that the spirit of the poems is necessary in order to bring out their lyrical song-like quality, a quality that is passed on through oral transmission, not written down on paper. Herder argues that if it is difficult to capture the songs on paper initially, a translation should do its best to be true to the spirit and character of the poem, and not change the spirit of the poem to better fit the translation.

In the end, Herder proposes that more attention be paid to collecting folk songs in Germany. He opposes the then current fascination with modern poetry and praises the raw simplicity found in folk songs. Herder concludes that cultivation of *Volkslieder* can help create a culture for the German people. Herder's ideas about folksongs are later illustrated in his own collection of folk songs *Alte Volksliedern*, later titled *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* (1778) or "The Voices of the Peoples in Song." The collection included a variety of national folksongs (not just German), but it illustrated Herder's

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<sup>22</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, "Extract from a Correspondence on Ossian and the Songs of Ancient People," trans. Joyce P. Crick, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller, and Goethe*, ed. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 155.

dedication to the folksong as a way to create culture. This dedication to a cultural change through folksong would prove to be inspiration for the writers of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

## Chapter Two The Creation of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

*I cannot praise this book enough; it contains the blessed flowers of the German spirit, and whoever reads these folk songs will learn the genuine German people. In these songs one can feel the heartbeat of the German people.*<sup>23</sup> – Heinrich Heine

Heinrich Heine's remarks in 1835 about *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* highlight the appeal of the *Volkisch* nature that the collection had; the same *Volk* enthusiasm Herder had wanted to instill in his people.

Between 1805 and 1808, Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781-1831) and Clemens Brentano (1778-1842) compiled a three-volume collection of German folk poetry called *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* or "The Youth's Magic Horn." Arnim and Brentano met as students at the University of Göttingen in 1801 and solidified their friendship during an excursion down the Rhine River together in 1802. This was further solidified when Arnim married Brentano's sister Bettina.

Born into an aristocratic Prussian family, Arnim's stable upper class socioeconomic status differed from Brentano's. Brentano, who lived most of his early life in Frankfurt-am-Main, had a difficult childhood and lived away from the support of his family. Despite these differences in upbringing and status, Arnim and Brentano had

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<sup>23</sup> Heinrich Heine, "Die Romantische Schule," in *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Hans Kaufmann, vol. 5 (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1972), 106-107. [Dieses Buch kann ich nicht genug rühmen; es enthält die holdseligsten Blüten des deutschen Geistes, und wer das deutsche Volk von einer liebenswürdigen Seite kennenlernen will, der lese diese Volkslieder. In diesen Liedern fühlt man den Herzschlag des deutschen Volks.]

similar visions on how disseminating a collection of folk poetry could rejuvenate German culture.<sup>24</sup>

On a trip to Vienna in 1802, Arnim remarked on the differences he perceived between the city people and rural residents, “Vienna has much beauty and much joy, I’ve come to know it in all classes of society...How terribly corrupt are the lower classes of the city dwellers, how rich in spirit and cheerfulness are those in the country!”<sup>25</sup>

From Arnim’s statement, we can see that Arnim perceived a true freedom and spirit of life in the rural peasants. This observation can be seen as a continuation of Herder’s conception of *Volk*. In fact, Arnim and Brentano used Herder’s *Alte Volksliedern* as an example on which to base *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.<sup>26</sup> Whereas Herder brought awareness to the importance of *Volk*, Arnim devised methods to spread this knowledge in order to improve German culture. At first, Arnim conceived of a German folk school that would serve as the educational center from which all German folk knowledge could be learned. He claimed:

Making the language of words and the language of music more pleasing is clearly the first point of our efforts. So, a language and singing school!...We will deliver the higher level poetry that has been lost to the people. Goethe is to be as dear to them as Emperor Octavian...One will build hostels for singers in the cities and teach them a combination of dramatic arts, there will be better musical foundations established.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Roland Hoermann, *Achim von Arnim* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 1-4.

<sup>25</sup> Reinhold Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’sche, 1894), 32. (English translation my own) [Wien hat viel Schönes und viele Freude, ich habe es in allen Ständen kennen gelernt...Wie schrecklich verderbt sind hier die unteren Klassen der Stadtbewohner, wie reich an Geist und Frohsinn die Landbewohner!]

<sup>26</sup> Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano*, 130.

<sup>27</sup> Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano*, 38. (English translation my own) [Die sprache der worte, die sprache der noten stärker und wohlgefälliger zu machen, dies ist

Even though such a school was never created, Arnim's idea underlies the teaching aspect of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The collection of folk poetry served as a "school" of knowledge that could teach people about their shared German culture. Brentano envisioned the collection to be comprehensive, comprising of various types of poems in an effort to appeal to as many people as possible:

It must hover between the romantic and the everyday, it must include spiritual songs, trade songs, working songs, songs of the times of day and year, and humorous songs without obscenity...It must be arranged so that no period of time is excluded, the better folk songs could be kept and newly written ones could be added. I am certain that it would work well.<sup>28</sup>

For Brentano, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* was never meant to be a faithful reproduction of folk poems. Rather, in conjunction with Arnim's idea of a folk school, the collection was meant to consist of poems that people could relate to, regardless of whether the poems were ancient folk poetry or newly written. To ensure that even ancient poems were accessible to modern readers, Arnim and Brentano removed archaic words and standardized differing dialects. Streamlining the poetry and uniting people remained the focus of the collection. Arnim remarked:

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klar als erster Strandpunkt unserer Bemühung anzusehen. Also eine Sprach- und Singschule!...So wollen wir die in jenen höheren Ständen verlorenen Töne der Poesie dem Volke zuführen, Göthe soll ihnen so lieb wie der Kaiser Octavianus werden...man errichtet Sängerherbergen in den Städten und verbindet und lehrt ihnen die Schaulspielkunst, es werden nun bessere musikalische, einfache Instrumente eingeführt.]

<sup>28</sup> Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano*, 132. [Es muß sehr zwischen dem Romantischen und Alltäglichen schweben, es muß geistliche, Handwerks-, Tagewerks-, Tagezeits-, Jahrzeits- und ScherzLieder ohne Zote enthalten...Es muß so eingerichtet sein, daß kein Alter davon ausgeschlossen ist, es könnten die bessern Volkslieder drinne befestigt und neue hinzugedichtet werden. Ich bin versichert, es wäre viel mit zu wirken.]

And in this it is that our *Wunderhorn* was something that did not previously exist. The people who had previously had hundreds of old songs merely as a curiosity, as symbols of another time, saw all of these songs at once associated with their own words.<sup>29</sup>

There are several reasons that compelled Arnim and Brentano to embark on the creation of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. At the end of the eighteenth century, more interest in folk songs developed in German speaking areas. In 1778, Herder's seminal collection of folk songs *Volkslieder* influenced the creation of many other folk collections, including an 1803 translation of *Minnelieder aus dem schwabischen Zeitalter* by Ludwig Tieck and an 1803 collection of Allemannic poems, *Allemannische Gedichte* by J.P. Hebel. The most famous song collection of the time was likely Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Neue Schriften* of 1803, a collection that Arnim and Brentano both admired and were inspired by.

Similar to these other collections, Arnim and Brentano were continuing a robust folk song collecting tradition in Germany, but with a different purpose. Not only would their collection focus solely on German songs (other collections had included songs from other nationalities), but the collection would also be created with a very different purpose in mind. Whereas previous collections had been created with the passive aim of preserving songs, *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* would have an active purpose of utilizing folk songs to revitalize German culture and the German people.

Even though preservation was not the original goal of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the ongoing Napoleonic Wars (1803-15) provided a pressing need to preserve a German

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<sup>29</sup> Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano*, 235. [Und darin liegt es, daß unser Wunderhorn etwas ward, was bis dahin noch nicht vorhanden. Die Menschen, die bis dahin hundert alte Lieder bloß als Merkwürdigkeit, als Sinnbilder einer anderen Zeit hatten vorüberstreichen lassen, sahen sie auf einmal mit ihren eignen Worten verbunden.]

culture that was quickly being overcome with French influence. Starting with the French Revolution in 1789, numerous war coalitions won by the French gave them control of many German-speaking territories. Specifically, the 1801 Treaty of Lunéville gave the French control of all German territories west of the Rhine.<sup>30</sup> For Arnim and Brentano, witnessing the French acquisitions of German territories furthered their need for the renewal of a German culture that was in danger of disappearing.

Just as Herder described literature and language as the bedrock of a strong German culture, Arnim said that, “[Folksongs] give the Germans a sound and tight connection...they will contribute to an allied Germany and make Germany the lightning rod of the world.”<sup>31</sup> Arnim and Brentano’s desire for folksongs to unite German territories proved to be a prevalent reason for the creation of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

Arnim expressed his views on German culture in his essay *Von Volksliedern*, written in January 1805, a few months before the first volume of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* was published. The second edition of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* included this essay showing the connection between Arnim’s cultural views and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. In *Von Volksliedern*, Arnim heralded the folksong as the key to reviving a fading German culture. Arnim wrote that current day popular songs and poetry are overrunning German culture and lowering the standards by which people enjoyed music.

