

## 6 Bruckner and secular vocal music

A. CRAWFORD HOWIE

### Background

The social upheavals that followed the French Revolution and its wars brought accelerating change to musical and concert life, including the rise of vocal and choral societies in many countries. Not only did they fulfil a social need, they enabled people to express feelings of patriotism which became more pronounced as the political map of Europe changed. The great choruses in Verdi's *Risorgimento* operas had their counterparts in the inspirational pieces for male-voice choir (*Liedertafel*) which became a vital part of music-making throughout Germany and Austria.

Germany led the way with Zelter's Berlin *Liedertafel* in 1809, followed by others in Leipzig, Breslau, Magdeburg, and Stuttgart. The first German choral festival took place in Plochingen (Württemberg) in 1827. In Austria, Metternich regarded any kind of popular movement with suspicion and initially refused to allow the establishment of choral societies. The founding of the Wiener Männergesang-Verein in 1843, however, provided the necessary impetus, as did the culturally and politically motivated cultivation of Austrian folksong.<sup>1</sup> Frequent contacts between societies resulted in joint tours and choral festivals as symbols of 'choral solidarity'. Beginning in the 1850s, choral festivals grew increasingly common in the 1860s, while enlarged bodies emerged such as the 'Upper Enns Choral Association' proposed by Josef Hafferl (the president of Linz's *Frohsinn*), Alois Weinwurm (the conductor of its *Sängerbund*), and August Göllicher senior in 1863.<sup>2</sup> Its objects were to provide support for new and existing societies, to encourage the writing of new choruses by native composers, and to institute festivals such as the first *Oberösterreich-salzburgische Sängerbundesfest* in Linz from 4 to 6 June 1865.

### The choral repertoire in the nineteenth century

A transition took place in the male-voice repertory from the convivial choruses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to choruses of a more folk-like, and eventually of a much more patriotic, nature. An inspection of the annual reports of *Frohsinn* and *Sängerbund* during the period 1855–68 reveals, besides works about nature, love, and drinking,

[64]

the presence of patriotic songs which were to receive new impetus from German unification and the related struggle in Austria between Pan-Germans and conservative monarchists.<sup>3</sup> The often highly charged political significance of these choruses assured their success. Prominent composers included Franz Abt, Karl Santner, Jakob Eduard Schmölzer, Anton M. Storch (choirmaster of *Frohsinn* until 1860), Hans Schläger (choirmaster of the Wiener Männergesang-Verein from 1856 until 1861), and Rudolf Weinwurm, founder and choirmaster of the Akademischer Gesangverein and conductor of the Wiener Männergesang-Verein. Choral pieces by Johann W. Kalliwoda, Konradin Kreutzer, Friedrich W. Kücken, Franz Lachner, and Heinrich Marschner were sung regularly, and the two choirs also performed works by Beethoven, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Schubert.

Bruckner would have been familiar with much of this repertory through his involvement with *Frohsinn* and *Sängerbund* in Linz, the Wiener Männergesang-Verein (conducted between 1866 and 1880 by his friend Weinwurm), and other societies in Wels, Steyr, and Vöcklabruck. He was held in high esteem by these choirs, many of which elected him an honorary member.<sup>4</sup>

## Bruckner's secular vocal compositions

Bruckner's secular vocal compositions are of varying quality, forming a relatively large but well-nigh forgotten part of his output. The majority are for male-voice choir but there are also works for mixed-voice choir, male-voice quartet, and the 'mottoes' (*Sprüche*) or short signature-tunes which Bruckner wrote for several choral societies. These works cover virtually his entire compositional career (1843–92) and were mostly written for specific occasions and dedicated to acquaintances or colleagues.<sup>5</sup> Many details of their first performance are obscure and manuscript sources are sometimes missing (as for WAB 91–2, 95 and 95b). There are also some songs for solo voice with piano accompaniment.

