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The Ossianic Maiden Colma in Compassionate View: Ferdinand Hiller's "Colma's Klage" (1873) and Vinzenz Lachner's *Die Klage der Colma* (1874)

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Abstract

The widespread, positive reception of Ossianic poems in Germany and Austria inspired many musical settings from Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and perhaps also Schumann. Settings of the poetic narrative of Colma, which relates the anguish of a maiden discovering that her brother and her lover have slain each other in mortal combat, were composed by Zumsteeg, Reichardt, Schubert, and Weber. This essay examines two later settings composed in the 1870s by Ferdinand Hiller and Vinzenz Lachner. While the settings are undeniably effective in their use of common idioms of German composition in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, they are deeply conservative, hampered by a loyalty to cultural history and musical convention on the one hand but overtaken in depth of musical daring by Brahms and Wagner on the other.

Keywords: Ossian, Ossian reception—Germany, Ossian reception—Austria, James Macpherson, Colma, Ossian—musical settings, Ferdinand Hiller, Vinzenz Lachner

The enthusiastic reception, in German-speaking lands, of the poems of Ossian from the late eighteenth century is by now well documented.¹ Besides Goethe, Herder, Hölderlin and Schiller, all the prominent writers and poets—Bürger, Jean Paul, Klopstock, Lenz, Moritz, Novalis, Tieck, Uhland—came under the spell of the poems that James Macpherson had rendered from the Gaelic of his native Scottish Highlands into English: *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh, 1760); the resounding success of the anonymously published *Fragments* was followed by the author's *Fingal* (London, 1762) and *Temora* (London, 1763) and thence, via

1. See Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, *"Homer des Nordens" und "Mutter der Romantik": James Macphersons "Ossian" und seine Rezeption in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004) and Howard Gaskill, ed., *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004). Pioneering research began a century earlier with Rudolf Tombo, *Ossian in Germany: Bibliography, General Survey, Ossian's Influence on Klopstock and the Bards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1901; reprint 1966). I am grateful to Howard Gaskill for critical comments on this essay.

the combined edition, *The Works of Ossian* (London, 1765) found their way rapidly into other European languages, including German.²

Ossian, indeed, has been recognized as an essential point of reference for German Romanticism. Schiller, like Goethe, Lenz and Moritz, was not interested so much in the insular obsession around the poems' authenticity.³ Rather, like most of his colleagues, he viewed the poems solely from an aesthetic perspective.⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder and others in Europe were well aware of the authenticity debate. *The Report of the Highland Society of Scotland* (1805), edited by Henry Mackenzie, concluded that Macpherson had based his work on the popular ballads of the Highlands, "incorporating some traditional plots and passages of accurate translation in long poems spun from his own imagination."⁵ Yet for Herder there was a genuine core of tradition behind Macpherson's adaptations, especially in the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. But he did not think Denis's verse translation of 1768–69 was suitable for the poetic language of Macpherson's original, and Denis recast his version in 1784 to accord with Macpherson's "carefully corrected, and greatly improved" edition, *The Poems of Ossian* (London, 1773). Denis's was the fourth of fourteen complete German translations to appear up to 1924.⁶ It is not surprising, then, that musicians in Germany were equally overcome with excitement at discovering these poems, particularly when Goethe included a masterly translation of most of "The Songs of Selma" and "Berrathon" in his sensational novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), and when Ossian was endorsed by a cultural historian of Herder's quality.⁷

2. See Howard Gaskill, ed., *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, with an introduction by Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); also Paul Barnaby, "Timeline: European Reception of Ossian," in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, xxi–lxviii. The first (piecemeal) translations were French (1760), Dutch (1762), and German (also 1762). Melchiorre Cesarotti translated *Fingal* into Italian in 1763 and produced his first full edition of the poems in 1772. The first complete translation of the poems in any language, however, was the German version by Michael Denis, a Jesuit priest from Vienna, who cast his translation, *Die Gedichte Ossians, eines alten celtischen Dichters* (1768–69), in the form of hexameters. Translations of Ossian into other languages followed, often at an interval of twenty or thirty years.

3. The difficulty of restricting discussion of the poems to the issue of authenticity is evident in Rachel Zuckert, *Herder's Naturalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 223–48. In the last thirty years there has been a shift from the field of philology to one of mentality, to study of the character of Macpherson, his cultural and political context, and to the far-reaching influence of the poems on Romanticism.

4. Wolf Gerhard Schmidt, "'Menschlichschön' and 'kolossalisch': The Discursive Function of *Ossian* in Schiller's Poetry and Aesthetics," in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 176.

5. See Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), 3.

6. Howard Gaskill, "Introduction: Genuine Poetry . . . Like Gold," in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 15.

7. See Herder's widely disseminated essay, "Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian und Lieder alter Völker: einige fliegende Blätter [1773]," in Hans Dietrich Irmscher, ed., *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1995), 7–62.

