

Preface

Songs pervade Paul Dessau's artistic career like a recurrent leitmotif. This area of his oeuvre in particular, with its kaleidoscopic heterogeneity, impressively lays bare the wide-ranging approaches and competing alternatives available to composers in the twentieth century. At the same time his songs reflect problems and contradictions, as well as resilience and adaptability, inherent to a vulnerable artistic career during an age of political and social dislocation and upheaval.

Paul Dessau was born in Hamburg on 19 December 1894. His family's rather modest financial circumstances posed no obstacle to the active performance and study of music, particularly as his paternal ancestors included several Jewish cantors. After early violin lessons and training at the Klindworth-Scharwenka Conservatory in Berlin (1909–1912), Dessau resolved at first to take up the career of a conductor. This took him to Hamburg, Bremen, and, after an interruption for war duty, to the Cologne Opera under Otto Klemperer in 1919. At the same time he consistently pursued his own creative work, which found initial recognition when he was awarded the Schott Prize in 1925 for his *Concertino* for solo violin with flute, clarinet, and horn. From 1927, after appointments in Mainz and the Berlin City Opera, he worked in Berlin as a cinema conductor, in which capacity he also arranged and composed a great deal of music for the nascent movie industry. These same years witnessed his initial contacts with the labor movement. When the National Socialists seized power in 1933 he fled to Paris, where he primarily frequented emigré circles. In 1936 he was introduced to René Leibowitz, who initiated him into the twelve-tone method of Schoenberg and his followers. In 1939 he moved to the United States. His first stop was New York, where he turned increasingly to Hebrew compositions and where, in 1943, he began a close collaboration with Bertolt Brecht. Their collaboration became especially fruitful that same year when he relocated to Brecht's place of activity at that time, Hollywood, where he resumed his active musical involvement in the movie industry.

Dessau received American citizenship in 1945 and joined the American Communist Party the following year. In 1948 he returned to Germany and took a leading part in the musical renewal of the German Democratic Republic, resuming his collaboration with Brecht. Despite many conflicts with the East German cultural authorities, particularly in connection with his opera *Die Verurteilung des Lukullus* (1951), Dessau was from then on considered one of the outstanding musical representatives of East Germany and received a large number of honors and awards over the years. Eluding stylistic pigeonholes and adapting flexibly to prevailing demands, he continued to produce a musical oeuvre that embraces virtually every genre. He died in Königs Wusterhausen on 28 June 1979.

Dessau's voluminous posthumous estate, administered by the Archive of the Berlin Academy of Art, contains a total of more than two-hundred-fifty songs, many of them unpublished. Of these songs, dating from 1912 to 1979, we have chosen fifty-two for solo voice with or without piano. Together with those published in his lifetime (see the list in the appendix), these songs shed new light on Dessau's vocal music. They range from fledgling compositional efforts in the spirit of the *fin-de-siècle* to the Heine settings of his final years, inscribing an arch with a protean variety practically unknown until now. Works inspired by the tradition of the large-scale orchestral lied rub shoulders with wholly personal, autobiographical miniatures, not excluding the odd *pièce d'occasion*; "art songs" based on classical lyric poetry clash with chansons of straightforward political import. It was also our goal to limit our selection to Dessau's original compositions, and we therefore had to ignore his many arrangements, particularly of Hebrew songs and synagogue hymns.

The bulk of Dessau's songs survive in manuscript, and our edition respects the state of the text as found in sources concerned. We have therefore deliberately refrained from making editorial additions to those that survive in sketch form and lack dynamic marks. Added accidentals ("warning accidentals") appear in parentheses. In contrast, accidentals that Dessau himself bracketed in his manuscripts are reproduced without brackets. Natural signs that he placed on accidentals as a precaution when changing from \sharp to \flat within a bar have been removed in the interest of legibility. A few rests, identified by square brackets, have been added to the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* (No. 4) for guidance purposes. The spelling and punctuation in the words underlaid in the songs have been judiciously adapted to conform with modern usage, particularly with regard to the handling of double S (ss) and the letter β ("Eszett") in German (e. g. "küsst" instead of "küßt") and hyphenation ("Meis-ter" instead of "Mei-ster"). Commas and periods missing in the manuscripts have been added when deemed necessary from the context or conducive to an understanding of the meaning. Song texts have been left unchanged wherever the rightful owners want the orthographic peculiarities of the (printed) sources to be retained exactly as they stand (e. g. No. 32).

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Berlin, 28 June 2009

Axel Bauni

(Translation: J. Bradford Robinson)

50 *a tempo* *p* (court)

Elle est en pei- - ne et de pas-sa - ge,

a tempo (p) *leggiere* ³ (court)

52

L'â - me qui souf-fre sans co - lè - re,

mp leggiere ⁸ *loco* *p* *loco*

54 *leggiere*

et com-me sa mo-râle est clai - rel...

p

56 *leggiere e piano possibile*

É-cou-tez - la chanson bien sa - - ge.

mf *p* *p* *poco* *(mf)*

für Edda Schaller
Drei Lieder

(Heinrich Heine)
 für Mezzosopran allein
 (1974)

Paul Dessau

Herausgegeben von Axel Bauni

a) Zu fragmentarisch

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 80$

37(a)

A

leggiere *calmo* *pp*

Zu frag-men-ta-risch ist Welt — und Le — — — ben! — (M) —

Ich will mich zum deut-schen Pro-fes-sor be-ge — — — ben. Der weiß das Le — ben

zu-sam-men-zu-set-zen, und er macht — — — ein ver-ständ-lich Sys-tem da-raus; —

M Mit sei-nen Nacht — —

— müt-zen und Schlaf — — — — rock-fet-zen stopft — — — er die

Lü-cken des Wel — — — — — ten — baus, — — — — des Wel-ten-baus.

b) Anfangs...

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 108$

37(b)

p *sempre p* *p* *senza cresc.* *p*

An-fangs wollt ich fast ver-za — — — gen, und ich glaubt, ich trüg es nie; —

und ich hab es doch, — — — und ich hab es doch ge-tra —

— gen — A-ber fragt mich nur nicht, wie? A — ber fragt — mich nur nicht, wie?