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Editors

Michael Fjeldsøe · fjeldsoe@hum.ku.dk

Peter Hauge · ph@kb.dk

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Address

c/o Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Section of Musicology,
University of Copenhagen, Karen Blixens Vej 1, DK-2300 København S

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Niels Wilhelm Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35 and the Art of Musical Idyll¹

Alexander Lotzow

As unlikely as it may seem to present concertgoers: Niels Wilhelm Gade was without doubt one of the most widely performed, celebrated, and best-known composers of the second half of the 19th century.² A major share of Gade's success and fame, namely from an international, German, English or even American point of view, was procured by his choral-orchestral music.³ Eleven years after the composer's death, Hugo Riemann in his *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven* listed several of Gade's choral compositions which for many decades had remained – and still were – standard repertoire for choral societies due to their, quoting Riemann, 'natural freshness' and 'artistic nobility'.⁴ The compositions mentioned by Riemann explicitly include Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35

- 1 This text is an extended version of a paper presented at the 'Symposium on the Occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Niels W. Gade', Aarhus University, School of Communication and Culture, in March 2017. It elaborates on some thoughts of the chapter 'Das Sinfonische Chorstück als 'reizendes Idyll': Niels Wilhelm Gades *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35 (1858)' in my book *Das Sinfonische Chorstück im 19. Jahrhundert. Studien zu einsätzigen weltlichen Chorwerken mit Orchester von Beethoven bis Brahms* (Kieler Schriften zur Musikwissenschaft, 55; Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2017), 226–60.
- 2 Jan Brachmann has recently emphasized this again: 'Was man den Zugvögeln ablauschen kann. Dänen und Deutsche feiern den 200. Geburtstag des Komponisten Niels Wilhelm Gade', in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 Jan. 2017, also found at <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buehne-und-konzert/200-geburtstag-des-komponisten-niels-wilhelm-gade-14641141.html>, accessed 8 Mar. 2018.
- 3 See Friedhelm Krummacher, 'Niels W. Gade und die skandinavische Musik der Romantik', in Friedhelm Krummacher, *Musik im Norden. Abhandlungen zur skandinavischen und norddeutschen Musikgeschichte*, ed. Siegfried Oechsle et al. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1996), 103. In summer 1871, Gade wrote to his wife from Bonn: 'After the concerts one would gather in several hotels and I met a lot of people from England, America and so forth who introduced themselves as admirers of my music. It is remarkable how frequently "Erl's king" is being produced these days. Almost everybody told me they had performed it lately or were in the process of studying it. An American intends to send me an English translation of "Erl's king". Several Englishmen asked for an English edition of *Crusaders*, *Comala* etc.' (Gade's letter of 23 Aug. 1871, tr. A. L. from the German rendition in Niels W. Gade, *Aufzeichnungen und Briefe*, ed. Dagmar Gade (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 150. The Danish original can be consulted in Inger Sørensen (ed.), *Niels W. Gade og hans europæiske kreds. En brevsamling 1836–1891* (København: Museum Tusculum Press, 2008), vol. 3, 809).
- 4 The original quot. is concerned with 'Chorwerken ..., welche zum täglichen Brot der Chorgesangsvereine und Musikvereine wurden und sich zufolge ihrer natürlichen Frische und künstlerischen Noblesse dauernd halten', Hugo Riemann, *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven (1800 – 1900)* (Berlin and Stuttgart: Spemann, 1901), 271.

for mixed choir and orchestra of 1858.⁵ In spite of its modest outline, this piece forms a rather central item of Gade's choral oeuvre and in my view can offer us some clues as to why Gade's music in general was once so very successful.

At first glance, however, *Frühlings-Botschaft* is by its outward appearance quite an extraordinary composition. A single movement, about eight minutes long choral-orchestral piece without soloists, it hardly has a counterpart among Gade's many other more cantata-like 'koncertstykker' which as a rule consist of multiple movements and regularly employ vocal soloists in addition to the choir.⁶ Opposed to this, *Frühlings-Botschaft* would in terms of the later 19th century rather have to be assigned to the genre 'Choral-Ode', or, as I have suggested elsewhere, to the 'Symphonic Choral-Piece',⁷ other examples of which are compositions like Schumann's *Nachtlied* op. 108 or Beethoven's *Meeres Stille und Glückliche Fahrt* op. 112. One could be startled though that *Frühlings-Botschaft* does not seem to share these latter pieces' common characteristics like 'grandeur' or 'sublimity' deriving from their genre's link to symphonic and oratorical traditions. In contemporary appraisals, *Frühlings-Botschaft* rather evoked attributes like 'exhilarant', 'graceful' or 'delicate',⁸ and an 1861 review called it, summarizing the reception quite strikingly, a 'charming idyll'.⁹

Although the designation as 'idyll' could simply be a casual, random statement, to me it seems very meaningful with regard to this piece of Gade's and possibly to his aesthetics in a broader sense, too. Yet, what does the term imply here? While 'idyll' is, other than in literature,¹⁰ not a musical genre in its own right, many compositions of the

5 While there is not yet a critical edition of *Frühlings-Botschaft* at hand, the original printed full score as well as the four-hand arrangement are easily available from the Petrucci Music Library at [http://imslp.org/wiki/Fr%C3%BChlingsbotschaft,_Op.35_\(Gade,_Niels\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Fr%C3%BChlingsbotschaft,_Op.35_(Gade,_Niels)), accessed 8 Mar. 2018. There is also a recording available: Niels Wilhelm Gade. *Baldurs Drøm* op. 117, *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35, Canzone-koret, Helsingborgs Symfoniorkester, Frans Rasmussen, Classico 2010.

6 Another singular composition of Gade's scored identically to *Frühlings-Botschaft* is *Ved Solnedgang* op. 46, albeit with regard to its formal outline a rather more songlike one still.

7 See Lotzow, *Das Sinfonische Chorstück*, particularly the chapter 'Gattungsmodell "Chorode"', 90–106. The term 'Chorode', 'Choral-Ode', was probably first introduced by Hermann Kretzschmar in his *Führer durch den Konzertsaal. II. Abteilung, zweiter Theil: Oratorien und weltliche Chorwerke* (Leipzig: Liebeskind, 1890).