As for influence of the Ossian poems on major composers, it is sufficient to note here the effect on Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and perhaps also Schumann.⁸ These composers lived at a time when the sensation of Ossian was novel and compelling as an incentive to composition, albeit (in Beethoven's case) unacknowledged and guardedly so (in the case of Mendelssohn's Overture); but there is no question that Beethoven prized Ossian, for in requesting copies of his favorite writers from his publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel, in a letter of August 8, 1809 he named those authors as Goethe, Schiller, Ossian, and Homer.⁹ For his part Schubert did not adopt Denis's translation of Ossian in his settings of 1815–1817 but the German version of Edmund von (de) Harold published in 1782.¹⁰ On the other hand, for his strophic setting of “Kolma's Klage” (D. 217) Schubert used Johann Friedrich Reichardt's versification of the poem in the “Lieder nach Ossian” from his second volume of *Lieder der Liebe und der Einsamkeit* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1798).

The poetic narrative of Colma, which relates the anguish of a maiden discovering that her brother and her lover have slain each other in mortal combat, first appeared in Fragment X (she is unnamed there) and was later integrated into “The Songs of Selma,” in Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. Poems such as these in translation not only maintained their huge appeal for German-speaking readers throughout the nineteenth century but also produced notable settings: by Johann Rudolf Zumsteeg (1760–1802) in 1794 or Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752–1814) a decade later, and above all by Schubert in 1815 (“Kolma's Klage”). In that same year Carl Maria von Weber made a strophic setting for voice and harp (“Was stürmet die Haide herauf?”).¹¹ The later settings of “Colma” by Ferdinand Hiller (1811–1885) and by Vinzenz Lachner (1811–1893), brother of Schubert's friend Franz Lachner, merit attention. They do so not just by the coincidence of birth and proximity of publication dates but because they show a high degree of craftsmanship

8. See discussion of Beethoven's, Mendelssohn's, and Schubert's relationship to Ossian in James Porter, *Beyond Fingal's Cave: Ossian in the Musical Imagination* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019), respectively 102–12, 113–22, 143–45; also John Daverio, “Schumann's Ossianic Manner,” *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 21, no. 3 (1998): 247–73.

9. Porter, *Beyond Fingal's Cave*, 103.

10. In imitation of Macpherson, von Harold published a three-volume prose translation, *Die Gedichte Ossian's: eines alten Celtischen Helden und Barden* in Düsseldorf in 1775, with a second edition in 1782; his *Poems of Ossian lately discover'd* appeared simultaneously in German and English in 1787; a later edition was *Neu-entdeckte Gedichte Ossians übersetzt von Freiherr von Harold*, 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Dänzer, 1798). Schubert used the versions of von Harold in his early Ossian-related songs; see John Reed, *The Schubert Song Companion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 351–52; for a description of von Harold and his methods see Alexander Gillies, *Herder und Ossian* (Berlin: Juncker und Dünnhaupt, 1933), 98–99.

11. Appointed Director of the Opera in Prague, Weber created the song for Georg Reinbeck's tragedy *Gordon und Montrose*, which was produced there on November 19, 1815. John Warrack, *Carl Maria von Weber*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 168 has the erroneous date of November 18.

despite their conventional style: in Hiller's case (1873) for soprano with piano accompaniment,¹² in Lachner's (1874) for mezzo-soprano and orchestra.¹³

These two settings by prominent, well-connected composers typify the appeal of the poem at a juncture of serious armed conflict in Europe.¹⁴ Two other settings of "Colma" precede them by a few years: those by August Walter (1821–1896), for voice and piano (1847) and Wilhelm Fritze (1842–1881), for piano solo, op. 7, no. 1 (1866). But editions in the form of scores, manuscript or published, are difficult of access or, in Fritze's case, untraced.¹⁵

Hiller's "Colma's Klage"

Ferdinand Hiller based his setting of "Colma's Klage, nach Ossian, für eine Sopranstimme mit Begleitung des Pianoforte," op. 153, no. 3 on the 1775 translation by Edmund von Harold.¹⁶ The setting was published by the Leipzig firm of Fr. Kistner, who brought out most of Hiller's works from his six Rückert songs, op. 18 to his op. 201, the *Capriccio affetuoso* for piano. "Colma's Klage," dedicated to "Fräulein Resie München," is the third of four songs in his op. 153, the others being, first, "Und als Maria nach Jerusalem wollt' geh'n," second, an arietta, "Caro Autor di mia Doglia," and last the folksong-like "Wär' ich ein Vöglein."¹⁷

Hiller's life is well documented.¹⁸ He studied with Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837), who took him to visit Beethoven in Vienna, where he famously cut off a lock of the dead composer's hair.¹⁹ During his professional career as pianist and orchestral conductor,

12. In George Kinsky's *Musikhistorisches Museum von Wilhelm Heyer Katalog in Cöln*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Kommissionen-Verlag von Breitkopf und Härtel, 1910–16), Kinsky includes autograph sketches by Hiller for the "Colma" setting (No. 1217), dated "2.3 August 69" and with "für Tony" (Hiller's wife, Antonka) inscribed on the first of three pages. This dedication does not appear on the published score of "Colma's Klage."