## The smaller-scale works

Among the acquaintances Bruckner made in Enns while receiving lessons from Zenetti was the parish priest Joseph von Pessler, for whose birthday he wrote his earliest surviving chorus, *An dem Feste*, to words by the Kronstorf priest Alois Knauer. The unaccompanied male-voice piece (first performed on 19 September 1843) is of particular interest because, fifty years later, Bruckner made some corrections, added dynamic markings, and had new

words provided by Karl Ptak. The most striking alterations occur in the cadential bars in which a semitone shift in the harmony gives added spice to an otherwise unpretentious perfect cadence. With its new title *Tafellied* it was performed by the Wiener Akademischer Gesangverein in March 1893 and was reviewed favourably in the *Deutsche Zeitung* and the *Deutsches Volksblatt*. In the former, Theodor Helm drew attention to the ‘unpretentious but successful choral writing of the nineteen-year-old Upper Austrian school assistant who at that time had certainly no inkling that he would become one of the greatest masters of the symphony and church music.’<sup>6</sup>

Eight compositions were written during the St. Florian period: six for male-voice chorus – *Das Lied vom deutschen Vaterland*, *Der Lehrerstand*, the first setting of *Das edle Herz*, *Die Geburt*, *Vor Arneths Grab*, and *Des Dankes Wort sei mir gegönnt*; and two for his own male-voice quartet in which he sang second bass – *Ständchen: Wie des Bächleins Silberquelle* and *Sternschnuppen*. The only work to have a specific date (see Table 6.1) is *Die Geburt*, an appealing work with a fondness for Schubertian mediant relationships.<sup>7</sup> We can also be certain of the date of *Vor Arneths Grab*, as it was written specifically for Michael Arneth’s funeral on 28 March 1854. The majority of these works are through-composed, and two are fairly substantial: *Der Lehrerstand*, in several sections differing in key, time-signature, and setting (chorus, soloists’ ensemble), and *Des Dankes Wort*, which has a cantata-like character, choral homophony alternating with recitative-like solo sections.<sup>8</sup> The first of the two male-voice quartets, *Sternschnuppen*, reveals a strong Mendelssohnian influence; the second, *Ständchen*, is essentially a tenor solo with a three-part ‘humming’ accompaniment which is wordless at first but later has words added.<sup>9</sup>

It has been assumed that Bruckner composed the chorus *Lasst Jubeltöne laut erklingen* for the reception of the future Empress Elizabeth in Linz on 22 April 1854. According to the *Frohsinn* chronicles, the choir sang a ‘festal chorus’ when she arrived and a ‘serenade’ in the evening. There is no mention of Bruckner’s composition in contemporary reports and publications, however, and several stylistic features of the music (the two-against-three rhythm which became more prevalent in his works from the 1860s onwards, chains of sixth chords, and enharmonic changes untypical of the St. Florian works) point to a later date.<sup>10</sup>

With the exception of the second setting of *Das edle Herz*, Bruckner wrote no new works during the period of his study with Sechter. It is not known if this work was written for a specific occasion.<sup>11</sup> Marinelli’s poem about the compassionate and unselfish treatment of one’s fellows prompted no more than an adequate musical response from Bruckner.

Bruckner’s first contact with *Frohsinn* was in 1853 when it visited St. Florian as part of a ‘choir excursion’. In March 1856, not long after moving

Table 6.1 Chronology of Bruckner's secular music for vocal ensemble (ABSW, XXIII/2)

