

Booklet notes by Dr Avrohom Leichtling for Sterling CDS 1089

Raff: *Die Tageszeiten*, *Die Sterne*, *Morgenlied* and *Einer Entschlafenen*

Die Tageszeiten Opus 209 (1877):

Conventional wisdom has it that Joachim Raff composed eleven symphonies, notwithstanding the fact that he actually wrote twelve and possibly thirteen of them. Preceding his 'official' First Symphony (*An das Vaterland*), Opus 96, completed in 1861, Raff in 1854 wrote a Grand Symphony in E minor, WoO 18, a work known to have been given at least four performances before its score was lost. Raff composed what was published as his Eleventh Symphony (even though it appeared in print only posthumously) prior to his Eighth, thus leaving the numbering of the last four symphonies completely askew. Conventional wisdom also has it that Raff composed nine Concerti for solo instruments and orchestra: three for Piano (although only one is called by the proper name of Concerto), four for Violin (although only two are called Concertos) and two for Violoncello (which are properly entitled Concertos). Finally, conventional wisdom has it that Raff composed six Orchestral Suites (all of them in five movements), two of which are rightly Concertos without being called such, and one of which is comprised of at least two movements from the original lost First Symphony.

One learns from this that Joachim Raff, while certainly exhibiting some respect for the received tradition that dictated conventions for the naming of pieces, had strong enough confidence in his creative imperatives to enable him to discard blind adherence to those conventions when his instincts led him elsewhere. His willingness to throw out the baby with the bathwater (while keeping a firm grip on the bathtub!) effectively led him into direct conflict with virtually all exponents of "advanced romanticism," even as it enabled him to predict with shocking precision many of the essential advances in compositional technique that would occur a century after him. Our recognition and numbering of both Raff's concerti and symphonies will need to be re-evaluated once again when an additional work is taken into account, the four-movement choral symphony *Die Tageszeiten* (The Times of Day), which he blithely referred to as a concertante – for mixed chorus, piano solo and orchestra, begun in 1877 and completed the following year.

The musical noun Concerto has a number of cognate derivatives: Concertino, Concert Piece, Concertante. The only thing all these words have in common is the fundamental concerto principle itself, that is, the use of one or more solo instruments pitted against a larger body of instruments (the Baroque relationship between concertino vs. ripieno). In Raff's day, the standard definition of 'concerto' required having a single soloist and an architectural form consisting of three movements in the temporal configuration Fast-Slow-Fast. Raff, however, never felt himself limited by that narrow definition, especially in light of his interests in the music of other periods. It was only natural for him, therefore, to explore the possibilities of applying earlier methods to contemporary syntactical and rhetorical constructs.

The general architecture of the purely instrumental 18th century symphony grew primarily in size and scope throughout the 19th century. The Choral Symphony, a form having a vocal component and, hence, a text imposing specific dramatic compositional demands, as contrasted with the purely abstract orchestral symphony, never established a set form. One need only compare the first three movements of Beethoven's revolutionary Ninth Symphony to its finale to see the problem

immediately. The earlier Concert Fantasy, perhaps in some ways a sketch for this work, nevertheless offered another possibility by its alliance with the concerto principle. The Choral Symphony as first espoused by Beethoven, came to have many admirers and descendants all of whom are indebted to him to one degree or another.

It would seem inevitable that it should fall to Raff to devise the scenario in which the essential aspects of all forms of the symphony and the concerto would come together to create a hybrid exploiting the fundamental elements of both, taking sustenance not from the famous Beethoven

Symphony, but, rather, from Beethoven's far more radical, futuristic Concert Fantasy for Piano, Chorus and Orchestra, Opus 80. The resulting composition, *Die Tageszeiten*, Opus 209, was not referred to as either a symphony or a concerto, but a concertante. Laid out in four movements (fast – slow – scherzo – fast) which follow the general dramatic sequence of movements in the 19th century symphony, its individual structures have little to do with the conventions of symphonic construction – either as symphony or concerto – which is perhaps the reason Raff declined to identify it as a symphony per se (and despite the fact that there are hidden unifying thematic and motivic elements running throughout it – a characteristic more of the symphony than of the concerto). Beginning with an elaborate, pro-generative cadenza and containing many episodes typical of the concerto, the solo piano is not used consistently throughout the piece, thus seriously calling into question its standing as a concerto in the purest sense. The chorus, similarly, appears in all four movements, although it, too, is not necessarily the focus of attention.