13. Cited by Matthias Wessel, *Die Ossian-Dichtung in der musikalischen Komposition* (Laaber: Laaber-Verlag, 1994), 88–89.

14. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 had recently ended with over 28,000 German dead and 88,500 wounded (with five times that on the French side).

15. Fritze published his "Kolma's Klage" as the first of his *Bilder aus Ossian: Fünf Clavierstücke* (Bremen, 1866).

16. *Die Gedichte Ossian's*, cited in n. 10 above.

17. No. 1 was dedicated to "Frau Therese Ravené" and no. 4 to "Fräulein Marie Sartorius." The latter had sung three songs from Hiller's op. 138 in Cologne on July 3, 1871. The second song has no dedication. On Hiller's artistry as a Lieder composer generally (especially his numerous Heine settings), see Ulrich Linke, "Überraschungen eines Konservativen: Ferdinand Hillers Liedschaffen: Ein Überblick und einige Details," in Peter Ackermann, Arnold Jacobshagen, Roberto Scoccimarro, and Wolfram Steinbeck, eds., *Ferdinand Hiller: Komponist, Interpret, Musikvermittler* (Kassel: Merseburger, 2014), 263–305.

18. His own writings include: *Musikalisches und Persönliches* (Leipzig, 1876) and *Erinnerungsblätter* (Cologne, 1884); see also Reinhold Seitz, ed., *Aus Ferdinand Hillers Briefwechsel (1826–1881)* (Cologne: Arno Volk-Verlag, 1958).

19. See Russell Martin, *Beethoven's Hair: An Extraordinary Historical Odyssey and a Scientific Mystery Solved* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000).

he came to know Mendelssohn, Schumann (who dedicated his Piano Concerto to him), Berlioz, Brahms, Chopin (whose Nocturnes, op. 15 are inscribed to him), Rossini, and Wagner. Productive as a composer with over two hundred works, his influence in Germany in particular was considerable.²⁰ Regarded as a conservative in the contested world of German music in mid-century, he recommended both Brahms and Max Bruch, his pupil, as his successor to the post of municipal Kapellmeister for Cologne, where he served from 1850 to 1884.²¹ As recent studies have shown, members of the circle around Franz Liszt (such as Hans von Bülow) launched anti-Jewish attacks on Hiller when he criticized Liszt's conducting at the Aachen Music Festival of 1857.²²

Hiller completed the songs of op. 153 during his time in Cologne as music director of the Lower Rhenish Music Festival.²³ His "Colma's Klage" consists of 342 measures, divided into segments according to the textual narrative. The overall style is reminiscent of Wagner partly because the text is set in contrasting recitative and arioso passages: Hiller's own attempts at opera, however, apart from *Die Katakomben* (1862) were mostly unsuccessful.²⁴ Hiller's setting of "Colma" is quasi-operatic, distinct in style and tone from a solo-voice cantata, a substitute, in effect, for a staged monologue:

SECTION	TONALITY	METER	TEMPO MARKING
Es ist Nacht, ich bin allein (mm. 1–25)	B minor	♩4	Moderato
Entsteig', O Mond, dem Gewölk (mm. 26–68)	G major	@4	Andante espressivo
Hier ist der Fels (mm. 69–183)	B minor	#4	Allegro con fuoco

20. He lived and worked in Frankfurt, Leipzig, Düsseldorf, Cologne, and Dresden as well as Paris, where he was conductor at the Italian Opera (1852–53).

21. Hiller's successor in Cologne, Franz Wüllman, propagated the music (shunned by Hiller) of Liszt, Wagner, and Richard Strauss. The Viennese critic Eduard Hanslick contributed a six-page obituary of Hiller three months after his death; see Michael Haas, *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Music Banned by the Nazis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 53.

22. See Beverly Jerold, "Zukunftsmusik/Music of the Future: A Moral Question," *Journal of Musicological Research* 36, no. 4 (2017): 311–35; and Jerold, "A Vindication of Ferdinand Hiller," *Journal of Musicological Research* 37, no. 2 (2018): 141–65.

23. It was at a garden party in Hiller's house during the festival, in June 1862, that his friend Moscheles met Brahms, who played his *Variations on a Theme of Handel*, op. 24, composed the year before; see Mark Kroll, *Ignaz Moscheles and the Changing World of Musical Europe* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 145.

24. John Warrack, *German Opera from the Beginnings to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 380.

Salgar, Salgar! (mm. 153–83)	B minor	#4	Allegro con fuoco
Siehe, der stille Mond erscheint (mm. 184–241)	B major	#4	Poco meno dolce
Ihr war't mir beide (mm. 242–86)	C major–E minor	#4	Andante mosso
Gebt der Gruft die Todten (mm. 287–42)	E minor–B major	§4	Andante sostenuto

Example 1. Structure of Hiller's "Colma's Klage."