8 The original labellings are 'reizend' ('Leipzig', in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 26/1 (1859), 22), 'erfrischend' ('Achtes Gesellschafts-Concert in Köln ...', in *Niederrheinische Musikzeitung*, 9 (1861), 62), 'anmuthig', 'fein' ('Gade, Niels W.', in Hermann Mendel/August Reissmann (ed.), *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexikon. Eine Encyclopädie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften für Gebildete aller Stände. Zweite Ausgabe* (Berlin: Oppenheim, 1880), vol. 4, 101).

9 In German, the piece is named a 'reizendes Idyll': 'Achtes Gesellschafts-Concert in Köln', 62.

10 See Renate Böschstein, 'Idyllisch/Idylle', in Karlheinz Barck et al. (eds.), *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2001), 134. Of course, as a literary genre, 'idyll' can by no means be viewed as a homogeneous term either: cf. Günther Häntzschel, 'Idylle', in Harald Fricke (ed.), *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), vol. 2, 122–25.

19th century are explicitly called ‘idyll’,¹¹ one of the most famous of them being Richard Wagner’s *Siegfried-Idyll*. But whereas in Wagner this occasional idyll would have to be regarded as barely more than a fairly private episode, to be tolerated next to an oeuvre driven by existential conflicts, Gade’s music much more frequently sought out ‘idyll’, and seemingly did so without any danger of jeopardizing its author’s reputation. Several of Gade’s compositions are explicitly named ‘idyll’,¹² too, and many others that are not nevertheless cause – or at least used to cause – a connatural impression, just like on the reviewer of *Frühlings-Botschaft* in 1861.

Calling *Frühlings-Botschaft* an ‘idyll’ then was not at all in peril to be taken as derogatory but could very well serve as a compliment. This may not be self-evident to today’s commentators, for when we emphatically speak of music as art in present times, we usually do not primarily think of idylls. Instead, we tend to highlight not its conciliatory features but its stirring and insurgent qualities, not least due to the numerous extra-artistic functions we are used to ascribing to it.¹³ Yet, we then forget that even the intellectually ambitious audiences of the 19th century did not at all strive to be *challenged* by music in the first place, as can be learned for instance from the highly controversial reception of Brahms’s *Schicksalslied* op. 54 or *Gesang der Parzen* op. 89.¹⁴ Instead, they would quite willingly let themselves be overwhelmed by musical sublimity, or be charmed by musical idyll – at least if it was fashioned in a coherent and convincing way.

So, what kind of artistic achievement would a composer like Gade be supposed to pursue in a musical idyll that would not have to be dismissed as naive or superficial? First of all, it should generally be pointed out that idyll in mid-19th century, while in part certainly ambivalent, was not, or not yet exclusively, regarded as trivial, in the sense of a narrow-minded postcard idyll. Rather, it fundamentally owned, understood as an opposite of a world critically viewed as fragmented, traits of a holistic utopia that had traditionally been a key element of the literary genre. In a similar sense, Friedrich Schiller in his 1795 essay *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*) had made idyll, in a widened understanding of the term from ‘genre’ to ‘Empfindungsweise’,¹⁵

11 Also, several earlier examples are commented on by Laurenz Lütteken, “Es herrscht durchaus die simpelste und schönste Harmonie”. Zur Typologie der musikalischen Idylle, in Frank Baudach and Günter Häntzschel (eds.), *Johann Heinrich Voß (1751–1826). Beiträge zum Eutiner Symposium 1994* (Eutiner Forschungen, 5; Eutin: Struve, 1997), 251.

12 The second of the 1837 three piano pieces is titled ‘Idylle’ as well as the *Idyller* op. 34 for piano (1857). The *Idyllisk Ouverture En Sommerdag*, unpublished in Gade’s lifetime, sets an example within the orchestral repertoire.

13 These circumstances have been briefly but inspiringly considered by Jan Brachmann in his article ‘Grundfragen’, in *Positionen. Texte zur aktuellen Musik*, 109 (2016), 6–8.

14 See the chapters on these compositions in Lotzow, *Das Sinfonische Chorstück*, 261–337, and 373–425.

15 A translation of this term according to Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, tr. and introd. Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1981), 15, could be ‘a kind of emotion’.

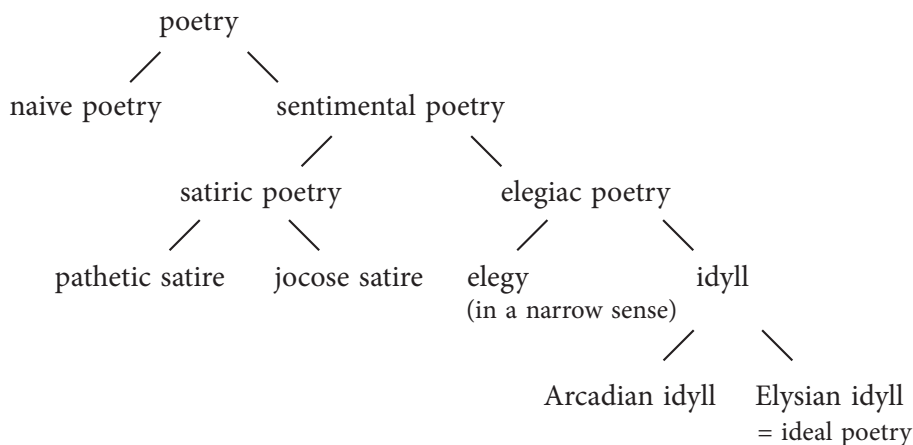


Fig. 1. Types of poetry according to Friedrich Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*.¹⁶

a crucial constituent of his considerations. It is then important to observe that in Schiller's view idyll is not a mode of naive but of sentimental poetry. It represents a reflected and deliberate kind of art – yet in a way, that does not bare a struggle with deliberation but that has come to a calm and self-sufficient state without being inactive at the same time. This may sound difficult to achieve, even utopian and as we know, Schiller, in his own writing, did not present an idyll to fulfil these requirements. In the 1880s, the German philosopher Karl Heinrich von Stein claimed to know the reason why: 'Schiller here demands something of poetry that it cannot achieve by itself. To express a state of completely higher character, a means of art that raises the whole spirit of the mind becomes necessary: What Schiller demands of poetry only music can achieve.'¹⁷ This statement is in its exclusiveness surely an exaggeration. There can be little doubt, however, that music does possess certain advantages in this regard. In a confrontation of reality and ideal, which is

¹⁶ The stemma is a translated quotation from Carsten Zelle, 'Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung (1795/96)', in Matthias Luserke-Jaqui (ed.), *Schiller-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2005), 476. Terms are translated after Watanabe-O'Kelly.