What we have, then, is a construct made up of the primary elements of the symphony, concerto and oratorio arranged in such fashion that the usual declarative and connective tissue, the intermediate episodes and rhetorical devices, have been completely refashioned. Aside from Beethoven's Concert Fantasy, Raff's other principal formal antecedent would have been from Haydn's great oratorio, *Die Jahreszeiten* (The Seasons). From a procedural perspective, the first movement of *Die Tageszeiten* is no less than Raff's take on Beethoven's Choral Fantasy, even to its basic formal layout and its principal tonality, C major. Had it ended after only the first movement, *Die Tageszeiten* would be viewed as a latter-day descendant of Beethoven's earlier work. But, just as Haydn's oratorio had its four seasons, Raff built his concertante around four periods of the day, accordingly adding three additional movements, each shorter than the first even as their total duration is longer than the first movement alone. Telescoping Haydn's year into a single day, Raff also presents us one of his trademark, humorous paradoxes, and exhibits another prescient feature of his compositional method, compression, which in the last years of his life led him to some of the 19th century's most unusual experiments in form and content.

Raff began the composition of *Die Tageszeiten* in 1877 in Wiesbaden and completed it 1878 in Frankfurt after he had assumed the post of Director of the newly-established Hoch Conservatory of Music. The work was first performed from the original manuscript on Monday, 12 January 1880 in Wiesbaden at the 4th Symphony Concert of the Royal Theater. The orchestra was conducted by Wilhelm Jahn with Karl Faelton as piano soloist. The Theater's resident choir sang the choral parts. The full score and piano-vocal rehearsal score (for the chorus) were published by Breitkopf and Härtel, Leipzig, in July of 1880.

Raff's daughter, Helene, who wrote the text of the work under the pseudonym Helga Heldt, in her memoir of her father's life written for the occasion of his 100th birthday in 1922, referred to it as a cantata! Helene was 17 years old when she wrote the text

– a collection of bucolic country scenes and paeans to the common values of work and love more than a little reminiscent of Baron Gottfried Van Swieten’s text for the Haydn oratorio written in 1801. It is a delicious conjecture to suggest that Raff might have put his poetess daughter up to the task of fashioning a libretto similar to Van Swieten’s but in miniature – the times of the day in four movements, as opposed to the four seasons in four parts. Helene/Helga’s text is quite polished and accomplished for one so young, but this is not so very surprising or unexpected for its time and place, given the education and support likely provided by her dotting parents.

From a strictly formal perspective, the first movement of *Die Tageszeiten* is the most elaborate. The opening piano cadenza (*A capriccio*), like the beginning of Raff’s Suite for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 200, makes perfect sense from a 21st century perspective, in that it presents its thematic and harmonic ideas in an embryonic manner prior to giving them their crystallized, defined form. From a 19th century perspective, however, organizing the musical material in this fashion may have had the effect of seeming to begin the piece in the middle. The fragmentary nature of the musical narrative and its insistence on a single motive gives the impression that it is the culmination of the development of a much longer musical idea, rather than the predictive statement of a theme not yet ready for full emergence. By placing this de facto development at the head of the work, Raff has allowed himself the freedom to make all kinds of suggestions and to engage in a wide range of musical innuendo. When it abruptly ends, it makes for the starkest kind of contrast through the presentation of a clear-cut, almost childishly simple eight-bar theme which emerges with brilliant clarity. Raff was very fond employing this *creatio ex nihilo* device, the emergence of something out of the seeming chaos of nothing, the ‘And there was light’ moment (Haydn).

The new born theme is stated by unison strings, followed by a set of at least fourteen variations. It will later emerge that Raff is engaged yet again in one of his trademark deceptions: the theme and variations will ultimately be shown to be an elaborately disguised monothematic sonata form derivative in which the variations become longer and more involved, as would occur in the purely developmental episodes of a sonata form. It remains for the chorus’ entrance later in the piece to complete the ruse.