So, this empty poetry has been brought down by the music itself. Creating new music has to follow the new, not because the new had so much to offer, but

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<sup>30</sup> Robert B. Asprey, *The Rise of Napoleon Bonaparte* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 406-407.

<sup>31</sup> Steig, *Achim von Arnim und Clemens Brentano*, 39. [Dies giebt den Deutschen einen Ton und eine enge Verbindug...Müssen ihnen verbündet, Deutschland der Blitzableiter der Welt werden.]



because it was required: So frivolous kinds of songs were made to teach people and these songs could never be folksongs.<sup>32</sup>

Arnim wrote that people could no longer tell the difference between good music and bad music. People were being introduced to new popular music that had no cultural value and could never contain the meaning and expression that folk songs have within them.

Arnim also said that German artistic culture was heavily affected by the artist's need to create for upper class bourgeois taste. He remarked that:

This type of disorder is the true limitation of all phenomena in theater classes and for classes of bourgeois society that has become either completely incapable of poetry, or indeterminate in their tastes.<sup>33</sup>

Arnim wrote that true art had the power to unify people. Folksongs, being a true and genuine human expression, had the power to unite people despite social class differences. Art written artificially for the tastes of others could never elicit the same reaction from people that folksongs did. Arnim's goal was to introduce people to folksongs in order to limit the interest in "empty" songs and eliminate the production of a culture solely based on upper class bourgeois taste.

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<sup>32</sup> Ludwig Achim von Arnim, "Von Volksliedern," in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, ed. Heinz Rölleke, vol. 6 of *Clemens Brentano: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Jürgen Behrens et al. (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1975), 408. [So hat diese leere Poesie uns oft von der Musik vielleicht die Musik selbst herabgezogen. Neues musste dem Neuen folgen, nicht weil die Neuen so viel Neues geben konnten, sondern weil so viel verlangt wurde: so war einmal einer leichtfertigen Art von Liedern zum Volke Bahn gemacht, die nie Volkslieder werden konnten.]

<sup>33</sup> Arnim, "Von Volksliedern," 411. [Dieser Art von wahrer Störung ist die Beschränkung aller Theatererscheinungen in Klassen und für Klassen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, die entweder ganz unfähig der Poesie, oder unbestimmt in ihrem Geschmacke geworden.]

For Arnim, artists had an important job to represent the community they belonged to. Creating meaningful contributions to art created a living, vibrant community. Arnim saw himself and Brentano as editors and artists and considered *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* their artistic contribution to the community.<sup>34</sup>

Even though Arnim and Brentano emphasized the artistic component of their project, some reviewers such as Jacob Grimm, J.D. Falk and Friedrich Schlegel found fault with the way Arnim and Brentano had changed some of the folk poems, sometimes rewriting portions to more clearly express the meaning of the folk poems.<sup>35</sup> Despite these criticisms, the collection gained popularity. Notably, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote what was arguably one of the most influential reviews of *Des Knaben*

*Wunderhorn*:

...But most appropriate of all would be to have this volume on the piano of amateur or professional musicians, for them to either match these song texts with familiar, traditional melodies as they deserve, or to adapt them suitably to other tunes – or, God willing, to be inspired by these lyrics into composing new, impressive melodies...If these songs were then to be gradually transmitted in their own stylistic and melodic idiom from ear to ear, from mouth to mouth, they would, in time, return enlivened and exalted to the populace, whence they had originally – in a sense – emerged and then we could say that the little volume had fulfilled its mission and could once more, as a written document, disappear from the scene, since it would have been assimilated into the nation's life and culture.<sup>36</sup>

Little did Goethe know that 80 years later, Gustav Mahler would do exactly as he had suggested. Not only would Mahler compose music to selected poems from *Des*

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<sup>34</sup> Arnim, *Von Volksliedern*, 423.

<sup>35</sup> Oscar Fambach, ed., *Der Romantische Rückfall in der Kritik der Zeit* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag Berlin, 1963), 1-48.

<sup>36</sup> As tran. in Roland Hoermann, *Achim von Arnim* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), 38-39. Originally published in *Jenaer Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*, 3:1; No. 18/19, January 21-22, 1806, p. 137.

*Knaben Wunderhorn*, but also the collection of folk poems would be part of several of his symphonies. Just as Arnim and Brentano found a way to bring traditional German folk poetry to contemporary audiences, so to would Mahler find a delicate balance between a tradition that celebrated the *Volk* and a new tradition that celebrated the modernization of antiquity.

**PART TWO: *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and 1900.**

### Chapter Three Fin-de-siècle Vienna

Mahler lived in Vienna from 1875-1883 and again in 1897-1907. His first stay in Vienna from 1875 to 1883 was as a student at the University of Vienna. In 1897 he returned to Vienna to assume the position of head conductor of the Vienna Court Opera. Natalie Bauer-Lechner referred to Vienna as Mahler's "spiritual home" suggesting that Vienna played an important role in Mahler's life.<sup>37</sup> It is appropriate to consider fin-de-siècle Vienna as a backdrop to the publication and reception of the *Wunderhorn* songs (1887-1901) because of Mahler's long extended stays in Vienna and his participation in Vienna's cultural and artistic life.

At the time of Mahler's appointment as head conductor of Vienna's Court Opera in 1897, Karl Lueger had been elected as mayor of Vienna. Lueger led the Christian Social Party that emerged in 1891 as a conservative party dominated by the middle and upper class bourgeois. The Christian Social Party and Lueger were emblematic of old Viennese tradition. One newspaper even compared the highly celebrated Viennese composer Johann Strauss and Lueger saying that "they embody the light and shadow of the Viennese *Volk* character."<sup>38</sup> Other characteristics that the party became known for were Catholicism, anti-Semitism and anti-Marxism.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 80.

<sup>38</sup> As translated and quoted in Camille Crittenden, *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 97.

<sup>39</sup> John W. Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 26.

Between 1897 and 1905, the Christian Social Party undertook municipal improvements for the city, including a street railcar system, a gas works system and water treatment facility. The party held up these improvements as evidence of their success. However, their reluctance to create long lasting social programs for the lower middle class and provide aid to the lower strata of society resulted in a large portion of the population who were dissatisfied with the party.<sup>40</sup> Even though numerous municipal improvements modernized the city, the party still upheld the traditional side of Vienna. The traditional spirit of *Volk*, for Lueger, rested in the people who were born in Vienna and therefore had the right to control the city:

Those [recent immigrants] who are out in the street marching and protesting are not the masters of Vienna, but rather those who pay the direct taxes, those who are born here, who have property in Vienna and love the city with all their heart – they are the ones who have a voice in its affairs.<sup>41</sup>

Lueger said this about Vienna in 1904, where in 1890 just under 35 percent of the population had been born in Vienna. Over half of Vienna's population growth from 600,000 in 1857 to 1,300,000 in 1890 came from immigrants moving into the city.<sup>42</sup> This growth resulted in a melting pot of ethnicities and different religions that contributed to the cosmopolitan allure of the city. But for some, like Lueger, this modern immigration threatened the city's traditional social structure. Along with the Christian Social Party's desire to modernize some aspects of the city, the party had an "uneasy balancing of

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<sup>40</sup> Edward Timms, "Images of the City: Vienna, Prague and the Intellectual Avant-Garde," in *Decadence and Innovation: Austro-Hungarian Life and Art at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Robert B. Pynsent (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989), 1-13.

<sup>41</sup> As cited and translated in Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna*, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Leon Botstein, "Gustav Mahler's Vienna," in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. Donald Mitchell & Andrew Nicholson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

traditionalism and modernism that paralleled many similar efforts at cultural harmonization between Vienna's single imagined past and its many anticipated futures."<sup>43</sup>

Many people in fin-de-siècle Vienna observed this uneasy balancing of traditionalism and modernism. The traditional social structure that the Christian Social Party relied on was a mask for serious problems, including poverty and housing shortages magnified by the large population growth.<sup>44</sup> Feelings of desperation and despair manifested themselves in the suicides of many Austrian intellectuals between 1860 and 1938.<sup>45</sup> Robert Musil, in his allegorical novel about fin-de-siècle Vienna, *The Man Without Qualities* (1930-1942), coined the name "Kakania" for Vienna. "Kakania" served as a combination of the words *kaiserlich* and *königlich* (imperial and royal), but also aligned with a German slang word for excrement, reflecting the fin-de-siècle attitude that Vienna was in the midst of decay and had no real future before it.<sup>46</sup>

However for some, the progress of modernity carried with it a sense of hope. Even though times were uncertain, the clash between tradition and modernity offered a chance for creation and new beginnings. As writer Hermann Bahr remarked in his 1890 essay "Die Moderne":

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<sup>43</sup> Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna*, 12.

<sup>44</sup> Allen Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 50.

<sup>45</sup> William M. Johnston, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), 174-180.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1995), 32.