The Wagnerian drift of the setting is established from the start, as the bass in the piano part holds a low pedal F# against a threefold procession of thirds in the right hand that begins as a dissonant B–G and G–E followed by a descent to a B-minor and finally an F#-major dominant cadence (see example 2). At that point the voice enters with the repeated intonation on F#, "Es ist Nacht, ich bin allein." This opening is reminiscent of quieter passages in Wagner's operas, even in middle-period works such as *Tannhäuser*, for instance, which Hiller helped to stage in Dresden in 1845; he attended a performance of that work in

Moderato

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system shows the piano part with a low F# pedal point in the bass and a threefold procession of thirds in the right hand. The second system shows the voice part with the lyrics "Es ist Nacht, ich bin allein, ver-lo-ren am Hü-gel des Strom's." The piano part continues with a low F# pedal point and a threefold procession of thirds in the right hand.

Example 2. Opening of "Colma's Klage."

November 1846.²⁵ By 1873, when he made his setting of “Colma,” *Tristan und Isolde* (1869) and the first two parts of *The Ring of the Nibelungs* (*Das Rheingold*, 1869 and *Die Walküre*, 1870) had been staged in Munich, and Hiller was well aware of their effect.

Despite his later aversion to Wagner’s music, Hiller seems to have absorbed elements of his style in this setting; the judgment, therefore, that he was deeply conservative is not quite accurate. Revealingly, his fundamental wish was to be an opera composer, and this perhaps explains to some extent his antipathy to Wagner.

The song’s dramatic character, clearly operatic in nature, proceeds as the piano launches into an Allegro with tremolos filling out a rather stereotypical diminished chord in a quick tempo with rising stepwise octave eighth notes in the left hand that are reminiscent of Schubert’s setting. After seven measures the original Moderato is restored for Colma’s “verloren am Hügel des Strom’s.” There follows a passage of 25 measures in $\text{♩}4$ marked Andante espressivo, the triplets in the piano’s right hand providing a gently positive contrast in G major as Colma sings “Entsteig’, O Mond, dem Gewölk” while searching for her lover. A brief repetition of the tremolo passage illustrates the concern of Colma for her lover’s delay. The piano then launches into a stormy Allegro con fuoco in B minor, with downward chromatic octaves in both hands beginning on F# as Colma intones “Hier ist der Fels, hier ist der Baum und hier der brüllende Strom” on repeated notes.

This flows seamlessly into a section in which Colma asks where her love, Salgar, has gone, until she exclaims, in longer notes, “wir sind nicht feind uns, O Salgar” and at this the Allegro with its descending octaves in both hands returns until the voice reaches a climax with the *fortissimo* cry “Salgar,” assuring her absent lover that it is she, Colma, who is calling for him. The piano’s *dolce* chords accelerate from the basic B minor to four measures of C major and a pregnant pause before the voice begins the less agitated section (*poco meno vivace*) with “Siehe, der stille Mond erscheint, es glänzet im Thale die Fluth” in half-note chords each held over two measures, with the final chord poised on a first inversion of C# major that dissolves into a first inversion of C major for “Ich seh’ ihn nicht auf der Berghöh” in a quasi-Neapolitan cadential inflection (see example 3).

The tempo picks up with a new two-measure motif in the piano derived from the opening thirds, but with upward striving in the right hand as the ensuing recitative leads to an Allegro molto in the piano, again with octaves in both hands, with a *fortissimo* climax at “Todt sind sie, die Schwerter vom Kampfe roth,” the realization that her brother and her lover have slain each other. This leads to an Andante mosso section that glides through G, C, F, and chromatically descending thirds to a new Moderato passage in $\text{♩}4$ as Colma addresses the spirits of the dead. The two chords in each measure are separated by rests, creating a sense of desolation as the singer, despairingly, cries “Nicht tönt ein leiser Laut im Wind, nicht halb vergeht Antwort im Sturm, sie schweigen auf ewig.”

25. Elisabeth’s prayer in act 3 of the opera, “Allmächtige Jungfrau,” may have conditioned Hiller’s B-minor setting as its G \flat -major key is related through the enharmonic dominant note, F#.

poco meno vivace

Voice

Sie - he, der stil - le Mond er scheint, es glän - zet im

Pianoforte

dol.

p Recit.

Tha - le die Fluht! Ich seh' ihn nicht auf der Berg - höh',

pp

Example 3. "Siehe der stille Mond erscheint."