The second movement, *Andante*, in 6/8 and F major is, on the surface, a calm and intimate answer to the bravado of the first movement. The gentle, barcarolle-like inflections in both the orchestra and the chorus are mitigated by the piano, which appears to function as a kind of interpreter between the two forces. It makes comment on both the orchestral and the choral statements, and seems to float above them, sometimes in its own world, totally divorced from them. At other times it seems to provide a lieder-like accompaniment to each. There is a superficial suggestion of tripartite form: a quiet opening, a more agitated central section, and a quiet conclusion. A simple bar count of the movement’s 13 phrases reveals a very different picture, illustrated by the following graphic where O = Orchestra, C = Chorus, and P = Piano:

Phrase	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Ensemble	O	C-O	P	C-O	P	C-P-O	P-O	C-P-O	P-O	C-P-O	P-O	C-P-O	P-O
Bar count	21	14	14	21	21	14	12	18	28	14	7	18	18

Raff’s avoidance of 8-bar phrases is immediately apparent. More striking, though, are the underlying pairings primarily in multiples of seven (7, 14, 21, 28) or of six (12, 18) -bar phrases. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11 by 7s; 7, 8, 12, and 13 by 6s;

further, the sequence of 6 phrases of 7s followed by 2 of 6s is followed by 3 phrases of 7s answered by another 2 of 6s.) There are, of course, seven days in a week (the seventh being the Sabbath leaving six other days), and since the whole work is a poetic cycle about a single day, one senses a deeper, hidden structure and meaning behind its otherwise mild and gentle but clandestine, implicit animus.

The relative calm of the second movement is transformed in the third movement into a mysterious and almost creepy F minor *Allegro* (2/2), which provides an inverted view of the second movement's depiction of evening in the form of an agitated 'night-time' scherzo that barely rises above piano. It is not made up of the kind of hobgoblin music that populates the scherzi of Raff's Symphonies N° 3, 8, 9, 10 and 11 being considerably shorter than any of them. Buzzing and swishing triplets in the strings, taken over at points by a piano part almost entirely comprised of measured figuration throughout, colorfully illustrate the central second couplet of the poem (English translation by Alan Howe; emphasis in italics by the present writer):

Nur die Schatten alles dessen,
Was uns froh und trüb gemacht,
Schleichen heimlich und vergessen,
Bis zur Ruh' sie bringt die Nacht.

Only the shadows of everything
Which makes us glad and sad,
Creep secretly and forgotten
Until night brings them to rest.

Misterioso gives way to warmth in a comparatively brief trio (now in D flat major) which concludes in a virtual chorale. The piano and orchestra, without the chorus, return to an abbreviated and much transformed restatement of the opening in which the hot and cold elements of the movement come together. In the end, the piano is left alone with its sussurando of brittle, rushing triplets, before one last chorale-like cadence resolves to F major – but only at the very last moment.

With the passing of the warm evening and the cold night, dawn is now ready to break and a new day to begin. The dawn, in this case the opening of the fourth movement, resembles in miniature the portrayal of sunrise Raff wrote for the opening of his Eighth Symphony (*Frühlingsklänge* /Sounds of Spring) in 1877. In this concluding movement, the three elements (symphony, oratorio, and concerto) are most closely knit together. The principal theme of the first movement reappears here as an integral part, not simply as a cyclical reference point. Four quatrains constitute the text, and the musical setting divides, like the third movement, into 13 subsections. A somewhat higher-level view of the compositional structure, though, shows the movement to be divided into two equal parts, equal, that is, at least with respect to bar counts (and allowing for the fact that the tempo established in the first measure does not change until the work's coda). The first half accommodates the first three quatrains, whereas the second half is given over entirely to the fourth. Raff reserves his best pun for last: As the text provides an external 'statement of purpose', the succession of underlying tonalities of the four movements, C major – F major – F minor – C major, forms nothing less than an outline of the Dresden or plagal cadence – that is, it spells out "Amen".

Opus 186 (1873) and **Die Sterne**, WoO 53 (1880):

In Joachim Raff's vast catalogue of nearly three hundred works, there are only eighteen choral compositions, barely six percent of his total output. Although he composed two Psalm settings for chorus and orchestra (Psalm 121, WoO 8 of 1848, unpublished, and Psalm 130 *De Profundis* Opus 141 of 1867), aside from a relatively early setting of the *Te Deum*, WoO 16 (1853), also unpublished, there are no major liturgical compositions: no setting of the Mass, no *Requiem* or *Stabat Mater*, no *Weihnachtsoratorium* or Easter oratorio, indeed none of the "standard" church canticles, hymns or other liturgical texts commonly set to music by Composers in the 19th Century.