It may be that we are at the end, the death of the exhausted man, and these are just the last spasms. It may be that we are at the beginning, at the birth of a new humanity, and these are only the avalanches of spring. We rise into the future or we fall, plunging into darkness and destruction – but staying here is not an option. Out of sorrow will come the salvation and grace of desperation, which we will meet after this terrible darkness and the art will come to the people – in this resurrection, glorious and blessed is the faith of modernity.<sup>47</sup>

Although not happy with the status quo, some artists, writers and musicians of fin-de-siècle Vienna composed a new reality for themselves in their work. The Vienna Secession was one example of such a group. By highlighting elements of the society that they saw, they attempted to show inherent problems with society and how an emotional and spiritual side of human nature had died out. Many viewed the artificiality of traditional aristocracy as a sign of a backward society that was ready for change and looked at the crisis of fin-de-siècle Vienna as an opportunity to break away from tradition and, in the hopeful spirit of Bahr, create a new humanity.

In 1897, two artistic groups, The Academy of Fine Arts and the *Künstlerhausgenossenschaft*, dominated the visual arts scene in Vienna. The *Künstlerhaus* was a private organization that owned the only exhibition hall in Vienna. For this reason, and because most established visual artists belonged to the group, the *Künstlerhaus* had supreme control over public taste, policies about art, and which artists

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<sup>47</sup> Donald G. Daviau, *Hermann Bahr* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 40-45. [Es kann sein, dass wir am Ende sind, am Tode der erschöpften Menschheit, und das sind nur die letzten Krämpfe. Es kann sein, dass wir am Anfange sind, an der Geburt einer neuen Menschheit, und das sind nur die Lawinen des Frühlings. Wir steigen ins Göttliche oder wir stürzen, stürzen in Nacht und Vernichtung – aber Bleiben ist keines. Dass aus dem Leide das Heil kommen wird und die Gnade aus der Verzweiflung, dass es tagen wird nach dieser entsetzlichen Finsternis und dass die Kunst einkehren wird bei den Menschen – an diese Auferstehung, glorreich und selig, das ist der Glaube der Moderne.]



received exhibits.<sup>48</sup> In 1897, artist Gustav Klimt formed the *Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs* (Association of Austrian Fine Artists) with a group of eighteen other artists. These artists had formally been members of the *Künstlerhaus*, but had become dissatisfied with the cooperative's conservative policies and the limited opportunities available to them. These artists, led by Klimt, came to be known as the Vienna Secession and were the so-called "sons revolting against their fathers" because of their desire to break with the constraints of traditional artistic practice.<sup>49</sup> The phrase "sons revolting against their fathers" also gains a political meaning when we consider Kurt Lueger's description of the youth of his ruling bourgeois party as "sons who are determined to take up the inheritance of their fathers."<sup>50</sup> In contrast to the bourgeois youth who were expected to follow the example of their fathers, the members of the Vienna Secession, broke away from their teachers or "fathers" and began a new course.

The writings and art of the Vienna Secession did not establish a single artistic style, but instead celebrated their artistic freedom and diversity. This is shown by the variety of artwork that members of the Vienna Secession produced.<sup>51</sup> The Vienna Secession's motto, "Der Zeit ihre Kunst – der Kunst ihre Freiheit" (To the Age its Art, To

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<sup>48</sup> Peter Vergo, *Art in Vienna 1898-1918: Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele, and Their Contemporaries* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1981), 18-20.

<sup>49</sup> Barbara Steffen, "Vienna 1900: A Total Work of Art," in *Vienna 1900: Klimt, Schiele, and Their Times, A Total Work of Art*, ed. Barbara Steffen (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 9-21.

<sup>50</sup> Boyer, *Culture and Political Crisis in Vienna*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Compare, for example, expressionist paintings by Richard Gerstl and modernist paintings such as *Death and Life* and *Beethoven Frieze* by Gustav Klimt in Christian Brandstätter, *Vienna 1900 and the Heroes of Modernism* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2006), 122-123, 42-43.

Art its Freedom) celebrated the freedom they found in art. Impressionists, naturalists, modernists, graphic artists, architects and sculptors all found a place in the Vienna Secession. Famous artists associated with the Vienna Secession include Otto Wagner, Joseph Maria Olbrich, and Josef Hoffmann. The Secession's dedication to the Wagnerian idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total artwork, was the basis of this inclusionary environment and aimed to eliminate the division between "high" and "low" art.<sup>52</sup>

Even the group's chief publication, *Ver Sacrum*, reflected the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal by including art, poems, and stories. One issue consisted of eleven Lieder by different composers accompanied by various works of art.<sup>53</sup> Along with the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal of combining a multitude of styles and mediums, the group also believed that the people who experienced the artwork were a part of the artistic experience. This concern for the public's interaction with art can be seen in the first issue of *Ver Sacrum* where a list of the group's statutes appeared. The first statute read that: "The Association of Austrian Artists has set itself the task of promoting purely artistic interests, especially raising the artistic sense in Austria"<sup>54</sup> As Arnim and Brentano felt an artistic responsibility towards rejuvenating German culture, so too did the members of the Vienna Secession articulate their responsibility to change the public's perception of art. In a sense, the members of the Vienna Secession wanted to change a portion of their culture, one they perceived as being outdated and unable to grow with the modern times.

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<sup>52</sup> Beate Susanne Wehr, "The Vienna Secession," in *Vienna 1900: Klimt, Schiele, and Their Times, A Total Work of Art*, ed. Barbara Steffen (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2010), 25-31.

<sup>53</sup> "Eilf Lieder," *Ver Sacrum*, December 1901, Issue 24.

<sup>54</sup> "Mittheilungen der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs," *Ver Sacrum*, January 1898, 27.

Mahler became acquainted with the Vienna Secession through his wife Alma whose stepfather, the artist Carl Moll (1861-1945), was a founding member. Mahler would later collaborate with Secession artist Alfred Roller in creating set designs for Wagner's operas that celebrated the *Gesamtkunstwerk* ideal, something the Vienna Secession artists were continually trying to cultivate with their artwork.

Surely one of the most famous events illustrating the Vienna Secession's *Gesamtkunstwerk* was their 1902 "Beethoven Exhibition." The exhibition occurred in the Vienna Secession's House of Secession, which was built in 1897 as an alternate exhibit space to the *Künstlerhaus*. The *Künstlerhaus*, up until 1897, had been the only exhibit space in Vienna. The "Beethoven Exhibition" centered on a statue of Beethoven by Max Klinger and featured other works of art with Beethoven as their subject, most notably Klimt's Beethoven frieze and Mahler conducting his brass arrangement of the finale of Beethoven's Ninth. This exhibition, in all its pomp and circumstance, attempted to use traditional stylistic forms and techniques in the modern exhibition space of the House of the Secession.<sup>55</sup> The interior white temple-like walls contrasted sharply with other nineteenth century Viennese museums that were built to resemble palaces. Ironically, Klimt had been commissioned to help ornament one of those museums, the Museum of Art History. However, instead of a decadent palace, the House of the Secession resembled a pagan temple that featured an intentionally barren space in celebration of the art exhibited within its walls.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Marian Bisanz-Prakken, "The Secession," in *Vienna 1900 and the Heroes of Modernism*, ed. Christian Brandstätter (New York: Vendome Press, 2006), 49-66.

<sup>56</sup> Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 217-219.

Fin-de-siècle in Vienna was a time of cultural upheaval that was similar to the cultural upheaval Arnim and Brentano experienced during the publication of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Mahler, writing his *Wunderhorn* songs in the years leading up to the turn of the century joined a league of artists, writers and philosophers who attempted to create artwork and writings that looked to the future and critiqued the present situation. Eduard Hanslick, in the *Neue Freie Press*, saw Mahler as a musical extension of the artistic Vienna Secession in his comments about Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs:

One cannot deny the contradiction between the idea of folksong and this artistic over-rich orchestration. But Mahler has executed this daring piece with exceptional sensitivity and masterly technique. Now, at the beginning of the new century, it is worthwhile repeating the novelties of the musical 'Secession' (Mahler, Richard Strauss, Hugo Wolf and so on); it is highly probable that the future belongs to them.<sup>57</sup>

Hanslick's association of Mahler with the Secession is significant. This association shows the novelty of the *Wunderhorn* songs and that the distinct blend of tradition and modernity was realized in the songs. Like the artists in the Vienna Secession, Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs differed from traditional German lieder, but still used traditional elements, like folk song, to guide the songs' creation.

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<sup>57</sup> As translated and cited in Nicolas Powell, "Mahler and the Vienna School," in *The Sacred Spring* (London: Studio Vista, 1974), 206-212. Originally published in Eduard Hanslick, *Aus neuer und neuester Zeit* (Berlin: Allgemeiner verein für Deutsche Literatur, 1900), 77.

The artists of the Vienna Secession were not opposed to using traditional elements, but instead, used them in a way that was meant to make modern man reconsider such traditional elements. One of the most famous examples of this practice is Klimt's *Nuda Veritas* (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: *Nuda Veritas* by Gustav Klimt**



*Nuda Veritas* appeared in the third issue of *Ver Sacrum* in an article about symbolism in art.<sup>58</sup> In *Nuda Veritas*, or “The Naked Truth,” the ancient Greek goddess Athena appears holding a mirror. The traditional goddess of wisdom is accompanied by a quote “Truth is fire and to speak the truth is to shine and burn.”<sup>59</sup> Athena, in this case,

<sup>58</sup> “Symbolistik vor Hundert Jahren”, *Ver Sacrum*, 1898, Heft 3, 12.

