

A Kalmus Classic Edition

**Medium-Low
Voice Edition**

57 Classic Period Songs

A Song Anthology of Choice Songs
of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven
and Lesser-Known Composers

Medium-Low Voice Edition

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Mozart



Beethoven



Haydn

**Kalmus**

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*Recommended to be interpreted in the traditional lyric Classic Period style; songs without an asterisk before their title should not conform in some, or perhaps, in many respects to traditional Classic style characteristics.

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Haydn Mozart Beethoven

and their songs

In view of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven's stature as composers, the question is often raised as to why they did not write more songs of high musical value. Certainly, if they had concentrated more seriously on the task, these gifted men would have been capable of a much more prolific song output on a generally higher level of excellence. The logical answer to this question seems to lie in the attitude held at this time by most music critics and aristocratic music audiences toward the relative importance of song composition. The solo song was written, as a rule, as relaxation from the rigors of composition in the larger forms, rather incidentally for parlor entertainment. It usually was not, as it was later, for serious formal concert occasions; this was reserved for opera, oratorio, requiems, cantatas and the longer instrumental forms.

Consequently, song writing carried little of the prestige then that it does now and even much less than in the time of Schubert. Composers of songs during the Classic Period were affected, of course, by the prevailing attitude and tended to regard their song writing lightly; so lightly in fact that songs were often given to their friends as mementos. This appeared to be true of some of the songs of Haydn and most of the songs of Mozart, resulting, undoubtedly, in the loss to posterity of some songs and a difficulty by musicologists in tracing and identifying others with the assurance they are the products of Haydn or Mozart or songs by some of their friends or imitators.

In view of the prevailing attitude and lack of prestige for song writing and the reflected attitude of the composers themselves for this undertaking, it is fortunate for posterity that scattered among the very short, trite and trivial are some outstanding songs of high charm and beauty to represent this period in history. These outstanding songs usually resulted

from the inspiration of a text by a poet that was superior to the trite and uninteresting lyrics frequently employed. In this case, the musical genius and integrity of these great composers revealed themselves in spite of their comparatively low regard for song composition as a serious occupation.

FRANZ JOSEPH HAYDN

Haydn was born in 1732 at Rohrau, a village near Vienna and died in 1809. He is considered the founder of the character of the modern symphony orchestra and the father of the traditional symphonic form in composition. He was an amazingly prolific composer of over 1,000 works in many mediums. Eighteen of his one hundred and fifty-seven symphonies are considered masterpieces today. He is also equally famous as the composer who brought chamber music to maturity, particularly the sonata form for string quartet of which he composed about eighty. He composed many concertos for various instruments, masses and the oratorios, *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. *The Creation* is still considered one of the greatest oratorios.

Haydn was one of the few eminent composers who enjoyed world-wide acclaim and honor during his lifetime. His music is so fresh, forthright, sincere, clear in structural design and attractive melodically that it was and still is universally understandable.

Haydn was not only Mozart's predecessor but also his contemporary and successor. Although born before Mozart, he lived many years after his death, continuing to mature his compositional technique and his reputation.

Haydn had a vocal background as a boy chorister at St. Stephens Cathedral for eight years between 1740 and 1748. During this period he also immersed himself in serious study, earning his living by playing the harpsichord, teaching and doing hackwork. He became Kapellmeister to Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy at his Eisenstadt estate in 1761, moved with him to his new palace at Esterhaz where he assumed the status of full Kapellmeister in 1766; he remained at this important musical post for almost a quarter of a century.

Haydn composed thirty-six authenticated songs and possibly others which have been lost; in addition he made some three hundred Scotch, Irish and Welsh folk song settings for voice, violin, cello and piano. As we shall see later, Beethoven also continued in this traditional type of small ensemble writing so popular for parlor entertainment at the time.

Most of Haydn's songs are brief and the composer apparently attached little importance to them as is indicated by a very sketchy accompaniment. Many are similar to folk songs or ballads with a listing of numerous verses tacked on at the end under the score. Nevertheless, even the most humble and naive examples, characterized by a simple folklike bass harmony accompaniment for the left hand and a right hand part only duplicating the vocal line note for note, have deft sequential touches that reveal his genius for melody writing. His longer, more erudite songs and those with an interesting, more complex and artistic piano accompaniment, such as songs selected for this volume, are gems of the Classic Period. They are not only well worth the attention of voice students for suitable study and recital songs but also the consideration of professional artists for concert programming of early period songs.

That Haydn believed profoundly in the importance of attractive melody as the basis for song composition is revealed by Prah in the following Haydn quotation, "Singing is almost one of those forgotten arts. It is the air which is the charm of music and it is that which is the most difficult to produce. The invention of fine melody is a work of genius."² That beauty and

²Victor Prah, *Foundational Repertoire for Singers*, Vol. I (Boston: C. C. Birchard and Co., 1939) p. 25.