Title	WAB	Setting	Date
<i>An dem Feste</i>	59	TTBB	rev. 1843, 1893
<i>Tafellied</i>	86		22 Feb. 1893
<i>Das Lied vom deutschen Vaterland</i>	78	TTBB	?1845
<i>Ständchen</i>	84	T, TTBB	?1846
<i>Der Lehrerstand</i>	77	T, T, B, B, TTBB	?1847
<i>Sternschnuppen</i>	85	TTBB	1848
<i>Zwei Sängersprüche: Ein jubelnd Hoch; Lebt wohl, ihr Sangesbrüder</i>	83/1 and 2	TTBB	1851
<i>Das edle Herz</i>	65	TTBB	?1851
<i>Die Geburt</i>	69	TTBB	19 March 1852
<i>Vor Arnehts Grab</i>	53	SATB, 3 trbns	March 1854
<i>Des Dankes Wort sei mir vergönnt</i>	62	T, B, TTBBB	c. 1850
<i>Das edle Herz</i>	66	SATB	December 1857
<i>Am Grabe</i>	2	TTBB	February 1861
<i>Du bist wie eine Blume</i>	64	S, A, T, B	5 Dec. 1861
<i>Der Abendhimmel</i>	55	TTBB	Jan. 1862
<i>Lasst Jubeltöne laut erklingen</i>	76	TTBB, 2 hns, 2 tpts, 4 trbns	after 1861
<i>Zigeuner-Waldlied</i>	135		
<i>Um Mitternacht</i>	89	A solo, TTBB, pf.	12 April 1864
<i>Herbstlied</i>	73	2 S, TTBB, pf.	19 March 1864
<i>Trauungslied</i>	49	SATB	8 Jan. 1865
<i>Vaterländisches Weinlied</i>	91	TTBB	c. Nov. 1866
<i>Vaterlandslied</i>	92	T, B, TTBB	c. Nov. 1866
<i>Der Abendhimmel</i>	56	TTBB	6 Dec. 1866
<i>Das Frauenherz, die Mannesbrust</i>	95	SATB	c. 1868
<i>Des höchsten Preis</i>	95b	TTBB	?1850
<i>Two mottoes: Im Wort und Liede wahr und treu; Wir alle jung und alt</i>	148	TTBB	28 Oct. 1869
<i>Mitternacht</i>	80	T, TTBB, pf.	Nov. 1869
<i>Freier Sinn und froher Mut, motto</i>	147	TTBB	21 March 1874
<i>Das hohe Lied</i>	74	(T, T, B, TTTTBBBB)/ (T, TTTTBBBB, 2 vlas, cellos, kbd, 4 hns, 3 trbns, tuba)	31 Dec. 1876
<i>Nachruf</i>	81	TTBB, org.	19 Oct. 1877; rev. 1886
<i>Trösterin Musik</i>	88	TTBB, org.	
<i>Abendzauber</i>	57	T, 3 yodellers, TTBB, 4 hns	13 Jan. 1878
<i>Zur Vermählungsfeier</i>	54	TTBB	27 Nov. 1878
<i>Sängerbund</i>	82	TTBB	3 Feb. 1882
<i>Volkslied</i>	94	TTBB	winter 1882
<i>Um Mitternacht</i>	90	T, TTBB	11 Feb. 1886
<i>Träumen und Wachen</i>	87	T, TTBB	15 Dec. 1890; rev. 4 Feb. 1892
<i>Das deutsche Lied (Der deutsche Gesang)</i>	63	TTBB, brass	29 April 1892

to Linz, he joined the choir, becoming assistant librarian on 31 October. He resigned from the choir in September 1858, possibly because of voice problems, but succeeded Storch as principal choirmaster in November 1860 after making a very favourable impression when conducting the choir for the first time at a concert in October. Contemporary reports confirm that he was a conscientious conductor, taking great care over details of articulation,

intonation, and breath control; regularly praised in the *Linzer Zeitung* and *Linzer Abendbote*, he was credited with raising the choir's standard to a level at least the equal of other choirs in the region. During 1861 he directed the choir in festival performances in Krems and Nuremberg, but resigned in September as a result of some unspecified contretemps.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, he seems to have remained on reasonably good terms with the choir and took up the baton again in 1868, his final year in Linz. The results he achieved, including the first performance of the final chorus from *Die Meistersinger* during the choir's centenary celebrations, were no less impressive.

A sign of Bruckner's greater maturity in word-setting and harmonic treatment comes with *Am Grabe* for male voices, sung at the funeral of the mother of the president of *Frohsinn*. Composing at short notice, he used the same text as in *Vor Arneths Grab*, omitting the final verse and avoiding an identical musical treatment, apart from some motivic connections at the opening; 'not so much a revision designed to update an earlier work as... a new composition using material from an older one', it was the first of Bruckner's choral works to be performed publicly in Linz on 11 February 1861 and to be reviewed in the following day's *Linzer Zeitung*, which highlighted the 'atmosphere of gentle feeling' that pervaded the work.<sup>13</sup>

Shortly after his resignation from *Frohsinn*, Bruckner wrote two pieces for vocal quartet: *Du bist wie eine Blume*, an undistinguished setting of Heine's famous poem for mixed voices and *Der Abendhimmel*, the first of two settings of Joseph Christian Zedlitz's three-verse poem. In comparison with his earlier choral works, the latter displays a much tauter formal structure, a tripartite song form with varied reprise (a structural model increasingly used in his subsequent choral works). The piece has a serenade-like character and is indebted harmonically and melodically to Schubert. The second setting of the text for unaccompanied male voices was completed nearly five years later. Not surprisingly, it reveals how much richer and more varied Bruckner's harmonic language had become in its mixture of chromaticism, archaic chordal progressions, and harmonic shifts to keys a third apart. The sudden break from four-part harmony to unison octave writing in bars 15–16, for instance, is reminiscent of many passages in the three great Masses and early symphonies.