<sup>59</sup> “Symbolistik vor Hundert Jahren”, *Ver Sacrum*, 1898, Heft 3, 12. [Wahrheit ist Feuer und Wahrheit Reden Heisst Leuchten und Brennen.]

is a traditional symbol whose mirror reflects the truth of the current state of the modern man who faces it.<sup>60</sup>

Mahler, in his own way, held up an audio musical mirror for modern man to look upon himself. In using folk-inspired songs to create remembrances of the past, he painted a traditional landscape for the modern music hearer. In doing this, he was not unlike the artists of the Vienna Secession who employed traditional symbols in an attempt to engage modern man in thinking about how the past and his current modernity joined together.

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<sup>60</sup> Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture*, 219-222.

## Chapter Four Mahler and *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*

Unsurprisingly, *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* became a resource for many composers, but for none did *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* have quite the mystical appeal that it did for composer Gustav Mahler.<sup>61</sup> All together, Mahler created songs from 24 poems found in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Nine of the *Wunderhorn* songs were first published in 1892 as volumes two and three of a three-volume collection for voice and piano that publishers entitled *Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit*. Twelve additional *Wunderhorn* songs were published in 1899 as a collection titled *Humoresken* that would later become known as *Songs from Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. The song “Das himmlische Leben” was not included in any of these publications, but would later become the finale of Mahler’s Fourth Symphony. After 1901, “Urlicht” and “Es sungen drei Engel” were removed from the *Humoresken* collection and replaced with “Revelge” and “Der Tamboursg’sell.” Mahler orchestrated fifteen of the songs and other musicians orchestrated the remaining nine (see Table 1).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> For a discussion and list of some composers who used *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* see Eric Sams, “Notes on a Magic Horn,” *The Musical Times* 115 (1974): 559.

<sup>62</sup> Table 1 compiled from Christopher Lewis, “Gustav Mahler: Romantic Culmination,” in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rufus Hallmark (New York: Shirmer Books, 1996), 218-249 and Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), 140-143.

**Table 1: Chronology of *Wunderhorn* Songs**

Title	Voice & Piano Composition	Orchestral Composition Date	Publication Date	Premiere Date & Place
Um schlimme Kinder artig zu machen	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	Munich 1899-1900 season
Ich ging mit Lust durch einen grünen Wald	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	December 13, 1907 / Stuttgart
Aus! Aus!	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	April 29, 1892 / Hamburg
Starke Einbildungskraft	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	November 13, 1907 / Stuttgart
Zu Strassburg auf der Schanz	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	November 1906 / Helsinki
Ablösung im Sommer	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	February 14, 1907 / Berlin
Scheiden und Meiden	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	November 3, 1889 / Budapest
Nicht wiedersehen!	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	April 29, 1892 / Hamburg
Selbstgefühl	1887-90?	Orchestrated by others	1892	February 15, 1900 / Vienna
Der Schildwache Nachtlied	January 28, 1892	April 26, 1892	1899	December 12, 1892 / Berlin
Verlor'ne Müh	February 1, 1892	April 26, 1892	1899	December 12, 1892 / Berlin
Trost im Unglück	February 22, 1892	April 26, 1892	1899	October 27, 1893 / Hamburg
Wer hat des Liedlein erdacht?	February 6, 1892	April 26, 1892	1899	October 27, 1893 / Hamburg
Das Irdische Leben	1892-1893	Unknown	1899	January 14, 1900 / Vienna
Des Antonius von Padua Fischpredigt	July 8, 1893	August 1, 1893	1899	January 29, 1905 / Vienna
Rheinlegendchen	August 9, 1893	August 10, 1893	1899	October 27, 1893 / Hamburg
Lied des Verfolgten im Turm	July 1898	Unknown	1899	January 29, 1905 / Vienna
Wo die schönen Trompeten blasen	July 1898	Unknown	1899	January 14, 1900 / Vienna
Lob des hohen Verstandes	June 1896	Unknown	1899	February 3, 1905 / Vienna
Es sungen drei Engel	1895	Fifth Mvmt of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Symphony 1896	1899-1900	June 9, 1902 / Krefeld
Urlicht	1893	July 19, 1893	1899-1900	December 13, 1895
Das himmlische Leben	February 10, 1892	March 12, 1892	1899-1900	October 27, 1893 / Hamburg
Revelge	1899	July 1899	1905	January 29, 1905 / Vienna
Der Tamboursg'sell	1901	August 1901	1905	January 29, 1905 / Vienna



Mahler's first reported introduction to *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* occurred in the fall of 1887. He found the anthology at the home of Carl Maria von Weber's family while he was completing an unfinished comic opera of Weber's entitled *Die drei Pintos*.<sup>63</sup> However, Mahler knew about at least one song from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* before 1887, because he used text directly from the collection in his song "Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht," the first song of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, written sometime between 1883 and 1885.<sup>64</sup> While this leads us to believe that Mahler knew about *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* prior to 1887, it is his "rediscovery" of the anthology at the Weber household that spurred him to use its text for a collection of songs.

Regardless of when Mahler became acquainted with *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the collection's influence on his compositions and life is undeniable. Five of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs were later incorporated as movements into his first four symphonies.<sup>65</sup> Mahler's use of his *Wunderhorn* songs in his symphonies created a connected period in Mahler's life that Donald Mitchell labeled as "The Wunderhorn Years" spanning from 1880-1900. Such a concentrated study serves to underscore the importance that *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* had for this particular period in Mahler's life. Mahler's work on

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<sup>63</sup> Henry-Louis de La Grange, *Mahler: Volume One* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1973), 166-171.

<sup>64</sup> For a comparison of the poem and song text see Jens Malte Fischer, *Gustav Mahler*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 127.

<sup>65</sup> Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years*, 32. The songs are "Des Anthonius von Padua Fischpredigt," (Second Symphony, third movement) "Urlicht," (Second Symphony, fourth movement) "Das himmlische Leben," (Fourth Symphony, fourth movement) "Ablösung im Sommer," (Third Symphony, third movement) and "Es sungen drei Engel" (Third Symphony, fifth movement).

*Die drei Pintos* and his subsequent discovery (or re-discovery) of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* broke open a source of inspiration for Mahler. In the three years prior to Mahler's association with the anthology he had composed very little.<sup>66</sup> Now between 1887 and 1900, with the inspiration garnered from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, Mahler composed songs and symphonies at a continual pace.<sup>67</sup> It is easy to see *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* as the inspiration not only for Mahler's song compositions, but as the impetus for his symphonic compositions as well.

Mahler was aware that he was not the first composer to use texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. However, he defended his *Wunderhorn* songs as being different from other composers' adaptations. Mahler wrote in 1905:

To the best of my knowledge only some of the individual songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* have been set to music. So my situation is really rather different: up to the age of forty I took the words for my songs...exclusively from that collection...Another difference is that I have devoted myself heart and soul to that poetry...in full awareness of its character and tone. And there can be no doubt that it is I, who for many years was mocked for that choice of mine, who did, after all, set the fashion going. But it certainly is comical, in the circumstances, that precisely my settings of these songs have still not been performed, down to this day, whereas my imitators are already very famous and their songs frequently sung.<sup>68</sup>

Later on in this letter, Mahler refers specifically to Theodor Streicher (1874-1940), a composer whose settings of thirty songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* had been published in 1903. An anecdote about a visit from Streicher related by Alma

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<sup>66</sup> La Grange, *Gustav Mahler: Volume One*, 171.

<sup>67</sup> See the appendix for a chronology of Mahler's song compositions, Symphony No. 1 was composed 1884-1888, Symphony No.2 1888-1894, Symphony No.3 1893-1896, and Symphony No.4 1899-1900.

<sup>68</sup> Knud Martner, ed., *Selected Letters of Gustav Mahler*, trans. Eithne Wilkins, Ernst Kaiser and Bill Hopkins (London: Faber, 1979), 284.

Mahler reveals the dislike Mahler had for these songs. The anecdote relates that when Streicher played his *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* songs for Mahler, Mahler did not respond, but stayed silent the entire time.<sup>69</sup> It is difficult to discern from Mahler's letter if his defensive tone is in response to Streicher's use of the same material or a reflection of Mahler's true feelings about Streicher's songs. Nevertheless, Mahler considered his *Wunderhorn* songs to be different from others who had composed songs from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.<sup>70</sup>

*Des Knaben Wunderhorn* provides the key source of folk inspiration for Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs. As detailed in Chapter 2, folk poems from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* carry with them a folk culture that Arnim and Brentano attempted to revive. Mahler's use of this folk source as the text for his songs immediately brings folk character to his song settings. An example of how Mahler adapted his *Wunderhorn* song settings for contemporary audiences is his manipulation of some of the *Wunderhorn* poem texts. This will be further discussed in the song example "Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz" in the latter part of this chapter where Mahler's deletion of the last two stanzas of the poem results in changing a soldier's character.

Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs are influenced by folk music, as well as folk poetry. Only three songs, "Trost im Unglück", "Lob des hohen Verstandes", and "Das himmlische Leben" directly quote known folk songs, but indicate Mahler's familiarity

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<sup>69</sup> Alma Mahler, *Gustav Mahler: Memories and Letters*, ed. Donald Mitchell, trans. Basil Creighton (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 79-80.