In the period between 1853 and 1874, Raff wrote numerous relatively brief choral songs to texts of different poets, mostly for unaccompanied male chorus. These were published, ultimately, in four different collections (Opp. 97, 122, 195 and 198) that were clearly not conceived as integrated compositions. The three remaining *a capella* choral works, written in 1868-9, are the closest Raff came to creating a legacy of shorter liturgical text settings: Four Antiphons for St. Mary (WoO 28), *Kyrie* (WoO 32) and *Ave Maria* (for eight-part double chorus), Opus 34.

Raff's *Deutschlands Auferstehung* ("Germany's Resurrection"), Opus 100 (1862-3), to a text by Müller von der Wera, was written in response to a competition for a cantata commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Nations sponsored by the Leipzig publisher C. F. Kahnt. It won the prize. His First Symphony (*An das Vaterland*) also won a competition at around the same time, and these two successes largely set Raff's public career in motion. It also signaled the beginning and the end of his short-lived period of overt German nationalism. Before that, *Dornröschen* ("Briar Rose" aka. "Sleeping Beauty"), WoO 19 (1855), would remain Raff's most significant choral work until the last half decade of his life, when he produced in fairly close order *Die Tageszeiten*, Opus 209 (1877), *Die Sterne*, WoO 53 (1880), and *Welt Ende-Gericht-Neue Welt*, Opus 212 (1879-81).

It should be borne in mind that Raff wrote many works for voice. In addition to numerous *lieder* (songs), he also wrote six operas the last of which (*Die Eifersüchtigen* / "The Jealous Ones") was composed at about the same time as the late choral works. At his death, Raff had a number of vocal projects on the drawing board, including an oratorio, John the Baptist.

Given the rather spotty evidence, one might conclude that Raff was not a choral composer *per se*. As with most all things Raffian, however, this is an illusion. Raff required an unusual challenge to set his creative juices flowing. The last three works are nothing if not unconventional solutions without precedent, and the results are wholly satisfying in form and content, and utterly original in their manner of construction and presentation. As with *Die Tageszeiten*, Raff's compositional interests were frequently at odds with the conventions of the day. His profound interest in J.S. Bach produced many examples of embedded fugues and other Baroque contrapuntal constructs rethought from the perspective of the late 19th Century. The shifting stylistic perspectives of his music, often within the same work, tended to drive his critics to condemn him as fundamentally heterodox. Raff ignored his critics, while at the same time producing a body of literature whose objectivism predicted many of the "new directions" of 20th Century composition.

Unlike the five pieces that constitute the cantata *Die Sterne*, WoO 53 (1880), the two components of Raff's **Opus 186** have no unifying title. They are listed simply as Opus 186a and 186b, and have no common thread in their subject matter save for the fact that they are diametrically opposite in subject, poetic style and content. Written in the spring of 1873 in Wiesbaden, both pieces were published separately by C.F.W. Siegel in July 1874. In May 1877, Siegel published versions arranged for piano and chorus with texts in German and English. Given the enormous appetite for choral music in the latter part of the 19th Century, especially in England, one would imagine, given Raff's reputation, that these works entered the repertory almost immediately. Interestingly, neither of Raff's early chroniclers, Albert Schäfer and Theodor Müller-Reuter, make reference to any known first public performances. The first modern edition appeared as part of Edition Nordstern's *Gesamtausgabe* (Complete Edition) of Raff's works in March

2009 in Stuttgart. Although there is no information regarding when these two pieces were first performed, the present CD unquestionably marks their recording debuts.

Opus 186a, *Morgenlied* (Morning Song) takes the well-known poem of Johann Georg Jacobi (1740-1814) as its text. Jacobi's poem, written in 1814, had been set to music previously by both Schubert and Mendelssohn. Raff provides a warm and mellifluous musical treatment in which all the high-flung, phantasmagorical romantic paeans describing a new born day are presented with concise and correspondingly unalloyed clarity. Scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings, the piece could easily have been a study for the longer but stylistically similar *Die Sterne*. Jacobi's text is constructed as three ten-line stanzas which follow the same rhyming and metrical scheme (1-2-2-1-1-2-1). Raff's setting, in G major, *Andante*, and in 9/8 meter, follows the dramatic progression of the poem rather closely. It soars majestically when the sun rises in the first verse: *O Sieh! Da strahlt die Sonne / Flerauf in voller Pracht!* (O see! The sun arising / In all his fullest might); is warm and majestic in its second verse: *Sie weckt den Ham, den wieder / Gesang und Lust belebt* (Love... Rouses the woods, that bidden / With song and gladness swell); jumps suddenly and unexpectedly to the unrelated key of E fiat major at the suggestion of sorrow and death, but returns gloriously to G major at the mention of heaven: *Liebe tröstet unter Sorgen. / Sie ruft zum ew'gen Morgen / Aus Grüßen einst empor* (Love can comfort every sorrow / She calls the endless morrow: / From the grave to heaven to rise). Formally, it is a through-composed, tripartite structure, A-B-C, in which part C (in addition to having its own content) also borrows from the preceding sections.