Between the settings of *Der Abendhimmel* (while working on *Germanenzug*), Bruckner wrote two choral pieces for male voices, female soloists, and piano, a combination not otherwise found in choral works. *Herbstlied* (dedicated to Josef Hafferl), a setting of a poem by Friedrich von Sallet, includes parts for two soprano soloists. The *Linzer Zeitung* deemed it well composed but found the initial soprano entries too prominent above the *pp* choral description of the echoes of nightingale song. As in the contemporary *Um Mitternacht*, *Herbstlied* begins in the minor but ends in the tonic

major with an eloquent musical portrayal of the ‘thousand kind stars’ which are hidden behind the dark clouds. *Um Mitternacht* uses a text by Robert Prutz that Bruckner set again in Vienna more than twenty years later, writing for similar forces but using a solo tenor instead of a solo alto. After the original’s first performance by *Sängerbund* under Bruckner (11 December 1864), the *Linzer Zeitung* referred to its ‘unusually sombre mood’ at the beginning (which is not long maintained) but singled out the solo alto entry in E major and the work’s ‘truly delightful conclusion’ for particular mention.<sup>14</sup> The first section, for male voices and piano, makes extensive use of choral unison and cadences in E $\flat$  major. With the entry of the alto soloist comes the sudden move to E major and descending chromatic movement in the bass effects a modulation to F major and thence to A major for the end of the second section. A return to the material of the opening in a brighter F major and with the solo alto echoing the choral phrases gives added interest to the final section which concludes with voices in unison underpinned by a Schubertian piano arpeggio accompaniment.

Three male-voice pieces were written in quick succession at the end of 1866, the second setting of *Der Abendhimmel*, and two choruses – *Vaterländisches Weinlied* and *Vaterlandslied (O könnt ich dich beglücken)* – to texts by August Silberstein that reflect the patriotic mood generated by the Austro-Prussian War of that year. Storch, as conductor of the Niederösterreichischer Sängerbund, had asked Bruckner to send him a chorus for male voices and the composer made reference to this request when he wrote to Rudolf Weinwurm on 2 December.<sup>15</sup> On 11 December Bruckner thanked Storch profusely for his request and sent him the three pieces, dedicating *Vaterlandslied* ‘to your excellent choir because I considered it to be the most substantial of the three.’<sup>16</sup> Whereas *Vaterländisches Weinlied* is a mere twelve bars, culminating in a rousing treatment of the final words, *O könnt ich dich beglücken*, a setting of a four-verse poem for male-voice choir with tenor and baritone soloists, is the most extended of the unaccompanied works. The tonic A $\flat$  is changed enharmonically to G $\sharp$  to become the third of E major in the third verse as soloists and chorus give impassioned expression to the words ‘I will not leave you, land full of noble truth!’ The quiet ending of the final verse over an A $\flat$  pedal is in complete contrast to the closing bars of *Vaterländisches Weinlied*.<sup>17</sup>

During the St. Florian, Linz, and early Vienna years Bruckner wrote several very short ‘mottoes’ for different choral societies. Some of these are of uncertain date, others can be dated accurately. *Ein jubelnd Hoch in Leid und Lust* and *Lebt wohl, ihr Sangesbrüder* were requested by his friend Josef Seiberl for the use of the Eferding *Liedertafel* in a Song Festival at Passau. *Das Frauenherz, die Mannesbrust* was probably given its first performance by the combined men’s and women’s choirs of *Frohsinn* during an outing

to the Kiernberger forest on May 1868. The words are by Karl Kerschbaum, a friend of Bruckner and president of *Frohsinn* at the time. The motto *Des Höchsten Preis*, with words by A. Mittermayer, was probably written for the *Liedertafel* in Sierning, near Steyr. Its simpler harmonic style suggests an earlier date. The two mottoes in C major and D minor for unaccompanied male voices (settings of Johann Kajetan Markus) were written in memory of Sechter. Finally *Freier Sinn und froher Mut*, also for unaccompanied male voices, was written in March 1874 for the Grein Choral Society.