The final segment of the setting is an extended *Andante sostenuto* of 57 measures in E minor–B major, mainly with pianissimo eighth notes in the piano part for "Gebt der Gruft die Todten, o Freunde," until strikingly, against a C#-minor chord, the voice moves into a curving cantilena on the second syllable of "ertönen" at the phrase, "süsse Laute soll die Stimme ertönen um meine Geliebten, sie waren Colma so theuer" (example 4).

dim.

dann süs - se Lau - te, süs - se Lau - te sollt die Stim - me er -

dolcissimo

tö - - - nen um mei - ne Ge - lieb - ten

dol

pp

dol

Example 4. "dann süsse Laute soll die Stimme ertönen."

Sequentially, appoggiatura chords assist the voice at the word “theuer” and the piano brings the setting to a close with pianissimo eighth notes and a cadence, E minor to B major, in the lower register of the piano part. The rather comfortable ending in a major key seems to be how German composers interpreted the text, even when it is clear that Colma’s mood is one, not just of regret, but of ecstatic desperation. The debt to Wagner in Hiller’s setting, at any rate, could not be clearer for its operatic character is entirely in the tradition of German lyric drama, with recitatives set off by arioso passages. In general, Hiller succeeds in balancing the sections of recitative against passages of arioso. The vocal part reflects the need for a flexible mezzo technique able to cover the demanding tessitura, one that ranges from a low B below middle C to a high A above the staff.

Lachner’s *Die Klage der Colma*

Vinzenz Lachner’s setting of Colma’s lament, in contrast, is for mezzo-soprano and orchestra and uses a different text. The version he adapted is by Johann Gottlieb Rhode (1762–1827), a poet whose translation had influence not only in Germany but also in Hungary and Poland.²⁶ The author’s life is lacking in some detail, for his publications were mostly in journals. He spent time as a theater consultant (*Dramaturg*) in Riga and Breslau, and published works on Protestantism in Germany, the religions of ancient peoples, and Zoroastrianism. Rhode seems to have begun his translation of the 1765 edition of Ossian, in rhythmic prose laid out as verse, around 1800: *Ossian’s Gedichte* was published in Berlin in 1800, Vienna in 1804, and again Berlin in 1817–18. Lachner may have discovered the Rhode version of 1804 in Vienna, which has some minor changes from the 1800 edition, in turn “improved” in the Berlin issue of 1817–18.

Lachner was born in 1811 in Rain am Lech, Bavaria along with his musician brothers Franz (1803–1890) and Ignaz (1807–1895). His professional life began in Vienna as an organist in a Protestant church, succeeding his elder brother Ignaz, and from 1836 in Mannheim, where he was appointed court conductor in succession to his brother Franz. His solid reputation over 37 years there was gained from his far-sighted staging of a greater number of operas, some by Gluck, Cherubini, or Méhul, than in any other German municipality. Although he disapproved of Wagner, he conducted edited versions of his operas. But the formation of a Wagner Society in the city meant that his conservative tastes

26. See Gabriela Hartvig, “Ossian in Hungary,” in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, ed. Howard Gaskill (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), 222–39, esp. 222–31; Nina Taylor-Terlecka, “Ossian in Poland,” in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, 240–58; here, 256.

and friendship with Brahms led to his retirement in 1873. Thirty years earlier, however, he had welcomed Berlioz to Mannheim in January 1843 for a performance of *Harold en Italie*. Berlioz praised the orchestral harpist in particular as “rather good,” and Lachner may have included a harp part in his setting of Colma not only because of its being the instrument associated with Ossian but also as a result of Berlioz’s compliment.²⁷

Lachner completed orchestral and chamber works, of which his string quartets are outstanding. The setting, *Die Klage der Kolma, aus Ossian’s Gesängen, für Mezzo-Sopran und Orchester*, op. 47 was published by Schott and is dedicated to Joseph Joachim’s wife, Amalie, a singer of ability who influenced the evolution of performance in the Lied. According to an advertisement by the publisher Simrock, she had included two of Lachner’s songs (op. 58, nos. 1 and 4) in her repertoire.²⁸ Joachim, a close friend of Brahms, had married Amalie in Hanover in 1863, but after 21 years and six children they went through a bitter divorce (1884), in which Brahms became involved on the side of Amalie. At the time of Lachner’s setting a decade earlier, however, all was well in the marriage, and Amalie, a mezzo-soprano, may have performed the setting since it was dedicated to her, although I have been unable to find a record of any public performance. She is recorded as including Schubert’s “Kolma’s Klage” in a recital in Vienna on November 20, 1872 and this setting seems to have been a stock part of her repertoire.²⁹

The orchestration of *Die Klage der Kolma* is for flutes, clarinets in B \flat , horns in F, bassoons, and strings; a harp part is introduced toward the end of the setting (m. 429). There is no oboe in the woodwind ensemble, which might seem strange given the plaintive character of the text.³⁰ Perhaps Lachner felt that the sharper, nasal character of the instrument was not how he wished to portray Colma’s somber monologue; in this omission he may have been following Méhul’s example of excluding violins from *Uthal* (1806). *Die Klage der Kolma* begins in F minor and ends in F major. The Allegro agitato, with restless sixteenth notes in the lower strings interspersed with measures of syncopated chords in the upper strings, lasts for 54 measures until the voice enters (example 5).