<sup>70</sup> Other composers who composed *Wunderhorn* settings include Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn, Johannes Brahms, Alexander Zemlinsky, Arnim Knab and Friedrich Silcher.

with folk songs.<sup>71</sup> More commonly, Mahler used other folk song characteristics such as musical folk imagery and diatonic melodies to reference folk songs, while integrating these elements into an art song for contemporary audiences. These folk elements were combined with Mahler's more contemporary compositional techniques such as the orchestration of his songs and advanced non-folk like harmonies.

More generally, Mahler recognized the influence folk songs had on his music. To Bauer-Lechner he remarked that "The Bohemian music of my childhood home has found its way into many of my compositions...The underlying national element there can be heard, in its most crude and basic form, in the tootling of the Bohemian pipers."<sup>72</sup>

Mahler also discussed the use of folk song in music and the importance of music in childhood during an interview with the American musical magazine *The Etude*. In the interview, Mahler remarked that music a child hears has an enormous impact on the music that he creates later on.<sup>73</sup> Some critics negatively commented on Mahler's use of folk characteristics.

Critic Paul Schuch negatively characterized Mahler's use of folk elements as predictable when he said:

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<sup>71</sup> Finson discusses the quotations from "Trost im Unglück" and "Lob des hohen Verstandes" and attributes the discovery of these quotations to Egon Pamer and Henry Louis de La Grange. Finson himself sees another folk song quotation in "Das himmlische Leben" in Jon W. Finson, "The Reception of Gustav Mahler's *Wunderhorn* Lieder," *The Journal of Musicology* 5 (1997): 111.

<sup>72</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 33.

<sup>73</sup> Gustav Mahler, "The Influence of the Folk-Song on German Musical Art," *The Etude*, May 1911, 301-302.

His “Songs for One Voice and Orchestra” have the stamp of originality, and yet one of the ideas is always pursued as if it were created according to a tested recipe, well-considered and finely honed. His songs struck me as...brilliant refinement in place of naïve feelings and intuitive artistic creation. The construction of the individual songs, their *well calculated climaxes* and *stereotypical effects at the ends of strophes*, and above all their quite *incredibly conceived sonorities* lead to these observations and conclusions.<sup>74</sup>

Mahler admired the use of simple folk songs, especially in the music of Beethoven and Haydn. His remarks about their use of folk music could likely refer to his own use of folk inspired elements in his works:

The master who has the skill to develop a great musical work certainly possesses the ability to evolve melodies. When he takes a folk theme as the subject of one of his master-works, it is for the purpose of elaborating and beautifying it as a lapidary might take an unpolished diamond, and by his skill bring out the scintillating and kaleidoscopic beauties of the stone. After all, the handling of the theme is even more significant than the evolution of the theme.<sup>75</sup>

To Mahler, his use of folk elements in his music involved more than the simple borrowing of a melody. His ability to integrate the folk elements into a sophisticated art song gave the song new meaning. This transformation, shown by Mahler’s orchestration and manipulation of harmonies and text, will be further analyzed in the latter part of this chapter in the songs “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” and “Der Tambour’sell.”

Folk music played an important role in fin-de-siècle Vienna. On one hand, recent immigrants to Vienna used folk music as an element that they could identify with and use

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<sup>74</sup> Paul Schuch, “Die 41. Versammlung des ‘Allgemeinen deutschen Musikvereins’ in Graz,” *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* XXXVI, no.24 (June 15, 1905), p. 471 as quoted and translated in Jon Finson, “The Reception of Gustav Mahler’s Wunderhorn Lieder,” *The Journal of Musicology* 5 (1997): 106. Emphasis my own.

<sup>75</sup> Mahler, “The Influence of the Folk-Song on German Musical Art,” 301.

to create their own identity in a new country. For immigrants, the distinctive national element of Viennese folk music helped further their assimilation into Austrian culture.<sup>76</sup> For Austrians, folk music remained one of the key methods by which to identify Austrian culture. This was significant in the midst of a cosmopolitan city that was becoming increasingly less and less representative of traditional Austrian culture. Thus, folk music had a contradictory and dual purpose.<sup>77</sup> Folk music helped to preserve the Austrian culture of the past and create an identity for the immigrants that would help shape the future of Vienna.

Audiences and critics regarded the use of folk elements in Mahler's music very differently. For some critics, Mahler's use of folk elements appeared to be naïve, trivial and artificial. Music critic Hans Geisler remarked about Mahler's Fourth Symphony (the *Wunderhorn* song "Das himmlische Leben" is the fourth movement) that the material was, "supremely simple, often the motives strike one as quite childlike, not to say trivial."<sup>78</sup>

The changing concert audience in Vienna also played a role in the interpretation of Mahler's music. In the years leading up to the turn of the century, Vienna's concert audience, like its government, changed dramatically. The size of audiences grew in

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<sup>76</sup> Camille Crittenden, "Austria Personified: Strauss and the Search for Viennese Identity," in *Johann Strauss and Vienna: Operetta and the Politics of Popular Culture*, Camille Crittenden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 86-87.

<sup>77</sup> Camille Crittenden, "Austria Personified: Strauss and the Search for Viennese Identity," 86-87.

<sup>78</sup> Heinrich Geisler, *Neue musikalische Presse* 11 (19 Jan. 1902), 37 as quoted and translated in K.M. Knittel, *Seeing Mahler: Music and the Language of Anti-Semitism in Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010), 97.

response to the emerging population of Vienna and included more of the middle class population, changing the perceptions and expectations of the concert-going audience.

For some, attending orchestra concerts helped them to identify with the upper class and show that they shared similar interests. For others, practicing and becoming familiar with music was an act of assimilation into a new culture. As Leon Botstein sums up:

...Music could obliterate or rather camouflage the crucial social distinctions in a culture and serve to solidify the solidarity of a cohesive group. Music's opacity, its seemingly unbridgeable distance from nature; its ability to denote and describe precisely; its contrast with reason as expressed in daily language were aspects of a music's lure to those in search of cosmopolitanism in a political climate which underscored natural and social differences. Both for the connoisseur and for the dilettante, the playing of music masked the accents of speech, the dialect of one's past, and the level of cultivation and status so evident in one's manner and being.<sup>79</sup>

Amateur playing as well as music clubs and societies furthered the accessibility to music in fin-de-siècle Vienna. More people used traditional classical music as a tool to further familiarize themselves with the music culture. The audience treated anything that threatened this new literacy, such as music that was not immediately understandable, harshly.<sup>80</sup>

Given the predisposition for traditional classical music of the Viennese concert going audiences, it is interesting to think about how a middle class concert audience interpreted Mahler's use of folk music. Even though some folk music was appreciated and even incorporated as popular music, the folk music had to be clear and straightforward, helping people create an identity and connection to the place, Vienna,

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<sup>79</sup> Leon Botstein, "Music and its Public Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870-1914" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 75.

<sup>80</sup> Botstein, "Music and its Public Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 73.

which they were assimilating into. Folk music heard in an orchestra hall to an audience assimilating both in nationality and class must have seemed out of place. The *Wunderhorn* songs, with their precarious balance between pure folk poetry and modern sophistication left the new audience of fin-de-siècle Vienna unsure of the *Wunderhorn* songs' true place in a traditional musical repertoire.

Part of the dilemma for the concert going audience must have been the orchestration of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs. Although he originally composed (or at the very least sketched) the songs for voice and piano, Mahler orchestrated at least 15 of the *Wunderhorn* songs.<sup>81</sup> Instrumental indications in early sketches of the *Wunderhorn* songs lead us to believe that from the very beginning, Mahler conceived the songs with orchestration in mind.<sup>82</sup> Orchestrating the *Wunderhorn* songs had quite an effect on the expectations of Mahler's listeners. Music critic Ludwig Karpath remarked:

The fact that the songs have orchestral accompaniment, is probably a result of Mahler's orchestration technique, the piano is no longer sufficient to express the many moods that dominate in the composition, and the orchestra probably has more opportunity to distribute light and shade properly. Mahler shows us these new songs from this new angle. Mahler stands before us an accomplished technician, who, clarified in his perception, gives these songs more melody and beauty. To my knowledge, he has been the first to capture the heart of the compelling beauty of "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" and consequently, has set to music an extensive number of these flowers of German poetry...All in all, the new songs by Mahler present in every respect a fully matured master. The orchestral accompaniment with its harmonic and instrumental characteristics is incredibly distinctive and appealing. Nevertheless, orchestral songs are unusual.

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<sup>81</sup> Two songs are known exceptions and were likely written for orchestra from the beginning for use in a symphony, see Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years*, 252-253.

<sup>82</sup> Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler: The Wunderhorn Years*, 130-148.