After his move to Vienna, Bruckner continued to write male-voice choruses when the opportunity arose. In August 1869 *Frohsinn* asked for a choral piece for the society's anniversary celebrations in May 1870; in November he wrote to the choir committee to thank them and inform them that Rudolf Weinwurm had helped him to find a suitable text.<sup>18</sup> In *Mitternacht*, Bruckner provided a highly effective piece for male voices and piano accompaniment. He complemented the atmospheric words – flowers and trees bathed in moonlight and a gentle breeze – with a pulsating repeated quaver right-hand part in the accompaniment. As the poet is moved to feelings of great devotion and imagines the sound of the organ and hymn-singing, the piano accompaniment changes to unison octave semiquavers.

During the years 1876–8, dominated by symphonic composition and revision, Bruckner wrote four pieces for male-voice choir which illustrate his highly imaginative use of the medium and reflect, albeit in much condensed form, some of the arresting stylistic features in his symphonic works. These choruses put much greater demands on the singers than the Linz choral works, which are more closely orientated to contemporary performing practice and performance standards. The range of colour in *Das hohe Lied* for male voices, tenor and baritone soloists, and in some other Bruckner choral works of this period, is increased by the use of a small 'humming chorus' which provides an atmospheric background sound. Bruckner composed the chorus at the end of 1876 and dedicated it to the Akademischer Gesangverein, possibly out of gratitude for their performance of *Germanenzug* in Vienna earlier in the year. Because of the technical difficulty and exposed nature of the 'humming chorus', Richard Heuberger, the conductor of the choir, suggested that the parts be doubled by a string quintet (two violas, two cellos and double bass). Bruckner also took the opportunity of adding brass instruments (four horns, three trombones, and bass tuba) to support the voices. The different images and moods of the poem are captured onomatopoeically by Bruckner: oscillating semiquavers for humming voices suggest the obtrusive sound of the millwheel as it 'disturbs the wanderer's song'; descending diminished sevenths depict the darkness of the wood (bars 12–14), rising E major arpeggios graphically portray the ascent

of the mountain (tenor soloist alternating with chorus, bars 15ff.); further alternation between soloists and chorus describes ‘the echo of the sound resounding more and more strongly’ (B major second inversion chords, bars 37–9); full homophony with typical Brucknerian surges conveys the sense of excitement as the summit is reached (bars 44ff.). There is a hushed ending as the song rises up into the stratosphere.<sup>19</sup>

*Nachruf* for male voices and organ was written in October 1877 in memory of Seiberl, and was premiered at St. Florian during the unveiling of a memorial plaque on 28 October. Bruckner played the organ part. To make the work more accessible he later had the original text changed by August Seuffert to one with less specific sentiments. Under its new title *Trösterin Musik*, it was given its first performance in Vienna in April 1886 by the Akademischer Gesangverein conducted by Weinwurm. The most effective part of the piece is at the end where, in the original version, the contrasting images of the ‘stormy chords of the organ’ and the organist (that is, Seiberl) ‘resting in peace’ are portrayed musically.<sup>20</sup>

*Abendzauber* (dedicated to Karl Almeroth, one of Bruckner’s Steyr friends) was written in 1878 for male voices (who hum until the final section where there is a proper text underlay), tenor/baritone soloist, three distant yodelling voices and four horns. According to Franz Bayer, another of Bruckner’s Steyr friends, the yodelling parts were intended for female voices and were modelled on the Rhinemaidens’ music. Bruckner appears to have chosen the key of G♭ major and frequent tranquil pedal points deliberately to suggest a Romantic moonlit seascape with the ‘magical sound of songs’ drifting upwards.<sup>21</sup>

The marriage of Bruckner’s landlord, Dr Anton Oelzelt-Newin, in November 1878 was the occasion for the unaccompanied male-voice chorus *Zwei Herzen haben sich gefunden (Zur Vermählungsfeier)*. It contains the normal Brucknerian fingerprints of sudden semitone shifts in the harmony and unison octave phrases.<sup>22</sup> Nearly four years elapsed before *Sängerbund*, composed in February 1882. First performed in a choral festival held in Wels in June 1883, its theme is the strength of German choral singing and its ability to foster patriotic feelings, underlined by some bars quoted from Kalliwoda’s famous *Deutsches Lied* in the second verse. Bruckner sets the four verses of the poem similarly, with the exception of the slightly longer second verse and the end of the fourth where he makes an appropriate harmonic change at the words ‘the song sounds forth right to death’s door’ before the final fanfare-like exaltations of ‘freedom’ and ‘fatherland’.<sup>23</sup> When *Sängerbund* was performed again at the forty-first anniversary concert of the Steyr *Liedertafel* in 1891, the *Alpenbote* commented on Bruckner’s treatment of the patriotic words in the chorus which ‘in its powerful chords sealed the



vow of everlasting faithfulness to German song in every phase of the destiny of the German people'.<sup>24</sup> Contemporary with it is the work erroneously called *Volkslied*, also with patriotic overtones. Bruckner intended it for a competition for 'a hymn for the German people in Austria' to be written as a 'beautiful, simple folk-like melody'. The jury came to the decision that none of the 1,320 entries (which presumably included Bruckner's) fulfilled these conditions.<sup>25</sup>