¹⁷ Tr. A. L. The original quot. is: 'Schiller fordert hier von der Poesie, was sie allein nicht zu leisten vermag. Zum Ausdruck eines seinem ganzen Wesen nach höheren Zustands gehört ein Kunstmittel, welches die gesamte Stimmung des Gemütes steigert und erhöht: Schiller verlangt von der Poesie, was nur die Musik leisten kann.' K[arl] Heinrich von Stein, *Goethe und Schiller. Beiträge zur Ästhetik der deutschen Klassiker. Nach seinen an der Universität Berlin gehaltenen Vorträgen aufgezeichnet* (Universal Bibliothek, 3090; Leipzig: Reclam, [1893]), 68f.; Stein, however, considered Beethoven to have fulfilled this task (ibid.); see also Thomas Schipperges, 'Wechselwirkungen von Idylle und Musik um 1800', in Markus Bertsch and Reinhard Wegner (eds.), *Landschaft am "Scheidepunkt". Evolutionen einer Gattung in Kunsttheorie, Kunstschaffen und Literatur um 1800* (Ästhetik um 1800, 7; Göttingen: Wallstein, 2010), 132f.

central to Schiller, music will, merely due to its material fundamentals, always surpass mimesis of the world. Even if it attempts to, by way of tone-painting or similar practices, one will at all times be completely aware of that music is *not* identical with what it processes artistically. Therefore, what might be naive as a literary text, for instance, in vocal music will be drawn towards the sentimental.¹⁸ And like any sentimental art it will not, or not only, mirror reality but it will also picture an ideal not yet fulfilled. Satire and elegy, which in Schiller's view are other modes of sentimental poetry, will make the *conflict* between reality and ideal their subject – be it accusingly, tauntingly or in a manner of mourning. The final form of idyll, which is the Elysian idyll, will according to Schiller have achieved to suspend this conflict and offer a prospect of the ideal itself (see Fig. 1, p. 6).

Possibly music, being an art that does not refer to reality in the same way that language does, is quite well equipped for this goal. If the goal is approached by a certain piece, though, it will very much depend on *how* this composition is fashioned.

Gade was certainly not a naive composer, but a highly reflected one, or in Schiller's words a 'sentimental' one, even if it often takes more than one look at his music to realize this. When we study Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* more closely, there is no doubt that the impression of idyll in this particular case starts with its text and notably with Gade's remarkable handling of it. By choosing a poem by Emanuel Geibel, Gade on the one hand stressed the international, especially the German scope of his choral piece. In Germany, pieces composed to texts by Geibel were more than common. Despite his prevalent reputation as a lyricist of rather low aesthetic rank, Geibel was one of the most widely read German authors of his age. The number of musical pieces to his lyrics in 19th-century Germany is surpassed only by those to texts by Heinrich Heine, not even by Goethe-settings.¹⁹ On the other hand, Gade must have been aware of the risk that a piece to a text by Geibel in 1858 would probably not be well received in Denmark. A native of Lübeck, Geibel rightfully was a notorious character to the Danish public, since he had frequently put forth unmistakably harsh statements against Denmark during the mid-century conflicts around Schleswig-Holstein,²⁰ and indeed this notoriety may well have impeded a wider dissemination of Gade's piece in his home country.²¹ Bearing this in mind, several traits of *Frühlings-Botschaft*'s printed edition at Breitkopf & Härtel could be taken as attempts

18 In this instance, one might think of Gustav Mahler's approach to his Lied-texts from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*.

19 Walter Hinck, 'Epigonendichtung und Nationalidee. Zur Lyrik Emanuel Geibels', in Walter Hinck, *Von Heine zu Brecht. Lyrik im Geschichtsprozeß* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1978), 67.

20 This is evident, for instance, in the sonnets of the 1846 collection *Für Schleswig-Holstein*, furthermore in other poems such as *Lübecks Bedrängnis* from *Zeitstimmen* (1841) and the quite prevalent *Protestlied für Schleswig-Holstein* (1846). Horst Joachim Frank considers these circumstances more thoroughly in *Literatur in Schleswig-Holstein*, vol. 3: 19. Jahrhundert, Erster Teil: Im Gesamtstaat (Neumünster: Wachholtz, 2004), 414–17.

21 Inger Sørensen, *Niels W. Gade. Et dansk verdensnavn* (København: Gyldendal, 2002), 184.

Frühlings-Botschaft.

Willkommen, heller Frühlingsklang!

Nach langem bangem Winterschweigen
Willkommen, heller Frühlingsklang!
Nun rührt der Saft sich in den Zweigen
Und in der Seele der Gesang.
Es wandelt unter Blütenbäumen
Die Hoffnung über's grüne Feld;
Ein wundersames Zukunftsträumen
Fließt wie ein Segen durch die Welt.

So wirf denn ab was mit Beschwerden,
O Seele, dich gefesselt hielt;
Du sollst noch wie der Vogel werden,
Der mit der Schwing' im Blauen spielt.
Der aus den kahlen Dornenhecken
Die rothen Rosen blühend schafft,
Er kann und will auch dich erwecken
Aus tiefem Leid zu junger Kraft.