Only where the specific nature of a composer is able to emerge should this unusual means be utilized.<sup>83</sup>

Orchestrating the *Wunderhorn* songs had the effect of changing the performance location of the lieder from a private, intimate chamber hall to a public orchestra hall. What was once meant to occupy a small space, now occupied the orchestra hall. Thus, not only did the *Wunderhorn* songs have to compete with a changing audiences' expectations, the songs also had to express themselves in a venue that magnified the tensions between sophisticated orchestration and naïve folk poetry that critics and academics have found to exist in Mahler's songs. As music critic Richard Aldrich expressed about Mahler's work:

There are curious contradictions in Mahler's style as a composer. He is intimately familiar with all the modern resources of musical expression, with the refinements of orchestral technique as well as with the most daring of modern harmonic combinations and the manipulation of thematic material. With this goes an unmistakable predilection for the naïve, the folk-tune, the simplicity and sometimes the bareness of the archaic...the whole work is, in a certain way, an expression of the time and place and atmosphere to which the verses take us back...<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ludwig Karpath, "Wien, Mitte Februar. [Novitätenschau.]," *Signale für die Musikalische Welt*, v.63, 1905, 283-285. English translation my own: [Daß sie Mahler mit einer Orchesterbegleitung versehen, ist wohl auf seinen Makartschen Farbenn zurückzuführen; das Klavier genügt ihm nicht mehr, um die mannigfaltigen Stimmungen auszudrücken, von denen er bei der Komposition beherrscht gewesen sein mag, und dann bietet das Orchester auch wohl mehr Gelegenheit, Licht und Schatten richtig zu verteilen. Die neuen Lieder Mahlers zeigen uns diesen von einer ganz neuen Seite. Abgeklärt in seinem Empfinden, mehr dem Melodisch-Schönen als dem Bizzar-Extravaganten zugeneigt, ein vollendeter Techniker, so steht Mahler jetzt vor uns da. Er ist meines Wissens der Erste gewesen, dem die herz bezwingende Schönheit von "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" aufgegangen und der mithin eine sehr ausgiebige Menge dieser Blüten deutscher Poesie vertont hat...Alles in allem präsentieren sich die neuen Lieder von Mahler als Emanationen eines in jeder Hinsicht voll herangereiften Meisters. Die orchestrale Begleitung mit allen ihren harmonischen und instrumentalen Eigenheiten ist ungemein charakteristisch und anziehend. Gleichwohl ist Orchesterliedern im allgemeinen nicht das Wort zu reden. Bloß wo die bestimmte Eigenart eines Komponisten anders nicht hervortreten vermag, darf von diesem ungewohnten Mittel Gebrauch gemacht werden.]

It is evident from critics that the responses to these tensions in Mahler's music were confused, not outright negative. Mahler indulged in tradition in using folk poems from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. However, he brought them into a modern space resulting in a puzzling balance between tradition and modernism. The *Wunderhorn* songs occupied a space between a common folk culture that had been fearlessly promoted in Arnim and Brentano's age and a modern culture struggling to transform society. This process of using traditional methods in a modern way creates an underlying tension that is both fascinating and beautiful and will be explored musically in the next section of the chapter through two of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs.

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<sup>84</sup> Richard Aldrich, "Gustav Mahler – His Personality and His New Symphony," *New York Times*, November 6, 1904, SMA4.

## Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz

**Der Schweizer**  
Des Knaben Wunderhorn<sup>85</sup>

Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz  
Da ging mein Trauern an,  
Das Alphorn hört ich drüben wohl anstimmen,  
Ins Vaterland muß ich hinüber schwimmen,  
Das ging nicht an

Eine Stunde in der Nacht  
Sie haben mich gebracht.  
Sie führten mich gleich vor  
    Des Hauptmanns Haus  
Ach Gott, sie fischten mich im Strome auf,  
Mit mir ist's aus.

Früh Morgens um zehn Uhr  
Stellt man mich vor das Regiment;  
Ich soll da bitten um Pardon,  
Und ich bekomm doch meinen Lohn,  
Das weiß ich schon.

Ihr Brüder allzumal,  
Heut seht ihr mich zum letztenmal;

Der Hirtenbub ist doch nur Schuld daran,  
Das Alphorn hat mir solches angethan,

Das klag ich an.

[Ihr Brüder alle drei,  
Was ich euch bitt, erschießt mich gleich;  
Verschont mein junges Leben nicht,  
Schießt zu, auf dass das Blut 'raus spritzt,  
Das bitt ich Euch.]

[O Himmelskönig Herr!  
Nimm du meine arme Seele dahin,  
Nimm sie zu dir in den Himmel ein,  
Laß sie ewig bei dir sein,  
Und vergiß nicht mein.]<sup>86</sup>

**Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz**  
As modified by Gustav Mahler

Zu Strassburg auf der Schanz',  
Da ging mein Trauern an!  
Das Alphorn hört' ich drüben wohl anstimmen,  
In's Vaterland musst' ich hinüber schwimmen,  
Das ging ja nicht an, das ging ja nicht an!

Ein' Stund' in der Nacht  
Sie haben mich gebracht;  
Sie führten mich gleich vor  
    des Hauptmanns Haus!  
Ach Gott! Sie fischten mich im Strome aus!  
Mit mir ist es aus, mit mir ist es aus!

Früh morgens um zehn Uhr  
Stellt man mich vor's Regiment!  
Ich soll da bitten um Pardon, um Pardon!  
Und ich bekomm' doch meinen Lohn  
    Und ich bekomm' doch meinen Lohn!  
Das weiß ich schon!

Ihr Brüder all'zumal, ihr Brüder all'zumal  
Heut' seht ihr mich zum letzten mal  
    Heut seht ihr mich zum letzten mal!

Der Hirtenbub' ist nur schuld daran!  
Das Alphorn hat mir's angethan,  
    das hat mir's angethan!

Das klag' ich an, das klag' ich an!

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<sup>85</sup> Ludwig von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, comp., *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1968), 145-146.

<sup>86</sup> Bracketed stanzas were not set by Mahler

## English Translation

<p>Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz          Da ging mein Trauern an,          Das Alphorn hört ich drüben wohl anstimmen,          Ins Vaterland muß ich hinüber schwimmen,          Das ging nicht an</p>	<p>In Strasbourg on the rampart,          there began my troubles:          I heard the alp-horn calling from afar,          and decided to swim to my fatherland.          That was unacceptable</p>
<p>Eine Stunde in der Nacht          Sie haben mich gebracht.          Sie führten mich gleich vor              Des Hauptmanns Haus          Ach Gott, sie fischten mich im Strome auf,          Mit mir ist's aus.</p>	<p>One hour in the night          They captured me;          they led me straight to the Captain's house;            ah God, they'd fished me right out of the river,          And everything's over for me.</p>
<p>Früh Morgens um zehn Uhr          Stellt man mich vor das Regiment;          Ich soll da bitten um Pardon,          Und ich bekomme doch meinen Lohn,          Das weiß ich schon.</p>	<p>The next morning at ten          they'll place me before the regiment;          I am supposed to beg for my pardon,          and I will receive what's coming to me,          that I know well</p>
<p>Ihr Brüder allzumal,          Heut seht ihr mich zum letztenmal;          Der Hirtenbub ist doch nur Schuld daran,          Das Alphorn hat mir solches angethan,          Das klag ich an.</p>	<p>You, my brothers all,          today you'll see me for the last time;          The Shepherd boy is alone to blame.          The alp-horn did this to me-          Thus I charge it</p>
<p>[Ihr Brüder alle drei,          Was ich euch bitt, erschießt mich gleich;          Verschont mein junges Leben nicht,          Schießt zu, auf dass das Blut 'raus spritzt,          Das bitt ich Euch.]</p>	<p>[You, my brothers, all three,          This I beg you now: shoot straight at me;          Do not spare my young life,          but shoot me so the blood splashes out:]</p>
<p>[O Himmelskönig Herr!          Nimm du meine arme Seele dahin,          Nimm sie zu dir in den Himmel ein,          Laß sie ewig bei dir sein,          Und vergiß nicht mein.]</p>	<p>[O king of heaven, Lord!          Take my poor soul away,          take it to you in Heaven,          let it be with you forever          And do not forget me!]<sup>87</sup></p>

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<sup>87</sup> Stanzas in brackets not included in Mahler's song setting.

Mahler wrote “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” between 1887 and 1890. The song was originally published for voice and piano in volume three of *Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit*. Mahler never orchestrated “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” but instrumental cues in his composition and Mahler’s orchestration of other *Wunderhorn* songs lead us to believe that an orchestration of the song would have been a possible step for Mahler.<sup>88</sup> The present discussion of “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” uses musical examples from the voice and piano version by Mahler, as the orchestral versions duplicate the harmonic and song structure found in Mahler’s voice and piano version. The song tells the story of a Swiss soldier who hears the faint call of an alphorn. The soldier is then overcome with homesickness and attempts to flee his regiment by swimming to his homeland. However, he is caught and condemned to die for trying to desert the army.

The city of Strasbourg lies in the traditionally disputed border region of Alsace-Lorraine between France and Germany. Germany took control of the region from France in the 1871 Franco-Prussian War. This region developed its own distinct regional culture and coincidentally was one of the first regions that collectors like Goethe and Herder used as a source of folk songs.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” has been orchestrated by several musicians, the most notable being Italian composer Luciano Berio in *Five Early Songs for Male Voice* (1986), Harold Byrns and a collaboration between British composers Colin Matthews and David Matthews that was released in 2010, but dates back to 1964.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of this region and folk song collecting activities see: Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism*, 133-140.