27. See Pepijn van Doesberg, “Germany at First,” in *Berlioz: Scenes from Life and Work*, ed. Peter Bloom (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 167.

28. Beatrix Borchard, “Amelie Joachim und die gesungene Geschichte des deutschen Liedes,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 58, no. 4 (2001): 265–99.

29. *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, no. 50, 806.

30. Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, in his outstanding monodrama, *Colma* (1780), initially dispensed with clarinets in his orchestration, but restored them later. It is possible that Lachner may have been influenced by this example if he had seen the manuscript in Berlin.

Voice

Es ist Nacht! Ich bin al - lein, ver - lo - ren am stür-mi-schen

Orch.

str.

clar.

fl.

Hü - gel, der Wind sausst im Ge - bir - ge, der Strom stürzt den Fel - sen her -

clar.

poco a poco cresc.

fl.

ab, kei - ne Hüt - te be - schützt mich vor Re - gen!

clar.

fl.

Example 5. “Es ist Nacht! Ich bin allein.”

This extended introduction is also marked by a descending motif of six notes in the woodwinds that gives way, at m. 20, to a four-measure phrase in the first violins (marked *dolce*) before returning to the style of the opening restless pattern in the lower strings, with *tremolando* chords marked *forte-piano*. At m. 38 a new, slower figuration begins with solo flutes, clarinets, and bassoons, the strings silent until they resume the tempo with their *tremolando* Fs against low clarinet chords. This texture accompanies the vocal part for the next 23 measures (see example 6).

SECTION	TONALITY	METER	MARKING
Intro (mm. 1–44)	F minor	♩4	Allegro agitato
Es ist Nacht, ich bin allein (mm. 45–143)	F minor	♩4	Allegro agitato
Warum verzieht mein Salgar? (mm. 144–200)	D \flat major	♩4	Allegro agitato
Schweig, o Wind, ein Weilchen (mm. 201–47)	F major	@4– \wedge 8	Andante
Sieh! Der Mond erscheint (mm. 248–42)	D \flat major	♩4	Allegro agitato
O sprecht mit mir (mm. 343–420)	C major–C minor	#4	Andante poco sostenuto
Wenn die Nacht auf den Hügel herabsinkt (mm. 420–end)	F minor– F major	♩4	Allegro agitato–Più sostenuto–Più lento– Andante

Example 6. Structure of Lachner's *Die Klage der Colma*.

The voice then intones, C to F, “Es ist Nacht, ich bin allein, verloren am stürmischen Hügel,” gradually rising in pitch to a high F and E \flat at “keine Hütte beschützt mich vor Regen, verloren am windigen Hügel.” A new section in D \flat (m. 75) then ensues, with soft chords in the strings, while the flute doubles the voice part at “Erheb’, o Mond dich von deinem Gewölke” as Colma searches for her beloved Salgar. The steady quarter-note accompaniment in the orchestra, on A \flat , gradually, through a recurring F \flat , announces a new section for “Ungespannt sein Bogen neben ihm” until, at m. 127, Colma sings, to the accompaniment of woodwind chords, that she must wait alone by the rocks of the stream. At this point the strings return to their tremolando chords for Colma’s description of the roaring river and the wind that prevent her hearing when her lover calls her. At “Geliebter,” Lachner marks a pause on a diminished seventh chord that resolves on to C major for “ruft” (calls).

This introduces a significant thematic section (m. 144) in which violas and cellos execute a two-measure motif with chromatic rising and falling quarter notes as the voice asks why her lover is delaying his return: here is the rock, the tree, the rushing river, but why has he broken his promise to return by nightfall? A short questioning recitative of four measures leads to a repetition of the two-measure motif, a G \flat –F in the basses suggesting a move to B \flat minor as Colma laments her flight with Salgar from her proud father and brother. The declaration, “Wir sind nicht Feinde,” brings this anguished passage, which is punctuated by

abrupt chords and repeated quarter notes in the strings, to an end. The succeeding Andante tempo in 4/4 with muted strings (m. 201) allows the voice to plead with the wind and river to be silent while the cellos continue to murmur ominously as they did at the opening measures. Lachner's treatment of Colma's invocation, "O Salgar, mein Geliebter," is not as dramatic than Hiller's, but in its gentler insistence no less effective.

A short section of six measures in the same tempo, but in 8/8 with quietly dissonant woodwind chords, heralds a return to the opening tempo in common time, but with an entirely different character (m. 248). The handling of the woodwind chords suggests the influence of Méhul, whose operas Lachner had introduced in Mannheim. Against appoggiaturas and held notes in the strings, the flutes and clarinets trace a luminous path in $\text{D}\flat$ half-note arpeggios, the flutes moving downward, the bassoons rising. This captures the moonlit effect as Colma sings, "Sieh! Der Mond erscheint, und die Fluth im Thale glänzt" (example 7).