Und sind noch dunkel deine Pfade,
Und drückt dich schwer die eig'ne Schuld:
O glaube, grösser ist die Gnade,
Und unergründlich ist die Huld.
Lass nur zu deines Herzens Thoren
Der Pfingsten vollen Segen ein,
Getrost, und du wirst neugeboren
Aus Geist und Feuerflammen sein.

Willkommen, heller Frühlingsklang!

E. Geibel.

Frohe Botschaft.

Nach langem bangem Winterschweigen
Willkommen heller Frühlingsklang!
Nun rührt der Saft sich in den Zweigen,
Und in der Seele der Gesang.
Es wandelt unter Blütenbäumen
Die Hoffnung über's grüne Feld;
Ein wundersames Zukunftsträumen
Fließt wie ein Segen durch die Welt.

So wirf denn ab was mit Beschwerden
O Seele dich gefesselt hielt;
Du sollst noch wie der Vogel werden,
Der mit der Schwing' im Blauen spielt.
Der aus den kahlen Dornenhecken
Die rothen Rosen blühend schafft,
Er kann und will auch dich erwecken
Aus tiefem Leid zu junger Kraft.

Und sind noch dunkel deine Pfade,
Und drückt dich schwer die eig'ne Schuld:
O glaube, größer ist die Gnade,
Und unergründlich ist die Huld.
Laß nur zu deines Herzens Thoren
Der Pfingsten vollen Segen ein,
Getrost, und du wirst neugeboren
Aus Geist und Feuerflammen sein.

III. 1a. Niels W. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, rendition of sung text in the printed edition of 1858.

III. 1b. *Frohe Botschaft* from Emanuel Geibel's *Juniuslieder* (Stuttgart/Tübingen: Cotta, 1848), 90f.

to downplay the importance of Geibel. For one thing, there is no mention of the poet on the score's title page. The reason for this cannot be, as we might be tempted to presume today, that Geibel might generally not have been considered worth putting on this representative spot: Thus, for instance, Geibel's name appears prominently on the first editions of Robert Schumann's various Geibel-compositions.²² In Gade's printed score, a

22 E.g. *Drei Gedichte nach Emanuel Geibel für mehrstimmigen Gesang mit Begleitung des Pianoforte* op. 29 (1841) or *Vom Pagen und der Königstochter. Vier Balladen nach E. Geibel für Solostimmen, Chor u. Orchester* op. 140 (1857). Digital facsimiles of these editions are offered by the Brahms-Institut an der Musikhochschule Lübeck at http://www.brahms-institut.de/web/bihl_digital/schumann_drucke_start.html, accessed 8 Mar. 2018.

reproduction of the text is given, and this does include a naming of the author, but only in tiny letters at the bottom of the page, abbreviating his first name (Ill. 1a).

The downplaying of Geibel could also hint at Gade's very prudent approach to a text that he may not have considered a piece of art in its own right to which he would not need to add much more than a compliant background of sound. It was rather the starting point of a more complex liaison of language and music. An indication of this is apparent in Gade's notable changing of the poem's title from 'Frohe Botschaft' to 'Frühlings-Botschaft', evident by comparison to Geibel's original edition of the text in his 1848 *Juniuslieder* (Ill. 1b).²³ The new title was already familiar to the German public at the time of Gade's composition. It was the title of at least two other very famous poems: of Heinrich Heine's 'Leise zieht durch mein Gemüt', prominently set to music by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy (MWV K 71), and of August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben's 'Kuckuck, Kuckuck ruft aus dem Wald', which under its original title is included in Schumann's *Liederalbum für die Jugend* op. 79 (No. 3), for instance. By choosing the same heading for his choral piece, Gade immediately made it move towards a more universal 'idyll', as nature, and foremost nature in spring, is a very common setting in this regard, albeit an altogether unspecific one.

At the same time, Gade obscured some features of Geibel's poem, which effectively is not a poem of spring but of Pentecost. Looking at the text in detail reveals that several of its properties are specifically linked to a sacred sphere: The stanza employed by Geibel (ignored by Novello's English piano reduction of 1872, incidentally²⁴) has its roots in 16th-century church song.²⁵ This may still be rather vague. The original title of the poem 'Frohe Botschaft', however, is much more striking, for it is the established German translation of 'Evangelium', meaning 'gospel'. To investigate the text further, here is the attempt of a literal English translation of the version printed in Gade's score (cf. Ill. 1a).

- 23 The *Juniuslieder* have, since their first publication, often been considered as an example of Geibel's more sophisticated lyrical output. According to Walter Hinck, Geibel shows a tendency here to succeed Goethe and also, with some rather notional poetry, Schiller. (Geibel 'schwenkt ... in die Bahn der Goethe-Nachfolge und – mit der mehr gedanklichen Lyrik – zugleich der Schiller-Nachfolge ein' (Hinck, 'Epigonendichtung', 68).
- 24 The University of Rochester provides a digital version available at <http://hdl.handle.net/1802/24697>. The edition attributes the translation to a certain Mrs. Charteris Cairns. Although on the one hand it handles the formal outline of Geibel's poem quite freely, on the other hand it emphasizes the religious scope of the text by spelling out the pronoun 'He' respectively 'Him' with capitals. In connection with other English editions of Gade's music, see John Bergsagel's paper on 'Gade in England' at <http://www.gade-edition.org/2017/04/22/gade-in-england>, both links accessed 8 Mar. 2018.
- 25 Horst Joachim Frank, *Handbuch der deutschen Strophenformen* (UTB, 1732; Tübingen and Basel: Francke, 1993), 649ff. This particular genealogy has left explicit traces in 19th-century poetry. A prominent example is the archangels' verses of the 'Prolog im Himmel' in Goethe's *Faust I* ('Die Sonne tönt nach alter Weise/In Brudersphären Wettgesang/Und ihre vorgeschriebne Reise vollendet sie mit Donnergang' etc.), employing the very same stanza.

Spring's message

Welcome, bright sound of spring!