The song text itself is a quintessential example of changing traditional texts to suit modern means. Arnim and Brentano altered “Der Schweizer” significantly from the original text. In the original version of the poem, the soldier simply deserts the army, without any provocation from the alphorn and without swimming across the Rhine.<sup>90</sup> Arnim and Brentano’s additions to the text create a more romantic and sentimental soldier than the one that appears in the original text. It is curious to see that Mahler’s musical interpretation plays significantly off of the romantic alterations Arnim and Brentano added to the text.

“Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz” (On the Ramparts of Strasbourg) opens with a *Kuhreihen* or *Ranz des Vaches*, a Swiss alphorn call (Example 2.1). J.-J. Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire de musique* remarked that the *Ranz des Vaches* “was so generally beloved among the Swiss that it was forbidden to be played in their troops under pain or death, because it made them burst into tears, desert, or die, whoever heard it; so great a desire did it excite in them of returning to their country.”<sup>91</sup> It is easy to hear the speaker of the song as a Swiss soldier who is hearing the nearby alphorn calls of his native Switzerland. Hearing this alphorn fills him with a nostalgic yearning for his homeland and for a time when things were simpler.

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<sup>90</sup> Karl Bode, *Die Bearbeitung der Vorlagen in Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1909), 318-321.

<sup>91</sup> “Ranz des vaches.” In *Grove Music Online*, ed. Laura Macy. *Oxford Music Online*. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22893> (accessed February 20th, 2013).

Example 2.1 “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” meas. 1-4: Alphorn



Even though it is the first element of the song, the alphorn motive enters in F major, a key that is distant from the song’s key of F minor. It is as if this “Alphorn Key” represents a romantic world that is far away from the world of war the soldier currently inhabits. (See Table 2).

Table 2: Structural overview of “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz”

Measure Numbers	Theme	Key
1-26	A	F major / F minor
27-38	B	C minor
39-48	C	B-flat major / B-flat minor
49-61	A’	B-flat major / B-flat minor

Mahler, for the most part, does not alter the text as he does in other poems he used from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.<sup>92</sup> Mahler’s most significant additions are the repetitions

<sup>92</sup> Mahler altered texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* for the purpose of making the meaning of the text more clear and improving the rhythm of the poetic structure. Specifically see songs “Um schlimme Kinder artig zu machen,” “Ich ging mit Lust,” and “Aus! Aus!” as discussed in Molly M. Breckling, “Narrative Strategies in Gustav Mahler’s Balladic Wunderhorn Lieder” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2010), 60-70.

of the lines “Das ging ja nicht an,” “Mit mir ist es aus,” “Und ich bekomm’ doch meinen Lohn!, Das weiss ich schon,” and “Das klag ich an.” Mahler’s added repetitions, in this case, serve to underscore the most devastating feelings of the soldier; the texts translate to “That was unacceptable,” “And everything’s over for me,” “And I will receive what’s coming to me, that I know well,” and “I charge it” respectively. All of these repetitions mark a decided change in mood, as well as key, in the song.

Despite the four flats in the key signature, the song opens in F major. However, in measure 12, the first note of the repeated phrase “Das ging ja nicht an” is an A-flat, and it has the effect of interrupting the romantic world of the F-major “Alphorn key” that did not really belong there in the first place. This interruption is seen in Example 2.2.

Example 2.2 “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” meas. 9-15

drü - ben wohl an - stim - men, in's Va - ter - land musst' ich hin - ü - ber schwim - men, das  
ging ja nicht an, das ging ja nicht an!

\*) In allen diesen tiefen Trillern ist mit Hilfe des Pedals der Klang gedämpfter Trommeln nachzuahmen.



We see this shift to minor happening again when the phrase “Das weiss ich schon, das weiss ich schon!” (Example 2.3) enters with an A-flat, bringing the song back into the key signature from the beginning and abruptly dissolving the “Alphorn Key” before it.

Example 2.3 “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” meas. 29-34

The musical score for Example 2.3 consists of two systems of music. The first system covers measures 29-32, and the second system covers measures 33-34. The vocal line is written in a soprano clef, and the piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is A-flat major (three flats). The lyrics are: "soll da bit-ten um Par - don, um Par-don! und ich be - komm' doch mei - nen Lohn und ich be - komm' doch mei - nen Lohn! Das weiss ich schon, das weiss ich schon!". The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, and *schauernd*, and articulation marks like slurs and accents.

At the end of the song, this repetition has a different look with “Das klag’ ich an, das klag’ ich an!” as shown in Example 2.4. However, this time, the repetition “Das klag’ ich an” is interrupted with a D-flat, a note that is no longer a part of the key signature. Now that the boy is sentenced to die, the real world can no longer take over the song, but it still has the last word in the irony of the situation. The boy is allowed to assume the romantic world of the alphorn, but only in death.

## Example 2.4 “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” meas. 47-61

Hir-ten-bub' ist nur schuld da-ran! Das

(Schalmey.)  
pp poco accel. poco rit. p

a tempo  
Alphorn hat mir's an-ge-than, das hat mir's an-ge - than! Das klag' ich an, das

a tempo  
klag' ich an!

p f p p pp ppp

Mahler's text repetitions are significant, but the text that he chooses not to set is significant as well. "Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz" is a military song, both in the story it tells and the sound images that it creates. Plodding chords simulating the marching of feet and drum rolls are heard continually throughout the song. Sonically, the listener would expect to hear the romantic ideal of a chivalrous and brave soldier.<sup>93</sup>

However, Mahler alters this romantic conception of a military soldier by eliminating the last two stanzas of the poem, two stanzas that graphically describe the

<sup>93</sup> Raymond Monelle, *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 142.

soldier's gruesome death and subsequently paint him as a brave soldier embracing his fate. Instead, Mahler leaves the listener with a soldier who is blaming the alphorn, simpering at its ability to lure him to his death. His last words are "I charge it." The soldier is neither brave nor chivalrous in Mahler's sound, he has been tricked and our traditional romantic ideal of a soldier dying bravely is destroyed.

## Der Tamboursg'sell

### Tambursgesell

From *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*<sup>94</sup>

Ich armer Tambursgesell,  
Man führt mich aus dem Gewölb,  
Ja aus dem Gewölb,  
Wär ich ein Tambur blieben,  
Dürft ich nicht gefangen liegen,  
Nicht gefangen liegen.

O Galgen, du hohes Haus,  
Du siehst so furchtbar aus,  
So furchtbar aus,  
Ich schau dich nicht mehr an,  
Weil i weiß, i gehör daran,  
Daß i gehör daran.

Wenn Soldaten vorbeimarschieren,  
Bei mir nit einquartieren,  
Nit einquartieren,  
Wann sie fragen, wer i g'wesen bin:  
Tampur von der Leib=Kompanie,  
Von der Leib=Kompanie.

Gute Nacht, ihr Marmelstein,  
Ihr Berg und Hügelein  
Und Hügelein,  
Gute Nacht, ihr Offizier,  
Korporal und Musketier,  
Und Musketier.

Gute Nacht, ihr Offizier,  
Korporal und Grenadier,  
Und Grenadier.  
Ich schrei mit heller Stimm,  
Von euch ich Urlaub nimm,  
Ja Urlaub nimm.

### Der Tamboursg'sell

As modified by Gustav Mahler

Ich armer Tamboursg'sell!  
Man führt mich aus dem G'wölb,  
man führt aus dem G'wölb!  
Wär ich ein Tambour blieben,  
dürft ich nicht gefangen liegen!

O Galgen, du hohes Haus!  
du siehst so furchtbar aus!  
Ich schau dich nicht mehr an  
ich schau dich nicht mehr an!  
Weil i weiß, das i g'hör d'ran  
Weil i weiß, das i g'hör d'ran!

Wenn Soldaten vorbeimarschier'n,  
bei mir nit einquartier'n  
Wenn sie fragen, wer i g'wesen bin:  
Tampour von der Leibkompanie,  
Tampour von der Leibkompanie!

Gute Nacht, ihr Marmelstein!  
Ihr Berg' und Hügelein!  
Gute Nacht, ihr Offizier,  
Korporal und Musketier!

Gute Nacht!  
Gute Nacht ihr Offizier!  
Korporal und Grenadier!  
Ich schrei mit heller Stimm:  
von Euch ich Urlaub nimm!  
Von Euch ich Urlaub nimm!  
Gute Nacht,  
Gute Nacht!

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<sup>94</sup> Ludwig von Arnim and Clemens Brentano, comp., *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1968), 78-79.