Opus 186b, *Einer Entschlafenen* ("To a woman who has passed away") is, on the surface, the polar opposite of *Morgenlied*. Nominally an elegy with a text by Arnold Börner, the four-verse, sixteen-line poem has little in the way of poetic flourish. It States its sentiments concisely and distinctly, but ends implicitly like Jacobi's verses, with praises for heaven above: *Entschwebe selig / Auf leuchtender Bahn / Zur ewigen Liebe / Elinan, hinan!* (In faith awaiting / To God's endless love / By heaven-lit pathway / Above, Above! – English version by J. Powell Metcalfe). Indeed, its Haiku-like content and brevity (20, 21, 18 and 20 syllables per verse, respectively) seem more like a mournful limerick (!). The poet in this case is the alter ego of the composer:

Arnold Börner was Joachim Raff's *nom de plume* when the composer turned his efforts to writing poetry rather than setting poetry to music. In this case, as with four of his six operas (*Samson*, WoO 20, *Die Parole*, WoO 29, *Benedetto Marcello*, WoO 46, and *Die Eifersüchtigen*, WoO 54) he performed both honors. Written for similar forces as the *Morgenlied* (minus the trumpets), *Einer Entschlafenen*, in F minor, *Moderato*, 4/4, is at first requiem-like, with an extended orchestral introduction leading up to the chorus' entrance. The second verse is sung by a solo soprano (in this recording, a trio of sopranos from the chorus - an alternative direction sanctioned by the composer in the score). While subdued and solemn for the first three verses, there is accumulating energy in the orchestra during the third verse, which leads to a sunnier, F-major conclusion (*Allegro*), providing a parallel dramatic release to the poems concluding words of comfort and faith.

In the chronology of Raffe's creative life, the year 1880 was largely given over to choral and vocal music. In January, *Die Tageszeiten* received its first performances. At the same time, Raff was engrossed in his choral magnum Opus, *Welt Ende—Gericht—Neue Welt* (The End of the World—Judgment— New World), Opus 212, which he had begun in 1879 but which would not be completed until 1881. At around the same time, he also

wrote the song cycle *Blondei de Nesle*, Opus 211, to texts by his daughter Helene (aka. Helge Heidt). Shortly after completing the song cycle, Raff began the third of his works to use his daughter's poetry, **Die Sterne** (The Stars), WoO 53, which was completed in the fall. The juxtaposition of the liturgical End of the World with the mystically astronomical Cantata provides an interesting yet insoluble mystery — what would have drawn Raff to such philosophical opposites, such that he would write pieces devoted to each at literally the same time? Adding to the mystery is the fact that during the Summer, he began to write the libretto for *Die Eifersüchtigen*, a comic opera about jealousy in marriage. In 1880, Raff had already been deeply involved with the Hoch Conservatory of Music in Frankfurt as its director for two years, and had faced serious personnel issues within his ranks. It is not hard to conjecture that one of Raff's coping mechanisms could very well have involved taking the insidious intrigues of running the conservatory of music and transmogrifying them into an opera about marital fidelity. The connection between ruminations about the Stars and The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (and what follows in their wake) is another matter altogether, and would make a fascinating study (though beyond the scope of this commentary). Both works, however, end on an uplifting and positive note - one on a principle of faith, the other in *Ja, in jenen lichten Fernen / über dir auch Tag und Nacht, / wie ob Sonne, Mond und Sternen / waltet eine höh're Macht.* (Yes, in those bright distant lands / above you both day and night, / whether by sun, moon or Stars / a higher power rules – translation by Alan Howe). Raff, while appearing to hedge his bets philosophically, covered all his bases metaphorically and arrived at an essentially corresponding conclusion spiritually: the one specifically religious, the other essentially secular.