Example 7. "Sieh! Der Mond erscheint."

But her lover does not appear. Over a chromatically upward-moving bass and a crescendo, she sees bodies, and in a recitative of some fifteen measures Colma asks if these are the bodies of her lover and her brother; with an exclamation, she realizes that they are dead, slain in mortal combat: a diminished chord, fortissimo, in the full orchestra marks her "Ach! Sie sind todt!" (mm. 308–10).

Funereal chords then accompany Colma's vision of blood-red swords and her rhetorical accusation: why did you slay my Salgar? Why, my brother? At her phrase, "Beide war't ihr theuer mir! Was soll ich euch zum Ruhme sagen?" the harmony moves slowly from an F-minor to a C-minor cadence, a short recitative-like passage of ten measures as Colma celebrates her lover's prowess in battle. The two measures marked *Maestoso* and *con forza* (majestic, forcefully; mm. 340–41) enclose fierce dotted rhythms, almost Baroque in their flavor, in the bassoons and strings, the lower strings descending from a $\text{D}\flat$ to a low G for "Er im Kampfe schrecklich!" The tempo now changes to 4/4 (m. 343) and *Andante poco sostenuto* for Colma's "O sprecht mit mir, hört meine Stimme," the tonality now in a plangent C major (example 8).

Andante poco sostenuto

The image shows a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is in 3/4 time and marked 'Andante poco sostenuto'. The score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a rest, followed by the lyrics 'O spricht mit mir, sprecht mit mir, hört'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'mei - ne Stim - me, hört mich, Söh - ne mei - ner Lie - be!'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns, including some chords and melodic lines in both hands.

Example 8. "O spricht mit mir."

The twenty measures of lament gradually give way to a C-minor passage in which Colma calls on the spirits of the dead and asks where she may find her departed. The agitated cry, "Keine schwache Stimme tönt im Winde" excites a sudden eighth-note descent of the upper strings and violas stepwise over two octaves, continued by the cellos and basses to a low G. Colma then sings, still in C minor, "Ich sitz' in meinem Grame und harre des Morgens mit Thränen." Lachner realizes the doleful cast of the text (mm. 397 following) by employing the cello and first violins to play a slower version of the downward-moving motif, especially at "Errichtet das Grab, ihr Freunde der Todten, doch schliesst es nicht bis Kolma kommt!" The nine-measure recitative in which she declares she will lie beside her friends closes with the downward eighth-note motif, this time in the flute, as the music returns to the *Allegro agitato* of the opening.

This final section falls into two parts: the first 45 measures, in F major and marked *piu sostenuto* (slower, sustained) along with the entry of the harp to the orchestral texture, reflects Colma's wish that her spirit will continue to lament the deaths of her friends. The second part is marked *piu lento* (even slower) and is more recitative-like, with detached chords, pizzicato, in the strings, as Colma recalls how dear her friends were to her. The penultimate measures, 474-76, revive the Baroque-like motif in the violins as a remembrance of her lover's prowess in battle. The volume decreases as the horns hold an octave F and the cellos sink to the G \flat that colored the tonality earlier, then to F while

Allegro agitato

Voice

Sturm und trau - ern den Tod mei - ner Freun - de,

Harp

f *decresc*

Allegro agitato

Orch.

mp

trau - - ern den Tod mei - ner Freun - de

Example 9. “[mein Geist] im Sturm und trauern den Tod meiner Freunde.”

prominent harp chords, novel in the texture, embroider the pizzicato lower strings and bring the work to a close (example 9): “[mein Geist] im Sturm und trauern den Tod meiner Freunde.”

Assessment

These settings by Hiller and Lachner are undeniably effective in their use of common idioms of German composition in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Both men were over sixty when they completed the settings. The similarities of style are more striking than the differences, at least in terms of melodic and harmonic resources. The overall structural concepts are also comparable, with free employment of recitative and arioso techniques in the voice part and with appropriate piano or orchestral accompaniment. Hiller's treatment of the text is compact in his tightly realized setting of 342 measures, Lachner's more ambitious and expansive in his orchestral treatment of 479 measures. He is relatively faithful to Rhode's version, with only small changes, such as "verloren am stürmischen Hügel" for the less singable "verloren am Hügel der Stürme" in line 2.³¹

The text in both works is set almost entirely in syllabic fashion, that is, one note per syllable, with very few ornamental flourishes. Only rarely are melismas introduced: in Hiller's setting, m. 325, on the word "ertönen" (marked *dolcissimo*); and in Lachner's, m. 335, on the word "du" (addressing the dead Salgar) and in the final ["meine Stimme] lieben" (mm. 447–49). Both settings include half a dozen sections marked as recitative (or, in Hiller's case, "*quasi recit.*"). The voice range in Hiller's setting for soprano is from a low B natural to a high A, while in Lachner's for mezzo-soprano is from a low B natural to a high G. Hiller's piano writing, in the operatic complexion of his setting, incorporates tremolando effects (mm. 12–17, 55–63), usually as diminished chords, to capture Colma's agitated description of her plight in the text. Similarly, Lachner has the upper strings of the orchestra (violins, violas) engage in unison *tremolando* (mm. 45–74) to underscore the wildness of the elements surrounding the forlorn heroine. These techniques are handled effectively, creating an aura of nervous tension around Colma's monologue.