## English Translation of Mahler's text

Ich armer Tamboursg'sell Man führt mich aus dem G'wölb, man führt aus dem G'wölb! Wär ich ein Tambour blieben, dürft ich nicht gefangen liegen!	I, poor drummer boy! They are leading me out of the dungeon, They are leading me out of the dungeon! If I had remained a drummer I would not lie imprisoned!
O Galgen, du hohes Haus! du siehst so furchtbar aus! Ich schau dich nicht mehr an Ich schau dich nicht mehr an! Weil i weiß, das i g'hör d'ran Weil i weiß, das i g'hör d'ran!	Oh gallows, you tall house, You look so frightening! I no longer look at you! I no longer look at you! Because I know that's where I belong, Because I know that's where I belong!
Wenn Soldaten vorbeimarschier'n, bei mir nit einquartier'n Wenn sie fragen, wer i g'wesen bin: Tampour von der Leibkompanie, Tampour von der Leibkompanie!	When soldiers march past that are not quartered with me, when they ask who I was: Drummer of the first company, Drummer of the first company!
Gute Nacht, ihr Marmelstein! Ihr Berg' und Hügelein! Gute Nacht, ihr Offizier, Korporal und Musketier!	Good night, you marble rocks! You mountains and hills! Good night, you officers, Corporals and grenadiers!
Gute Nacht! Gute Nacht ihr Offizier! Korporal und Grenadier! Ich schrei mit heller Stimm: von Euch ich Urlaub nimm! Von Euch ich Urlaub nimm! Gute Nacht, Gute Nacht!	Good night! Good night! You officers, Corporals and grenadiers! I cry out with a clear voice: I take leave of you! I take leave of you! Good night! Good night!

Much like “Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz,” “Der Tamboursg’sell” tells the story of a drummer boy who is doomed to hang from the gallows because of his attempted desertion from the army. What makes this poem particularly poignant is the emphasis on the boy’s youth in his declaration that he is but a “poor drummer boy.” Goethe remarked that the poem was “a serene realization of an anxious state. It would be hard to find a poem this intuitive to compare with it.”<sup>95</sup>

The voice and piano version of “Der Tamboursg’sell” was written during a two-week span in 1901, when Mahler also composed his Rückert Lieder. Bauer-Lechner reports Mahler playing the “Der Tamboursg’sell” for her on August 10, 1901.<sup>96</sup> “Der Tamboursg’sell” was also republished for voice and piano (it was originally published for voice and piano in 1905 and orchestrated by Mahler at an unknown date) in the first publication of the Rückert Lieder in 1910, which highlights their connection and the theoretical break that “Der Tamboursg’sell provides from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.<sup>97</sup> Mahler said to Bauer-Lechner that, “...he felt sorry for himself that he should have to write ‘Der Tamboursg’sell’ and the *Kindertotenlieder*, and he felt sorry for the world that would have to hear them one day, so terribly sad was their content.”<sup>98</sup>

Mitchell has proposed that “Der Tamboursg’sell” is not the end of Mahler’s use of the *Wunderhorn* world. Rather, Mitchell perceives similarities between the theme

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<sup>95</sup> Karl Bode, *Die Bearbeitung der Vorlagen in Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, 275. [Heitere Vergegenwärtigung eines ängstlichen Zustandes. Ein Gedicht, dem der Einsehende schwerlich ein gleiches an die Seite setzen könnte.]

<sup>96</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 173.

<sup>97</sup> The present discussion will use musical examples from the voice and piano version of “Der Tamboursg’sell,” but will also reference Mahler’s orchestration.

<sup>98</sup> Bauer-Lechner, *Recollections of Gustav Mahler*, 173.

used in the first movement of Mahler's Fifth Symphony (1902) and the theme in "Der Tamboursg'ssell" that indicate Mahler had not forgotten the creative force of the *Wunderhorn* world, but let it manifest itself in a different way.<sup>99</sup>

For so long, the songs of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* had influenced Mahler's symphonies. In "Der Tamboursg'ssell," it is as though the song is influenced by the symphonic genre.<sup>100</sup> There is much more opportunity for the orchestra to express itself, especially in comparison with the simplistic use of the alphorn motive in "Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz." Through the entirety of the song, the use of the lower tessitura of the orchestra, cellos and double basses, is significant as it gives the song its mournful characteristic sound.

For all of its forward-looking connotations, the song also inhabits the folklore world of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Musical quotation of a popular folk song, "Der gute Kamerad" indicates that the world of *Wunderhorn* is not lost all together.<sup>101</sup> However, in "Der Tamboursg'ssell," the quotation is transformed into minor, signifying that although the *Wunderhorn* world is still present, it is changed in character.

Much like "Zu Strassburg auf der Schanz," "Der Tamboursg'ssell" fluctuates in and out of major and minor, creating an unsteady picture of the drummer boy who is coming to terms with his fate (See Table 3.) This method is particularly visible in

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<sup>99</sup> This relationship is further discussed in Donald Mitchell, "Eternity or Nothingness? Mahler's Fifth Symphony," in *The Mahler Companion*, ed. Donald Mitchell and Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 237-248.

<sup>100</sup> Donald Mitchell, *Discovering Mahler: Writings on Mahler, 1955-2005*, ed. Gastón Fournier-Facio (Rochester: The Boydell Press, 2007), 109.

<sup>101</sup> Henry-Louis De La Grange, *Gustav Mahler, Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897-1904)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 780.

measure 141 (Example 3.1) when the drummer boy is crying out in a clear voice that “Von Euch ich Urlaub nimm!” or “I take leave of you!” The drummer boy is vocalizing his fate in a major key, but slips back into a minor key at the end of his phrase, anticipating the harrowing punishment to come.

Example 3.1 “Der Tambourg’sell,” meas. 140-145

Stimm: von Euch ich - Ur - laub nimm!  
 call: one last fare well to all!

65

Table 3: Structural Overview of “Der Tambourg’sell”

Measure	Theme	Key
1-30	A	E minor
31-90	B	G major / E minor
91-137	B'	G minor
138-170	Coda	D major / D minor

After “Der Tambourg’sell,” Mahler would look to the darker poetry of Rückert to inspire his next song compositions. His serious illness in February 1901 undoubtedly made him consider the end of his life. He remarked in 1901, “While I was hovering on the border between life and death, I wondered whether it would not be better to have



done with it at once, since everyone must come to that in the end.”<sup>102</sup> Thankfully, Mahler would live for another decade. Although he would decidedly leave the world of *Wunderhorn* behind him after “Der Tambour’sell”, he would continue to use the traditional *Volk* world of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* exhibited by folk and dance inspired elements in his music, continuing to produce a tension between the tradition of the past and the modernization of the future.

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<sup>102</sup> La Grange, *Gustav Mahler, Vienna: The Years of Challenge (1897-1904)*, 334-335.

## Conclusion

My discussion has attempted to move beyond the texts of the *Wunderhorn* songs and explore how Mahler's settings are a reflection of both the tradition of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and the modernization of fin-de-siècle Vienna. This modernization gives new meaning to the traditional sources and themes that Mahler uses to inspire his songs. My purpose has been to suggest that the tension most often commented on in Mahler's music stems from the presence of traditional sources in a modern environment, such as fin-de-siècle Vienna. This tension has been explored by looking at some of the sociological background of both worlds the *Wunderhorn* songs inhabit, identifying traditional romantic themes, such as the soldier in "Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz" and looking at how Mahler uses these themes in his *Wunderhorn* settings. Interpreting these songs in the modern context in which they were created leads to a deeper understanding of these songs and the history that they have.

Having looked at both the traditional and modern worlds of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, the conclusion of my study is to encourage the interpretation of Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs based on the history of the concept of *Volk*, Arnim and Brentano and fin-de-siècle Vienna. Using these historical ideas as a map, connecting these significant landmarks in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* gives greater meaning as to how they culminate in Mahler's *Wunderhorn* songs.

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## Appendix

### *Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit, for voice and piano, Volume 1 (1892)*

Year Composed

1880-1883	<i>Frühlingsmorgen</i>
1880-1883	<i>Erinnerung</i>
1880-1883	<i>Hans und Grete</i>
1880-1883	<i>Serenade aus Don Juan</i>
1880-1883	<i>Phantasie aus Don Juan</i>

### *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (published for voice and piano 1897)*

1883-1885	<i>Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht</i> (based on Wunderhorn text)
1883-1885	<i>Ging heut Morgen übers Feld</i>
1883-1885	<i>Ich hab' ein glühend Messer</i>
1883-1885	<i>Die zwei blauen Augen von meinem Schatz</i>

### *Des Knaben Wunderhorn Songs*

Nine songs that make up Vol. II and Vol. III of *Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit*  
(Volumes I, II and III all published in for voice and piano 1892)

#### *Volume II of Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit*

1887-1890	<i>Um schlimme Kinder artig zu machen</i>
1887-1890	<i>Ich ging mit Lust durch eine grünen Wald</i>
1887-1890	<i>Aus! Aus!</i>
1887-1890	<i>Starke Einbildungskraft</i>

#### *Volume III of Lieder und Gesänge aus der Jugendzeit*

1887-1890	<i>Zu Straßburg auf der Schanz'</i>
1887-1890	<i>Ablösung im Sommer</i>
1887-1890	<i>Scheiden und Meiden</i>
1887-1890	<i>Nicht wiedersehen</i>
1887-1899	<i>Selbstgefühl</i>

#### *Humoresken (published for voice and piano in 1899)*

1892	<i>Der Schildwache Nachtlied</i>
1892	<i>Verlor'ne Müh</i>
1892	<i>Trost im Unglück</i>
1892	<i>Wer hat dies Liedlein erdacht?</i>