After the long and anxious silence of winter
 Welcome, bright sound of spring!
 Now sap is stirring in the branches
 And singing in the soul.
 Under blooming trees
 Hope is wandering across the green field;
 A wondrous dreaming of the future
 Is flowing through the world like a blessing.

So throw off, then, that which troublesome
 Held you enchained, o soul;
 You are still to become like the bird
 That plays with its wing in the blue.
 He, who from the bare and thorny hedges
 Creates the bloom of red roses
 He can and he wants to awaken you
 From deep suffering to youthful strength.

And however dark your paths may be
 And how heavily you may be pressed down by your own guilt:
 O do believe, grace is greater
 And favour is inscrutable.
 Only let Pentecost's full blessing
 Pass the gates of your heart,
 Have confidence and you will be born anew
 From spirit and flames of fire.

Welcome, bright sound of spring!

(tr. A. L.)

In an unmistakably ode-like apostrophe,²⁶ the first addressee of the poem is 'Frühlingsklang', 'sound of spring'. In Geibel's poem under the name of 'gospel', it is quite clear what this sound is supposed to signify: The whirring of the air that is connected with the wonder of Pentecost. A comparison with another of Geibel's *Juniuslieder*,²⁷ of which only a few lines will suffice, strengthens this reading:

²⁶ Concerning the importance of apostrophe for the literary genre 'ode', see the chapter 'Apostrophe' in Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs. Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001 [1981]), 149–71; see also Katrin Kohl's article 'Ode' in Dieter Lamping (ed.), *Handbuch der literarischen Gattungen* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2009), 549–58.

²⁷ Geibel, *Juniuslieder*, 82f.

Frühlingsbrausen

...
 Dem Brausen in der Luft,
 Dem heil'gen will ich lauschen.
 O Laut, in welchem sich
 Zuerst der Lenz enthüllet,
 ...
 Du mahnest wundersam
 Mich an das Sausen wieder,
 Drin einst zu Pfingsten kam
 Der Geist des Herrn hernieder.
 ...

Whirring of spring

...
 To the holy whirring of the air,
 I want to listen.
 O sound, in which
 Spring was first revealed,
 ...
 You remind me miraculously
 Of the whirring
 In which, at Pentecost,
 The Lord's spirit descended.
 ...

(tr. A. L.)

That 'Frohe Botschaft' is to be read in the same context is revealed at the latest in its final stanza, which introduces the unmistakable terms 'Pfingsten', 'Geist' and 'Feuerflammen'. The religious framing of Geibel's poem is thus not to be obliterated but it is, as it were, postponed by Gade's composition. The result of this is that the piece in the course of its performance shifts very carefully from a simple – if you will: naive – spring song to something that might be called a sacred ode. In Gade, the call 'Willkommen' ('welcome') is unhinged from the second line and forms both the verbal beginning and end of the composition. Accordingly, it gains two very different qualities. At the outset, it addresses spring, but in a musical composition it at the same time automatically becomes self-referential and the music itself seems to be 'Frühlingsklang'. Yet already in the first stanza, it becomes an ambivalent phenomenon, firstly because of the relationship of external and internal sound, as line four also pronounces a 'singing in the soul', secondly by the naming of 'blessing', which already hints to the religious sphere. The second stanza continues on increasing the poetical tension by self-addressing the speaker's soul, before the very centre of the text fully reveals the religious grounding: Here it becomes evident that it is God, He, who is the source of all of spring's joy. Gade emphasizes this by making line 13 both the basis of a pivotal formal caesura and the temporal centre of his composition. By and by, it becomes obvious that Geibel's words do not simply celebrate spring and awakening nature but make it a symbol of redemption from human suffering by divine grace. It is to this that the piece says – not shouts – 'Willkommen' at the end.

With regard to Gade's composition, this very subtle development does not result in an outwardly obvious 'plot'. This again is by no means self-evident. By choosing this particular Geibel-text, *Frühlings-Botschaft* unlike many other compositions dealing with 'spring' cannot follow a common 'plot' according to which spring would still have to be summoned in the course of the piece. Gade's own *Frühlings-Phantasie* op. 23 (on a text by Edmund Lobedanz) for example delays the arrival of spring up to its third movement:

I.	I.
Es füllt mir so innige <i>Sehnsucht</i> die Brust <i>nach dir, dem lieblichen Lenze!</i>	My chest is filled with deep <i>longing</i> <i>for you, lovely spring!</i>
...	...
O sage, wann öffnet sich mir dein Reich?	O speak, when will your realm open itself to me?
...	...
II.	II.
Es sausen und brausen die Stürme so laut,	The storms are raging and whirring so loudly,
...	...
III.	III.
Nun schwillt es, nun quillt es an Blüthe und Ast, ohne Ruh und Rast <i>denn der Frühling, der Frühling ist da!</i>	Now bloom and branch are swelling and stirring without calm and rest <i>for spring, spring is here!</i>

(tr. and italics A. L.)

Similar things happen in single-movement choral pieces, too. In Johann Peter Emilus Hartmann's *Foraarssang* op. 70 of 1871 as well as in Emil Hartmann's *Vinter og Vaar* op. 13 from the same year there are traces of conflict in both text and music, or at least clear points of demarcation, which cause an obvious sequentiality, resulting in a musical tension pointing towards the arrival of spring.²⁸ Nothing of this sort takes place in Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* and it is in my opinion precisely this limitation to the *presence* of spring from the very beginning, hence the prolongation of one single state, that on the one hand contributes essentially to the impression of idyll and that on the other hand poses the specific tasks to Gade as the composer of it. For what *Frühlings-Botschaft* lacks in outward development, it has to compensate in other ways if it is not to suffer from stagnancy. The problem to create tension within the tranquillity of idyll was also acknowledged by Schiller:

But for just the reason that all opposition falls away [in idyll], it becomes infinitely more difficult than in the two previous kinds of poetry [satire and elegy]

