

Three Poems by Marie Luise Kaschnitz

Translation and Commentary: Hal H. Rennert

Musical Setting: John D. White

Listening Image

Recorded
The pounding of the pistons
The rolling wheels
Ringing of the telephone
Agnus Dei
Fleeting steps
Barking dogs in the suburb
Music box
Adding the sound
From the chest of a man
His wheezing
Getting shorter
Breaths of air
Superimposed
His memories
Of certain ocean breakers
Which I let dominate
Powerfully up the cliffs
While his breath
Getting smaller extinguishes.

Hörbild

Aufgenommen
Das Stampfen der Kolben
Die rollenden Räder
Telefongeklingel
Agnus Dei
Gerufene Namen
Flüchtende Schritte
Hundegebell in der Vorstadt
Orchestrier
Dazu das Geräusch
Aus der Brust eines Mannes
Seine keuchenden
Immer kürzeren
Atemzüge
Eingeblendet
Seine Erinnerung
An eine gewisse Brandung
Die ich überhandnehmen lasse
Mächtig felsaufwärts
Während sein Atem
Klein wird erlischt.

Andante ♩ = 84 **Hörbild**

Sop.

Pno.

66 Delos

Sop. 16 Or - ches - tri - on Da - zu das Ge - räusch Aus der

Pno.

Sop. 19 Brust ein - es Man - nes Sei - ne keuch - en-den Im - mer kürz - er -

Pno.

Sop. 22 en

Pno.

Sop. 26 *ritard.*

Pno. *ritard.*

poco meno mosso

A - tem -

Ten.

poco meno mosso

No Magic Incantation

Some replies
Could be opposed
Decapitating the young
Black walnut by the storm
And all those other
More frightful Gorgon heads.

No magic incantation
No gesture
Words written long ago
I will enter
In my text

Such as from
Thomas Aquinas
Because evil exists
God exists.

Kein Zauberspruch

Einiges wäre
Entgegenzuhalten
Der jungen von Sturm
Geköpften Schwarznuß
Und allen viel schrecklicheren
Gorgonhäuptern.

Kein Zauberspruch
Keine Geste
Worte einmal aufgeschrieben
Will ich meinen
Text einfügen.

Etwa diese
Aus Aquino
Weil das Böse ist
Ist Gott.

70 Delos

10

Sop. 17

Pno.

Kein Zau - ber - spruch Kei - ne Ges -

17

Sop.

Pno.

- te Wor - te ein - mal auf - ge - schrie - ben

21

Sop.

Pno.

mp

Will ich mein - em text ein - fig - gen Et-wa die-se Aus A-qui - no

26

Sop.

Pno.

pp

Weil das Bö - se ist, Ist Gott.

30

Sop.

Pno.

poco ritard

30

poco ritard

pp

Birds

Birds – a couple still
But how unequal now
One greedily pecking
Life's smallish leftover
Among the warm leaves
The other flown off
Its clear shadow
Gliding across the snowy field
Circling thrice
Each time paler yet
No cry from the clouds
No feather descending.

Vögel

Ein Paar Vögel noch immer
Aber wie ungleich jetzt
Einer gierig aufpickend
Den kleinen Lebensrest
Im warmen Laub
Der andere entflogen
Sein klarer Schatten
Gleitet übers Schneefeld
Zieht Kreise drei
Jder ein wenig blasser
Kein Schrei aus den Wolken
Keine Feder herab.

Vögel

Andante ♩ = 52 *Sop.* *mp* *mf*

Andante ♩ = 52 Ein Paar Vö - gel noch im

Pno. *mp dolce* *mf*

pedal ad libitum

Sop. mer A - ber wie un - gleich jetzt Ein - er gier - ig

Pno. *p* *mf*

Sop. 8 auf - pick - end Den klein - en Le - bens - rest Im warm - en Laub

Pno. *p*

Sop. 12 Der an - de - re ent - flo - gen Sein klar - er Schat - ten Glei - tet

Pno. *mp* *p* *mp*

8

Sop. ü - bers 3 Schnee - feld Zieht Krei - se drei

Pno.

16

Sop. Je - der ein we - nig blas - ser Kein Schrei aus dem

Pno.

19

Sop. Wol - ken Kei - ne Fed - er

Pno.

23

Sop. her - - ab, her - ab.

Pno.

27

poco piu mosso

poco piu mosso

poco ritard

Commentary:

Each of the three poems was first published in *Kein Zauberspruch* (1972), one of five volumes of poetry by Marie Luise Kaschnitz during her life-time (1901-1974). The poem "Vögel" (Birds) was actually written in the early 1960s, shortly after her husband, the art historian Guido von Weinberg-Kaschnitz, had died in 1958. One literary critic refers to this poem perceptively as a secular requiem ("ein weltliches Requiem"). Although there is a strong biographical element in Kaschnitz's writing, her range of themes is much deeper and wider. She shares with other German and other European writers the classical humanism of mid-twentieth century and straddles a complex and enlightened Weltanschauung as, for example, her friendships to Theodor Adorno, Paul Celan, Dolf Sternberger and Ingeborg Bachmann demonstrate. My fellow colleagues in the field of German Studies in North America are familiar with her famous short story, "Das dicke Kind" (The Fat Child), if for no other reason than its ubiquitous appearance in undergraduate textbooks. A selection of her poems from four collections appearing in German-speaking countries in Europe between 1957 and 1972 were included in *The Selected Later Poems of Marie Luise Kaschnitz*, translated by Lisel Mueller, Princeton University Press, 1980.

John White and I have collaborated on literary-musical projects for over thirty years. The *Kaschnitz Lieder* project grew out of a larger prospective monograph on the poetry and short prose of Kaschnitz and my research at the German Literature Archive in Marbach, Germany, where her literary estate, that is, her manuscripts, letters and papers (Nachlass) is located. I took up John White's challenge – with an eye and ear to possible successful musical settings – selecting ten of Kaschnitz's best poems from an oeuvre of over one thousand published and several dozen unpublished poems for translation. The three poems in the current issue of *Delos* represent an additional refinement of this challenge.