The text of *Die Sterne* follows no particular dramaturgical curve. It is not a narrative, it tells no story, and espouses only the most generic kind of poetic imagery and philosophy. It consists of five poems which contemplate the idea of stars and what they represent in various contexts. Raff alights on key phrases within each poem and generates therefrom the musical structures and dramatic flavor and flow of each piece. At the highest level, the work is nominally a cycle of choral songs in and around the key of F major. Each of the five movements is an independent unit. There is little in the way of common materials among them. While not a neo-classical work per se, absolute formal, harmonic and thematic clarity are the composition's guiding principles. Although containing several fugal episodes, the statement of the materials of each song is direct, and presented without elaborate development. *Die Sterne* is scored for 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani and strings. It was first published in 2009 as part of Edition Nordstern's *Gesamtausgabe*, and, so far as can be determined from the available source documentation, is being given its première performance on this recording.

I - *Vom Firmamente blinkt Sternenglanz* (The Stars beam down from the firmament), F major, 4/4, *Andante, quasi Allegretto*:

The first poem of the cantata consists of six verses constructed as a sequence of 4 - 4 - 5 lines, repeated once, with the rhyming scheme a-b-a-b / a-b-a-b / a-b-b-a-a. Its subject matter is impersonal, mysterious and suggestive. Raff's setting is sectional, in that each of the six parts of the poem is given its own thematic and motivic ideas which tend to flow out of one section and into the next. The opening chorale-like statement is built on the simplest of harmonic and contrapuntal principles — utilizing what amounts virtually to 1st or 2nd species counterpoint, in which all voices move either in the same rhythm or in the relationship of 2:1. Played by divided violins in their middle and upper registers, the music illustrates the text quite literally — suggesting the calm, cool mystery of night-time stars in the sky. The choral entrance is at first imitative, but

quickly settles into completely homophonic textures in which all the voices move in a common, shared rhythm. There is somewhat more movement from the orchestra in the second verse, and a fugal exposition in the chorus for the third verse set against dotted rhythms in the strings, which are eventually taken over by the full orchestra. After a brief climax at the end of the third verse, the fourth and fifth verses take elements from the previous sections and work them together, reaching another brief climactic moment in the sixth verse. The movement ends by bringing back a variant of the opening chorale, now supported with additional woodwind coloration which fades to a *pianissimo tutti* in F major. The chorus, which was absent at the opening of the movement, is absent at its end, as well.

II - *Es schaut der Lotse auf der See* (The pilot at the sea), F minor, 9/8, *Andante*:

The second poem contains three seven-line verses with the rhyming scheme a-b-c-b-d-d-b, and whose persona changes from the abstract to the specific: "the pilot at the sea looks up to the heights," "the astronomer too looks up," and "many a heart looks into the ether." The chorus is the primary focus here and sings virtually a cappella throughout. The orchestra provides a bare, minimalist accompaniment that flits back and forth between winds and strings, and serves more as musical punctuation than a tone painting. The choral writing, intended perhaps to sound like a folksong setting, plays with unison singing which becomes two-part counterpoint (doubled at the octave) and, finally, returns to being fully homophonic as in the first movement. Musically, the second and third verses consist of two nearly identical repetitions of the first verse, thus reinforcing the suggestion of an old folksong spiffed up in "modern" dress. It is the briefest of the five movements and has but one *tutti*, an unexpected final *sforzando* F major chord at the conclusion.

III - *Heil und freundlich lacht der Gestirne Pracht* (The Stars' splendor laughs brightly and kindly), A major, 4/4, *Adagio (quasi Andante)*:

The structure of the third poem, which contains three verses, is freer both in its rhyme scheme and its metrical patterns. It creates the effect of blank verse. Its first two verses contain six lines, the third verse, five. Subjectively, it begins joyfully, descends into suggestively menacing imagery, then resolves positively, if somewhat ambiguously. Raff's setting is rather literal and conveniently falls into a clear tripartite A-B-A structure, the first such "traditional" form in the piece. Lest we be deceived by this, however, the music is the most devious of the five pieces in the cantata. Harmonically, it shifts between simple diatonic A major in its outer sections, and creepily syncopated chromatic slithering in its central section, where the text implies danger and the fiery tail of a comet. The choral writing is the most consistently polyphonic of the five movements, and is, like the second movement, quite brief. The mixture of coy, clucking charm and insidious devilry (like the sharp, alcoholic kick of the sweet-tasting liquor in the center of your bonbon) is a typical Raffian confection in miniature.

