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Selections from Wagner's "Wesendonck Lieder" Arranged for Alto Saxophone and Piano

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Wesendonck Lieder Program Notes

Following his involvement in the 1849 Dresden Uprising, Wagner was forced into exile and eventually settled in Zurich. It was there that he made the acquaintance of Otto Wesendonck, a wealthy silk merchant, and his young wife, Mathilde. A keen supporter of the arts, Otto would soon become one of Wagner's most loyal patrons. In 1857, he allowed the composer and his wife, Minna, to move into the small home on his property (nicknamed *Asyl*— "Asylum," or "Sanctuary"), adjacent to his newly-constructed villa.

Wagner repaid his patron's generosity by entering into a passionate affair with Mathilde, an amateur poet whose gentle and creative nature offered him an escape from his troubled marriage. Although the specific details of the relationship are shrouded in obscurity, its impact on the future of art would become legendary. In July 1857, the affair inspired Wagner to set aside work on his monumental Ring Cycle in favor of a new drama: *Tristan und Isolde*.

The subject matter of *Tristan und Isolde* was highly relevant to Wagner's life at the time, focusing on the forbidden love between the title characters. Wagner's reworking of the ancient story explores the philosophical ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer, depicting a passion so extreme that it can only be consummated in death. Highly erotic, with its hyper-extension of the tonal system and near-complete departure from the Classical concept of form, *Tristan und Isolde* would become one of the most influential pieces of music moving into the 20th century. Wagner kept Mathilde well-informed of his progress with *Tristan*, sharing his poetic and musical ideas as they came to fruition. Influenced by Wagner's creative ideas, she wrote a set of five poems in the style of the *Tristan* text. Wagner would then set each of these poems to music at various points between 1857 and 1858 (concurrently with Act I of *Tristan*).

This song cycle, commonly known today as the *Wesendonck Lieder* but initially published under the title *Fünf Gedichte für eine Frauenstimme* ("Five Poems for Female Voice"), allowed Wagner to cultivate the new musical language he was developing for *Tristan*. In fact, the original manuscripts designate the songs *Im Treibhaus* ("In the Greenhouse") and *Träume* ("Dreams") as "sketches" for *Tristan und Isolde*. Wagner repurposed much of the

musical material from these songs into the Act III prelude and the Act II Love Duet, respectively.

The tensions brought about by the affair came to a head in April 1858, when Minna intercepted a letter from Wagner to Mathilde that she took as evidence of his infidelity. This debacle eventually brought the relationship to its end, but the artistic legacy it left behind has lived on since then.

Im Treibhaus

Richard Wagner

Arranged by Kaitlyn Grella

Langsam

Alto Sax

Piano

A. Sx.

Pno.

A. Sx.

Pno.

The first system of music shows the Alto Saxophone and Piano. The Alto Saxophone part begins with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by a whole note chord in the second measure. The Piano part starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, featuring a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. The dynamics are marked *p* in the first three measures and *più p* in the fourth measure.

The second system continues the music. The Alto Saxophone part begins at measure 4 with a melodic line. The Piano part continues with the same texture, marked *mp* in the Alto Saxophone part and *p* in the Piano part. The dynamics are marked *p* in the first three measures and *più p* in the fourth measure.

The third system continues the music. The Alto Saxophone part begins at measure 8 with a melodic line. The Piano part continues with the same texture, marked *p* in the Piano part. The dynamics are marked *p* in the first three measures.

A. Sx. 12 *mp*

Pno. 12 *p* *p*

A. Sx. 16

Pno. 16 *pp* *p* *p* *pp*

Alto Sax 21 *f*

Piano 21 *p* *f*

25 *rit.*

A. Sx.

mp

Pno.

p

29

A. Sx.

p *mp*

Pno.

pp *p*

34

A. Sx.

ff *mp*

Pno.

f *p*

39

A. Sx.

Pno.

più p

44

A. Sx.

Pno.

p

pp

50

A. Sx.

Pno.

pp

ppp

pp

55

A. Sx.

Pno.

p *più p*

60

A. Sx.

Pno.

pp *p* *pp*

65

A. Sx.

Pno.

Im Treibhaus

Richard Wagner

Arranged by Kaitlyn Grella

Langsam

2 2

mp

7

12 *mp* *p*

17

23 *f* *mp* *p* *rit.*

30 *mp*

36 *ff* *mp*

43 *p*

50

pp *p*

56

3

64

3

Träume

Richard Wagner

Arranged by Kaitlyn Grella

Mäßig bewegt

Alto Sax

Piano

pp

5

A. Sx.

Pno.

9

A. Sx.

Pno.

dim.

A. Sx. 14

p

Pno. 14

pp

A. Sx. 19

pp

Pno. 19

A. Sx. 24

Pno. 24

29

A. Sx.

Pno.

mp

p

34

A. Sx.

Pno.

f

poco cresc.

mf

dim.

39

A. Sx.

Pno.

p

ff

mp

pp

f

p cresc.

A. Sx. 44 *ritenuto* *accel.* *a tempo*

Pno. 44 *dim.* *pp* *ff* *dim.*

A. Sx. 49 *mp* *ff*

Pno. 49 *p* *cresc.* *f dim.*

A. Sx. 54 *mp*

Pno. 54 *p*

A. Sx. 59 *mp*

Pno. 59 *più p*

A. Sx. 65 *morendo p*

Pno. 65 *pp*

A. Sx. 70

Pno. 70

74

A. Sx.

Pno.

dim.

79

A. Sx.

Pno.

pp

Träume

Richard Wagner
Arranged by Kaitlyn Grella

Mäßig bewegt

16

p

23

31

mp *f*

38

p *ff* *mp*

45

ritenuto *accel.* *a tempo*

p *ff* *mp*

52

ff *mp*

59

mp *morendo*

67

p

16