

Unser lieben Frauen Traum (Our dear Lady's dream)

Johan Baptist Joseph Maximilian Reger (1873-1916)

Unser lieben Frauen Traum

Like many carols, the German text of the *Unser lieben Frauen* is anonymous, and pulled from a religious folk song, or **Volkslied**. Unlike many carols, Reger produced an original composition, apart from the existing folk melody, to assemble a sacred, unaccompanied motet for mixed choir. The piece was posthumously collected and published as the fourth of *Acht geistliche Gesänge* (Eight Sacred Songs) Opus 138.

The text speaks of a dream that Mary had of a tree growing under her heart, representing Jesus. In this delicate, contemplative piece indicative of Reger's late-career expressive, but underlyingly conservative style, the first two stanzas are set the same, in 3/4 time for SATB, but performed with different dynamics using the same notes:

*Und unser lieben Frauen, der
traumet ihr ein Traum
wie unter ihrem Herzen
gewachsen wär ein Baum.*

*Und wie der Baum ein Schatten
gäb wohl über alle Land:
Herr Jesus Christ der Heiland, also ist er genannt.*

But the third stanza:

*Herr Jesus Christ der Heiland ist unser Heil und Trost,
mit seiner bitterm Marter hat er uns all erlöst.*

...is in common, or 4/4 time, and set for six voices, dividing both soprano and bass, creating tension and emphasis on a final fortissimo "hat er uns all erlost" (*he has redeemed us all*) line, which then immediately dissolves to a pianissimo echo.

Watch & Listen

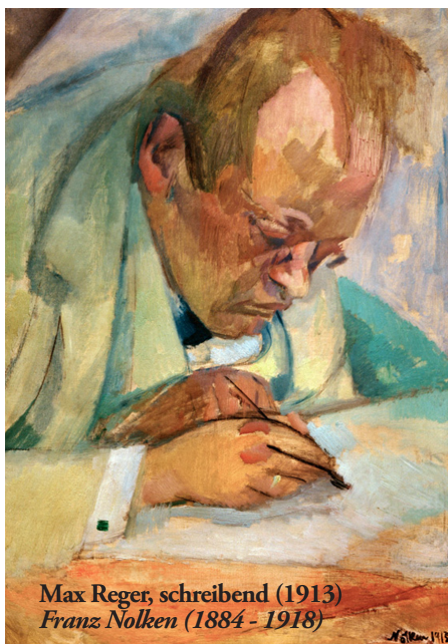
Acht geistliche Gesänge, Op. 138: No. 4, Unser lieben Frauen Traum - Calmus Ensemble

Maximum Reger: 2017 Documentary film by Will Fraser (Trailer [here](#))

Max Reger: Fantasy and Fugue on B-A-C-H Op. 46
Balint Karosi, organ

The "Giant in The Shadows"

Composer origin stories always seem to have - apocryphal or not - moments like this: at the invitation of his uncle, a fifteen-year-old Max Reger attended performances of Richard Wagner's operas *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal* at the **Bayreuth Festival** in 1888, and it changed his life.



Already a student of piano, organ and violin, Reger's early compositions, after studying with the legendary **Hugo Riemann**, led him to academic appointments in Weisbaden, Munich, and then Leipzig, where he was appointed professor at the Royal Conservatory in 1907, and began a rise in fame that saw him touted in some circles as a best hope for the future of German music alongside **Arnold Schoenberg**.

Reger worked at a staggering pace, during a era of whirlwind, and widespread socio-economic and political changes in Europe. But his idiosyncratic combination of Romantic generative principles and older, formal logic, although respected by modernist colleagues, was controversial. And not

unlike Mendelssohn (see notes to *Im Advent*) who also flirted with contradiction between romantic expressiveness and neoclassical formalism, has been unduly dismissed by history.

Too soon (as many) Max Reger died of a heart attack at the age of 43 during an exhaustive tour, leaving behind 146 opus numbers and a vast amount of uncataloged music exploring every major genre except opera.

Further Reading

History and Max Reger

By Leon Botstein for *Oxford Academic Musical Quarterly*

Why does everyone hate Max Reger?

Damian Thompson for *The Spectator*

Max Reger (1873-1916)

The Mahler Foundation