During 1886, while he was working on the Eighth Symphony, Bruckner composed the second version of *Um Mitternacht* (WAB 90). It was written specifically for a special Bruckner concert in Linz in April planned by *Frohsinn*. Bruckner's response to Prutz's textual imagery is just as keen as it is in the first setting, and there are some similarities between the two; both are in F minor and both begin with an organ-point effect, in the piano in the earlier version, in the bass voices in the later. The second and third verses are now set for tenor solo with an evocative humming accompaniment for the choir, which provides a rich, frequently shifting harmonic background. *Frohsinn* found this extremely awkward to sing, however, and a supporting harp accompaniment was provided at the first performance.<sup>26</sup>

Bruckner's last two works of this kind were both connected with the Akademischer Gesangverein. Although preoccupied during 1890 with revisions of earlier works, Bruckner found time to write a short male-voice chorus, *Träumen und Wachen*, a setting of words by Grillparzer in concise A–B–A form with a central section for solo tenor and 'humming voices' which he conducted during the University of Vienna's celebrations to mark the centenary of Grillparzer's birth on 15 January 1891. The cordial relations between composer and choir, strengthened by a successful Bruckner evening in December 1891, led to Bruckner being invited to write a choral piece specially for the Deutschakademisches Sängerkongress in Salzburg at the beginning of June 1892. Bruckner obliged with *Das deutsche Lied* for male voices and brass ensemble. The words were provided by Aurelius Polzer ('Erich Fels') from Graz. The work was given its first performance by three massed choirs, including the Vienna Akademischer Gesangverein, in the *Aula academica*, Salzburg on Pentecost Sunday, 5 June. As in *Sängerkongress*, Bruckner quotes deliberately from Kalliwoda's *Das deutsche Lied*. Antiphony between the brass and the voices reinforces the patriotic words and the combined forces apostrophize the power of German song as it resounds through the 'endangered land'. Bruckner the symphonist is very much in evidence throughout and it was climactic moments such as the chromatically rising first inversion chords at the words 'so sound forth, terrify the enemy and awaken our sleeping comrades' which no doubt prompted one of the reviewers of the first performance to describe the work as being 'shot through with the titanic power of his symphonic creations'.<sup>27</sup>

## The larger-scale works

The only large-scale secular piece to survive from the Kronstorf period is the first of the ‘name-day cantatas’, *Vergissmeinnicht* (WAB 93). It has a cantata-like format and is scored for eight-part mixed voice choir, four soloists and piano accompaniment. Its three versions (all dating from 1845) vary only in slight changes to the accompaniment figuration. There are seven short movements, all in a simple melodious style, though the final unaccompanied eight-part chorus shows a keen awareness of vocal colour and achieves a pleasing textural variety.<sup>28</sup> *Entsagen* (WAB 14) was composed c. 1851 for soprano or tenor soloist, mixed-voice choir and organ or piano. It is a ‘spiritual song’ in three sections, the outer sections in the form of a Protestant chorale and the middle section, for soloist, rather repetitious and unappealing in its arid three-part semi-contrapuntal style.<sup>29</sup>

More substantial are three occasional cantatas: *Heil, Vater! Dir zum hohen Feste* (WAB 61), a setting for six-part mixed-voice choir, three horns, two trumpets, and trombone of a text by Marinelli for Arneht’s name-day in 1852 and first performed at the abbey at the end of September; *Auf, Brüder! auf, und die Saiten zur Hand* (WAB 60), for male-voice quartet, male-voice choir, mixed-voice choir and wind band, written in July 1855 for Friedrich Mayr’s name-day; and the *Festgesang ‘Sankt Jodok spross aus edlem Stamm’* (WAB 15), for soloists, mixed-voice choir, and piano, completed in December 1855 for the name-day of Jodok Stülz, the St. Florian parish priest, and perhaps intended as a parting musical gift. In the coda of the second we have our first real glimpse of later Bruckner as the basses span almost two octaves and the pre-cadential harmonic movement colourfully avoids the obvious.<sup>30</sup>