²⁸ In H.C. Andersen's poem that is the basis of J.P.E. Hartmann's *Foraarssang*, this demarcation is found, quite early, between the verses 'End ligger Jorden i Sneens Svøb,/Lystigt paa Søen er Skøiteløb,/ Træerne prange med Rimfrost og Krager,' and the subsequent 'Men imorgen bestemt det dager;/Solen bryder den tunge Sky,/Vaaren rider Sommer i By,' resulting merely in a slow minor introduction to the following *Allegretto grazioso*. In Carsten Hauch's poem used for Emil Hartmann's *Vinter og Vaar*, there are three whole stanzas depicting winter ('Titan af de blege Vover/Løfter lavt sit Hoved op,/ Larven under Jorden sover,/Bladet sover i hin Knop' etc.), before spring is finally emphatically called upon to melt away all lethargy: 'Taagen splittes, Isen brister, Solen høit paa Himlen staaer!/Vintren paa sin hvide Ganger flygter for den unge Vaar!'

to produce that *movement* without which no poetic effect can ever be imagined. The highest unity must exist but it may not take away from diversity ...²⁹

Hence, whether an idyll works out will depend on how well it manages to deal with this specific demand – and to my mind, Gade's *Frühlings-Botschaft* manages it, literally speaking, exemplarily. What it certainly does manage is to create is a high degree of musical autonomy in a structural sense. In fact, the piece works very well as an instrumental one, too, and so, incidentally, it seems natural that it was offered right from the start as a textless piano arrangement for four-hands also. Yet why this is the case is not at all obvious. The qualities of the piece are rather hidden in its background and the way in which unity and diversity, outward simplicity and ulterior complexity are subtly merged by it, is quite remarkable.

I would now like to approach the structure of *Frühlings-Botschaft* from three sides: first, by pointing out a certain type of overarching melodic ornamentation; second, by looking at the motific outline in a narrower sense; and third, by analysing the overall formal framework of the composition.

First, ornament as structure: After an almost unmeasured chordal introduction, bar 9 introduces a two-bar phrase in the clarinets, containing what I call motif a, a rising line of quavers (Ex. 1). With this, the obligatory motoric setting of the piece is installed. Doubtless, the passage bears a certain resemblance to the subordinate theme of the first movement of Louis Spohr's *Die Weihe der Töne* (Ex. 2), as was already noticed by the contemporaries.³⁰ What is striking in Gade by comparison is a more specific employment of chromatic transitions: Based on an E major chord, only two scale positions, the fifth and the major third, are chromatically approached (marked in Ex. 1). This is something that, primarily but not exclusively bound to motif a, happens throughout the piece with such frequency that it can be regarded as a unifying trait on a very basic level. This type of chromatic approach via augmented seconds and fourths becomes even more striking, when it is employed not as transition but as suspension. Such gentle chromatic additions to the major scale are very common in Haydn and even more common in Mozart, with regard to whom Hermann Abert called them 'freely introduced suspensions' or 'altered suspension[s]

29 'Aber eben darum, weil aller Widerstand hinwegfällt, so wird es hier [in der Idylle] ungleich schwieriger als in den zwei vorigen Dichtungsarten [satirische und elegische Dichtung], die Bewegung hervorzubringen, ohne welche doch überall keine poetische Wirkung sich denken lässt. Die höchste Einheit muss sein, aber sie darf der Mannigfaltigkeit nichts nehmen ...' Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, ed. Klaus L. Berghahn (RUB, 18213; Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002), 74. Tr. Watanabe-O'Kelly, *On the Naive and Sentimental*, 66 (italics not mine).

30 The anonymous reviewer of 'Achtes Gesellschafts-Concert in Köln' (in *Niederrheinische Musikzeitung*, 9 (1861), 62) noticed 'a little violin-figure with an uncanny resemblance to one of Spohr's in the first movement of *Die Weihe der Töne*' ('... eine Violin-Figur, die eine täuschende Aehnlichkeit mit einer von Spohr im ersten Satz der Weihe der Töne hat').

Ex. 1. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, bb. 9–10, reduction.

Ex. 2. Louis Spohr, *Die Weihe der Töne* op. 86, I, bb. 49–52, reduction.

Ex. 3. Gade, *Frühlings-Phantasie* op. 23, II. *Allegro molto e con fuoco*, bb. 12–19, reduction.

from below'.³¹ As others, Gade normally uses these suspensions only very occasionally, supposedly to add the impression of 'charm' or 'lightness' to a major tune, as for instance in some bars of the second movement of his *Frühlings-Phantasie* (Ex. 3) or in a passage from his *Idyllisk Ouverture En Sommerdag* (Ex. 4).

Ex. 4. Gade, *En Sommerdag*. *Idyllisk Ouverture*, bb. 139-47, reduction.

Whereas in the examples above this is a very exclusive means of ornamentation, in *Frühlings-Botschaft* similar chromatics are so frequently heard that they become structure, a unifying fundament of the whole musical language, not interspersed at random but very meticulously set. At the same time they are so subliminal and, in terms of potential anticipation, so imperceptible that they could hardly be called overdone. Ex. 5 shows some instances; many more can be easily identified hearing and reading the piece.

³¹ In German, Abert calls them 'frei eingeführte... chromatische Vorhalte' (Hermann Abert, *W. A. Mozart. Herausgegeben als fünfte, vollständig neu bearbeitete und erweiterte Ausgabe von Otto Jahns Mozart, Erster Teil (1756 - 1782)*, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1919, 437) or 'alterierten Vorhalt von unten' (ibid., *Zweiter Teil (1783 - 1791)* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1921), 232).

a)

b)

c)

d)

e)

Ex. 5. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, examples of chromatic suspensions: a) orchestra, bb. 27–28, piano reduction; b) choir and instruments, bb. 35–39; c) choir, bb. 40–42; d) choir, bb. 93–94; e) oboe and cello, bb. 96–97.

a) Clarinet, bar 9

b) Oboe, bar 29
Viola

c) Soprano, bar 40

d) Violin 1, bar 53

e) Oboe, bar 96

Ex. 6. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, table of main motifs.