The differences in the two settings are subtler, and the spirit of Mendelssohn and Schubert seems to preside over the choice of key: for his tonal palette, Hiller chooses B minor (key of Mendelssohn's "Hebrides" Overture) and Lachner F minor (the key in which Schubert's setting of "Colma" ends).³² Both composers move to calmer, richer tonal images for Colma's address to the moon, Hiller to B major (m. 184), Lachner to D \flat major (m. 248). Chromatic figuration is more prominent in Hiller's fiery octave passages (mm. 69, 125), although in Lachner the recurring notes G \flat and F \flat in the bass move the setting toward a

31. Other changes are: "freundliches Licht" (for "irgend ein Licht," l. 9), "neben ihm" (l. 12), "weilen" (for "sitzen" l. 14), "wohin seid ihr gegangen" (l. 85), "eilt" (for "flieht," l. 96), and "noch leben" (for "hier weilen," l. 97).

32. Minor flat keys rather than sharp keys are almost the norm for settings of the Colma text, indeed for the majority of Ossian settings, not only by German composers.

perpetually mournful cast. The meters in both settings are almost entirely divided between @4, #4, and c, although Lachner introduces a short section in ^8 just before Colma's address to the moon. Hiller likewise restricts his meters mostly to \$4 and #4, although he gives the illusion of ^8 in the @4Andante espressivo (mm. 26–40) by using triplet figuration in the right hand of the piano part.

Both settings are accomplished examples of the mid-century German style: thoughtful, serious, and competent if rather unadventurous in harmonic and melodic terms; Hiller in particular disappointed both Schumann and Brahms's friend, the critic Eduard Hanslick.³³ What is remarkable is their similar structuring of the narrative episodes between recitative and arioso segments: both have some half dozen recitative passages interspersed with melodic treatment of the text. In this, the influence of opera in Central Europe is decidedly a factor, although F. W. Rust was doing the same kind of thing with greater originality almost a century earlier in his monodrama. Essentially, the idiom of Hiller and Lachner is deeply conservative, hampered by a loyalty to cultural history and musical convention on the one hand but overtaken in depth of musical daring by Brahms and Wagner on the other.

While they typify what has been called the mainstream of Austro-German art music composition in the third quarter of the century, they are nevertheless committed and compassionate in their attitude to the subject matter. They could be seen to manifest the quality of *Einfühlung* (affective empathy) that Herder proposed should be an essential factor in understanding "other" cultures, or indeed characters in works of art.³⁴ In particular, both composers may well be responding to the loneliness of the artist, a theme that emerges even in the first line of the poem: "It is night. I am alone." The other major themes that permeate musical settings of Ossian, such as gentle melancholy, the "joy of grief" (*Wonne der Wehmut*) that Goethe adopted as the title of his poem of 1775 (set by Beethoven in 1810, although the subject is not related to Ossian), the heroic stance of women in many of the poems, and the wildness of Nature, all are present to some extent in Hiller's and Lachner's visions of "Colma." Following the euphoria of German victory in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), the grief expressed in Colma's lament for her brother and her lover

33. Schumann at first admired Hiller's compositions but came to describe them as "a basket of ripe and unripe fruit thrown together." In his "Zur Biographie Ferdinand Hiller" (*Neue Freie Presse*, August 18–19, 1885) Hanslick praised Hiller's writings rather than his music, finding the latter lacking in originality; see Haas, *Forbidden Music*, 53–54.

34. See Kristin Gjesdal, *Herder's Hermeneutic Philosophy: History, Poetry, Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); also Eva Piirimäe, Liina Lukas, and Johann Schmidt ed, *Herder on Empathy and Sympathy/Einfühlung, und Sympathie im Denken Herders* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

might be seen as a metaphor for the pointless slaughter of just a few years earlier, before these settings were published. Both composers must have seen in the fragmentary poem a reflection of the horror many German artists felt at the price of victory in the conflict. The settings accordingly demonstrate the continuing magnet of Ossian texts for German composers, as numerous settings of “Colma” and of the warrior maiden “Darthula” throughout the century reveal.³⁵

35. About 1769 or 1770 Herder drew on Denis’s translation of Ossian to compose his poem, “Darthula’s Grabgesang,” which was set by numerous composers including Brahms and (in an unfinished but extensive sketch of 1903) Arnold Schoenberg. See Porter, *Beyond Fingal’s Cave*, 194–215.

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