By 1862 Bruckner was well established in the musical life of Linz. After his course with Sechter, he was beginning to spread his wings again under Kitzler’s tuition and had a renewed confidence in composing after a long self-imposed period of musical silence. Bishop Rudigier’s request for a cantata for the laying of the foundation stone of the Neuer Dom on 1 May 1862 fired Bruckner’s enthusiasm and he responded with the *Festkantate ‘Preisest den Herrn’* (WAB 16), to words by the theology professor Maximilian Prammesberger. It was written in about a month, scored for four-part male-voice choir, solo quartet, bass soloist, wind band, and timpani, and performed by *Frohsinn*, invited guest singers, and members of a local regimental band conducted by Lanz. There are eight short movements; material from the opening chorus is repeated twice – in the third and eighth movements – to bind the work together. In the fourth movement, the expansive phrase for bass soloist, ‘the building reaching like a giant into the blue heaven’, and repeated quaver accompaniment were

clearly blueprints for similar gestures in the later sacred and secular vocal music.<sup>31</sup>

Thirty years separate Bruckner's two arguably most 'patriotic' choruses, *Germanenzug* (WAB 70; 1863–4) and *Helgoland* (WAB 71; 1893), both settings of texts by the Viennese poet and journalist Dr August Silberstein.<sup>32</sup> Bruckner entered *Germanenzug* for a competition at the first Oberösterreichisches Sängerbundesfest, scheduled for August 1864 in Linz but postponed until June 1865 when its name was changed to the Oberösterreichisch-Salzburgisches Sängerbundesfest. His original intention was to use his *Zigeuner-Waldlied* (WAB 135) as the basis for his entry, but correspondence with Silberstein and Weinwurm during the summer of 1863 makes it clear that he discarded this and requested a more patriotic text.<sup>33</sup> Bruckner's and Weinwurm's entries were two of the eight compositions chosen to proceed to the final stages.<sup>34</sup> On the day of the competition (5 June 1865) first, second and third prizes were awarded according to the volume of popular applause, and *Germanenzug* had to take second place to Weinwurm's *Germania*.

Clearly conceived primarily for outdoor performance, *Germanenzug* is scored for male voices accompanied by a brass ensemble consisting of four horns, two cornets, four trumpets, three trombones, a tenor horn, and tuba. Structurally it is in three main sections, each with internal repetition. The first (comprising verses 1 and 2) is in D minor and the sharply dotted leaping octave motive at the beginning is a slightly altered variant of the beginning of *Preisest den Herrn*. There are also obvious links with other D minor works written before and after, the Requiem, Mass, and Symphonies '0' and 3. The slower middle section (verses 3 and 4) is the most adventurous harmonically. The third section (verses 5 and 6) begins with an exact repetition of the first section but then proceeds to D major and new material for the stirring conclusion of the piece. The outer sections portray German warriors going into battle, and the middle section (for male-voice quartet and four horns) is a song of the Valkyries who describe the delights of Valhalla, the destination of heroes who are killed in battle.<sup>35</sup>

*Helgoland* was commissioned by Eduard Kremser and the Wiener Männergesangverein for their fiftieth anniversary in 1893. Dates on the autograph and references in his letters give us some indication of Bruckner's slow but steady progress on the composition of the work between April and August, subsequent corrections, and concern that sufficient rehearsal time be spent in preparing it for performance.<sup>36</sup> The chorus, scored for male voices and symphony orchestra, was given its first performance at the Männergesangverein's anniversary concert in the Winter-Reitschule of the Hofburg palace on 8 October. Silberstein's poem narrates the story of the imminent invasion of the island of Heligoland by a Roman fleet and the

miraculous intervention of a wild storm which throws the ships on the rocks and saves the islanders. According to Ringer, Silberstein's 'storm-battered North Sea rocks' were a 'timeless symbol of the unified German nation which had finally come into existence in 1870'.<sup>37</sup> Bruckner's setting has that 'primitive' grandeur reminiscent of parts of the *Te Deum* and Psalm 150. Passages of a traditional cast intermingle with 'progressive' elements (bold voice-leading, advanced chromatic harmony, arresting orchestral colour) and the work has a symphonic feel which links it to the Eighth and Ninth Symphonies. It is on a much larger canvas than *Germanenzug* but a number of internal motivic connections guarantee overall unity. Critical reaction to the première was mixed, the most frequent criticism being that, while the orchestral depiction of the tempestuous elements was successful, the voices were over-stretched.<sup>38</sup>