A slightly more obvious, nevertheless non-schematic framework of the composition is constituted by a recurring set of short musical elements that can be identified as five central motifs, listed in Ex. 6 in order of their appearance. They show varying degrees of elaboration but are all unspecific enough to be set in very different environments. The already witnessed rising chain of quavers in the exclusively instrumental motif a is much more specific than the simple but all-encompassing neighbouring note in motif b, shown here as overlapping in two voices. The fanfare-like motif c again contains an augmented fourth suspension as an alternative to what could be a plain triad figure. Linked – albeit not exclusively – to the ritornello (see below), motif c is a very prominent and always noticeable item of the piece. The again rather simple motif d causes a vocal impression but it is mainly executed by the orchestra; motif e finally is quite striking owing to its prominent seventh leap. Again as observed above, motif e is often followed directly by a chromatic suspension (see Ex. 5e).

Nearly all of these motifs are not restricted to certain sections but overlap formal caesuras, as can be witnessed in the synopsis of the piece's form (Fig. 2). Often they work, as it were, in the background of other distinctive melodic surfaces. Sometimes

they move to the foreground and create allegedly complex textures, as for example in the section given in Ex. 7, producing something similar to a double canon via the repeated combination of motifs b and e. In both ways, the motivic network produces cohesion and the effect of a richly elaborated composition.

95

o See - le, wirf ab was dich hielt, o See - le

o See - le, wirf denn ab was dich ge - fes - selt hielt, o See - le

o See - le, wirf ab was mit Be - schwer - den ge - fes - selt dich hielt,

o See - le o See - le

VI. 2

p

Cb.

Ex. 7. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, choir, instruments, bb. 95–99.

Finally I shall consider the overall layout of the piece. The formal outline of *Frühlings-Botschaft* puts itself, to use James Hepokoski's term,³² in dialogue with a multitude of generic standards, yet none is carried out entirely. In this manner, Gade sets off a continuous play with expectations, comprehensible enough not to scatter the listeners' attention, open enough to remain suspenseful.

In musical idylls, one would probably estimate rounded forms like the ternary 'liedform' A-B-A or songlike strophic structures. Both are definitely hinted at in *Frühlings-Botschaft*. Necessary for this is a recursive element, which is formed by a vocal ritornello. For this purpose, the poem's second line 'Willkommen, heller Frühlingsklang' is unhinged from the first stanza to serve as the basis of the ritornello and finally also of the piece's coda. Yet, at the crucial point of recapitulation in bar 155, the words change: This is a remarkable decision, because it avoids verbal redundancy while at the same time it still – musically – fulfils its formal function. With regard to 'liedform', the music of the ritornello does mark two separated beginnings of a section

32 James Hepokoski, 'Sonata Theory and Dialogic Form', in Pieter Bergé (ed.), *Musical Form, Forms & Formenlehre. Three Methodological Reflections* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 71–89.

prelude 1-34 [34]	prelude ¹ 1-8 [8]	–	G [#] 7, B ⁷ , d [#] , B ⁷	–
	prelude ² 9-16 [8]	–	E → g [#] → B → B ⁷	motif a
	prelude ³ 17-26 [10]	–	E → F [#] 7	motif a
	prelude ⁴ 27-30 [4]	–	F [#] 7 → B ⁷ → E ⁷	motif b
	prelude ⁵ 31-34 [4]	–	A → B ⁷	–
A 35-74 [39] and 73-107 [35]	ritornello ¹ 35-39 [5] I, 2 ‘Willkommen’ B ⁷ motifs c, a	ritornello ² 73-78 [6] I, 2 ‘Willkommen’ B ⁷ motifs c, a		
	A 40-49 [10] I, 2+1 ‘Willkommen’ E → B motifs c, a	A ⁷ 79-90 [12] I, 2+1 ‘Willkommen’ E motifs c, a		
	B ¹ 50-53 [4] I, 3-4 ‘Nun rührt der Saft’ B → g [#] → B motifs b, a	C ¹ 91-94 [4] II, 9-10 ‘So wirf denn ab’ A –		
	B ² 53-66 [14] I, 5-6 ‘Es wandelt’ → g [#] → B motifs d, b	C ² 95-103 [9] ~II, 9-10 ‘o Seele, wirf ab’ A → B ⁷ motifs b, e		
	‘chorale’ ¹ 67-73 [8] I, 7-8 ‘Ein wunder- sames’ B motifs b, a	A ⁷ 104-107 [4] II, 11-12 ‘Du sollst noch’ E motif c		
B 108-154 [47]	D 108-122 [15]	II, 13-16 ‘Der aus den’	a → C	motif d
	C ² 122-130 [9]	–	C → e	motifs a, b, e
	E 131-142 [12]	III, 17-18 ‘Und sind’	e	motifs d, b
	‘chorale’ ² 143-154 [12]	III, 19-20 ‘O glaube’	E → B	motif b
A’ 155-191 [37]	ritornello ³ 155-159 [5]	~III, 20/19 ‘unergründlich’ B ⁷	motifs c, a	
	F ¹ 160-172 [13]	III, 21-24 ‘Lass nur’	E → c [#]	motifs a, b
	F ² 173-183 [11]	III, 21-24 ‘Lass nur’	→ E → B motif b	
	‘chorale’ ³ 183-191 [9]	III, 21-22 ‘Lass nur’	E	–
coda 192-207 [16]	~C ² ” 192-197 [6]	III, 23/24 ‘und du wirst’	E	motifs e, a, b
	~A”” 198-207 [10]	~I, 2 ‘Willkommen’	E	motifs ~c, a

Fig. 2. Formal synopsis of Gade’s *Frühlings-Botschaft*. In terms of tonality, upper-case letters signify major and lower-case minor.