IV - *Ein Stern der Höhen fällt* (A Star high up falls), A flat major, 6/8, *Largo*:

The fourth poem contains two verses of 6 and 12 lines, whose rhyme scheme creates three-line units in the pattern of a-a-b. The first verse sets the tone for the entire musical setting: *Ein Stern der Höhen / fällt, kaum gesehen, / gleich einem Traum, / eilt mit den Winden, / ein Grab zu finden / im Weltenraum.* (A Star high up / falls hardly seen, / like a dream, / hurries with the winds / to find a grave / in space). The musical setting is, like the third movement, also clearly tripartite (A-B-A), but with a major difference. The opening section, in A flat major, contains one of the most exquisitely beautiful orchestral passages in Raff's entire output — a lengthy cantilena for strings (and later, clarinets) but largely without the basses and featuring a solo French horn. At

key points, divided first violins suggest the words *fällt, kaum gesehen* with rapidly descending showers of notes over the ever-sustained, seemingly arhythmical background. It is 83 measures, nearly half the movement, before the chorus enters, except that the entire choral section drops down to E major. The choral portion (itself a tripartite structure containing momentary "falling Star" references) is entirely homophonic, with both harmonic support and twinkling decoration in the orchestra partially derived from the clarinets figuration in the opening section. Its materials are essentially a variation of the horn's opening melody. The word setting is gently fragmentary and follows the a-a-b structure of the poem's verses. The instrumentation is reduced to winds, horns and strings. After the chorus concludes, the music returns to A flat major, with the horn's opening monologue fleshed out and given to the whole orchestra. A few brief references to the earlier falling stars signals the end of the movement, which concludes peacefully, but not without a hint of mystery, on a sustained A flat major chord, filled in as an upside-down pyramid.

V - *Wenn das Aug' in nächt'ger Stille* (When the eye in night-time silence), F major, 4/4, *Allegro*:

After the variant forms of the first four poems, the fifth assumes a straightforward structure consisting of four four-line hymn-like verses with the same metrical and rhyming scheme (a-b-a-b). The first two verses ask questions, culminating in: *Sagt er nicht, ihr leises Mahnen /Botschaft sei von höh'rem Licht* ("Doesn't it say that their quiet exhortations / are a message from a higher light?").

The final question is answered: *Frommer Glaube trüget nicht* ("True faith does not deceive"), and ends: *waltet eine höh're Macht* ("a higher power rules"). Viewing the questions and the answers as the key points in the poem. Raff constructs his final movement directly parallel to them. The movement opens with a chorale whose character is wholly different from the beginning of the cantata. There, the slow-moving, seemingly arhythmical chorale effect was intended to suggest impersonal, detached distance. Here, preceded by a quiet roll on the timpani, the chorale is stated in a much faster tempo and in colorful wind instruments. The chorus enters over string *tremolandi* intoning the first two verses of the poem in unison, over unstable harmony, disposing of them, as it were, as quickly as possible so as to get to the all important message of faith with which the poem (and the cantata) concludes. Choral unison gives way to four-part chorale on the words "*Frommer Glaube trüget nicht*", and the third verse, in "chorale style," serves both as preparation for and transition to the final verse, which (in a construct similar to the final movement of *Die Tageszeiten*) occupies two-thirds of the cantata's finale.

*Ja, in jenen lichten Femen
Über dir auch Tag und Nacht,
Wie ob Sonne, Mond und Sternen
Waltet eine höh're Macht.*

(Yes, in those bright distant lands
above you both day and night,
whether by sun, moon or stars,
a higher power rules.)

Like the Book of Esther which does not mention the Almighty at all (and thus underscores the concept of Divine Presence in everything), 17-year-old Helene provided a similarly veiled answer, one which perhaps was suited to an "enlightened", secular age, but which came to a spiritual conclusion, anyway.

Raff's setting of this all-important verse reverts to his ecclesiastical fugal mode (and is very much in the same character and style as many parts of *Welt Ende*) by providing the most extended and elaborate polyphonic music of the entire work. All is joyful and

resolute. At the fugue's conclusion, on the Word "*macht*", the full orchestra and chorus land on a jarring diminished 7th chord (the "traditional" signifier of fear and awe), which is quickly resolved to F major, wherein the final verse (preceded by "*Frommer Glaube...*") is restated as a full setting of the movements opening chorale with summarizing coda.

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