## The songs

If *Helgoland* represents Bruckner at his most 'massive' in terms of combined choral and orchestral forces, the handful of songs show a much more intimate and even less well-known side of the composer. With one exception they were all written before his move to Vienna and betoken an acquaintance with the Lied repertoire of Mendelssohn and Schubert.

Only one of the songs composed in the St. Florian period has survived in complete form. The voice part of 'Mild wie Bäche' (WAB 138; c. 1845) is complete but the piano part is sketched in only a few places. In 'Wie des Bächleins Silberquelle' (*Duetto*) (WAB 137; c. 1845) for two sopranos and piano, the voice parts are again complete but there is no piano accompaniment apart from a few bass notes. The Mendelssohnian 'Frühlingslied' (WAB 68; 1851), a setting of a poem by Heine, was dedicated to Aloisia, Michael Bogner's daughter, described by Bruckner as a 'blossoming spring rose'.<sup>39</sup> During the St. Florian years, Bruckner also arranged folksongs for voice and piano accompaniment for Aloisia.

The dating of all four songs Bruckner composed during the Linz period is uncertain. On 30 October 1858, the composer wrote to Rudolf Weiwurm that he had written 'a little song'.<sup>40</sup> Although Max Auer surmised that this was a reference to 'Wie bist du, Frühling, gut und treu' (WAB 58), a setting of five verses from Oskar von Redwitz's *Amaranths Waldeslieder* intended for one of Mayr's musical evenings at St. Florian, Angela Pachovsky considers that it was probably composed in 1856 as Bruckner's 'farewell present to his music-loving patron on leaving St. Florian abbey'.<sup>41</sup> Far superior in its word-setting and use of the piano is 'Im April' (WAB 75), a setting of words by Emanuel Geibel which Bruckner conceived in the early 1860s and dedicated to Helene

Hofmann, one of his piano pupils. In the longer second half of the song Bruckner uses a sudden dynamic and harmonic contrast to underline the poet's frustration in not being able to find the appropriate sonority to capture the 'atmosphere of the April evening'. In his discussion of 'Mein Herz und deine Stimme' (WAB 79), a setting of a poem by Platen, and 'Herbstkummer', WAB 72, a setting of a poem by Ernst, Auer remarks that 'both songs have only curiosity value' and casts doubts on the authenticity of the former which was dedicated to Pauline Hofmann, Helene's sister.<sup>42</sup> Walther Dürr was more inclined to accept it as genuine Bruckner, however, and argued that it was firmly in the tradition of the Romantic Lied. Bruckner took care to provide an interpretation which does justice to its mood and imagery and preserves an equal balance between poem, vocal melody, and piano accompaniment.<sup>43</sup> The date of 'Herbstkummer' (April 1864) is corroborated by stylistic features such as a more mature grasp of harmony, careful integration of voice and accompaniment, and judicious use of word-painting, no doubt the result of experience gained in his studies with Kitzler (for whom Bruckner had already completed a number of song exercises between Christmas 1861 and August 1862; they range from incomplete sketches to complete compositions and are contained in the *Kitzler Studienbuch*). We return finally to the patriotic theme. In the early 1880s when Bruckner composed 'Volkslied' (WAB 94) as his competition entry for a 'hymn for the German people of Austria', he submitted his manuscript in two forms, one for unaccompanied male voices, the other for voice with suitably hymn-like piano accompaniment.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion

Bruckner's songs show a grasp of the medium but, like his piano and organ music, were occasional compositions written for others and displaying only occasionally the spark of greatness which was to illuminate much of his mature sacred and symphonic oeuvre. The secular choral works, the patriotic ones in particular, were extremely successful and popular during Bruckner's lifetime and for several years after his death. Stylistically, not least in the frequent use of atmospheric 'humming voices', they are 'locked into' and very much part of the nineteenth-century German choral tradition and are rarely performed today. Nevertheless, they provide us with a fascinating glimpse of the less serious side of the composer and enable us to experience many of the grand gestures of the symphonies on a miniature scale.