A (bb. 35 and 155). The whole outline however would still have to be regarded then as framed by an external prelude (b. 1) and coda (b. 192) and with a dual and varied exposition of A (the second cycle starting with the second ritornello in b. 73). Section B (b. 108) certainly works as a contrasting section according to its predominant minor keys, which are strikingly linked to passages of the text that speak of ‘dark paths’ and ‘guilt’. This kind of minor insert (particularly its vocal version from bar 131) is quite characteristic indeed of a varied song, and it can be found quite frequently in examples by Schubert. On the other hand, section B is, quite un-generically, interspersed by an

instrumental interlude (b. 122) which consists of music already heard, and eventually with a harmonic recapitulation (b. 143) preceding the thematic one (b. 155). The alternation of refrain-like recurrences and contrasting episodes could also lead to the conception of a rondo, refrains of which then could be found in bars 35, 73 and 155, while the episodes were to be located in bars 50, 91 and 108. Yet already the first connection of assumed refrain and episode unmistakably points in the direction of sonata form. As it happens, on hearing the piece for the first time, one might think that after the instrumental prelude one were in fact to enter a veritable vocal sonata, embracing a main (b. 40), a subordinate (b. 50) and a closing theme (b. 67), including the expected harmonic shift from I to V, here from E major to B major as well. Adding to this assumption is the fact that the music from bar 73 suggests a generic repetition of the supposed sonata exposition. However, after bar 91 the piece continues with a contrasting section in the subdominant key of A major that is rounded once more by a recapitulation, yet with a new text.

Within this abundance of possibilities to cling to a formal discourse, there is still an outstanding series of sections deserving special attention. They are listed in the synopsis (Fig. 2) under the name of 'chorales'³³ (bb. 67, 143 and 183). These passages serve, with increasing intensity, as insular points of contemplation. This is achieved musically by the suspension of the otherwise continuous quaver-motoric motion and by concentrating the choir in a virtual a cappella and plain homorhythm. The first of these sections seems to serve as a closing theme of the alleged sonata exposition, but there it already surpasses this function. Tied to the word 'Segen' ('blessing'), it offers a first glimpse at the sacral grounding of text³⁴ and, ultimately, of music as well. For the first time in the piece, a (still small) window to transcendence is opened, to the mystery that lies behind the elation of spring (Ex. 8).

This effect is reinforced by the second 'chorale'³⁵ which serves as an immediate reply to the preceding minor section, the text of which runs 'And however dark your paths may be/And how heavily you may be pressed down by your own guilt' (Ex. 9).

In the surroundings of the third 'chorale', there appears no opposition in the sung words,³⁶ but a twofold musical illumination of them: The text of the 'chorale' is the same as in the piece's climax but its message is transformed from exuberance to

33 For the purposes at hand, this is admittedly a metaphorical term, of course, for no actual chorale is presented here, neither melodically, nor with regard to harmonic treatment. The overall texture of the music in the passages in question, however, seems to allow for the using of the term nonetheless.

34 'Ein wundersames Zukunftsträumen/Fließt wie ein Segen durch die Welt.' ('A wondrous dreaming of the future/Is flowing through the world like a blessing.')

35 'O glaube, größer ist die Gnade/Und unergründlich ist die Huld.' ('O do believe, grace is greater/And favour is inscrutable.')

36 'Lass nur zu deines Herzes Toren/Der Pfingsten vollen Segen ein.' ('Only let Pentecost's full blessing/Pass the gates of your heart.')

67 men

ein wun - der-sa - mes Zu - kunfts - träu - men

70 fließt wie ein Se - gen durch die Welt.

Ex. 8. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, choir, bb. 67–73 ('chorale 1').

143

O glau - be, grö - sser ist die Gna - de, grö -

O glau - be, glau - be

O glau - be, grö - sser ist die Gna - de, glau - be

O glau - be, grö -

148 grö sser ist die Gna - de, und un - er - gründ - lich ist die Huld,

Ex. 9. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, choir, bb. 143–53 ('chorale 2').

contemplation (Ex. 10). While both the Hartmann's spring-pieces mentioned above, having broken out of a musical display of winter, end in *forte* exultations of new-born nature, the finale of *Frühlings-Botschaft* is a gesture of self-reflection that stops to ponder more intensely the joy that it has been singing of from the very start.

184

lass nur zu dei - nes Her - zens Tho - ren der

188

Pfing - sten vol - len Se - gen ein, Se - gen ein,

Ex. 10. Gade, *Frühlings-Botschaft*, choir, bb. 183–91 ('chorale 3').

The subsequent coda (b. 192) repeats the initial 'Willkommen', but does not so by bursting out any more but as if speaking to itself. 'Welcome', the verbal gesture of acceptance, becomes an expression of humble thanksgiving.

What one might think of as a quite trivial musical praise of spring thus is charged with – at least a streak of – transcendence. Behind its compliant outward appearance, *Frühlings-Botschaft* hides a hypertrophy, in both semantics and structure that audiences will have noticed when dealing with this music, and be it only on a subconscious level. Gade's music in this particular case (and one could well be tempted to generalize the statement) does not brag about an obvious complexity but surrenders its subtle qualities almost unnoticed. This idyll is rich and modest at the same time and it is an idyll that Gade's audience would have bought, and, to put it bluntly, did buy from him as it represents an art that is balanced but not boring; furthermore, it gets less boring but ever more exciting the longer you deal with it. Less bluntly put, this conception corresponds again with something Schiller wrote about his ideal of idyll: 'Peace would thus be the dominant impression of this kind of literature but the peace of consummation, not of laziness; a peace which flows from equilibrium, not from the cessation of powers, which flows from richness, not from emptiness, and is accompanied by the feeling of an endless capacity.'³⁷ This may even sound a bit pompous perhaps, and much more pompous surely than *Frühlings-Botschaft* in a concert-hall, and yet: Could anything more fitting be said about a musical idyll of Gade's?

37 'Ruhe wäre also der herrschende Ausdruck dieser Dichtungsart, aber Ruhe der Vollendung, nicht der Trägheit; eine Ruhe, die aus dem Gleichgewicht, nicht aus dem Stillstand der Kräfte, die aus der Fülle nicht aus der Leerheit fließt, und von dem Gefühle einen unendlichen Vermögens begleitet wird.' (Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 74; tr. and italics Watanabe-O'Kelly, *On the Naive and Sentimental*, 66).

Abstract

Drawing on Friedrich Schiller's theory of idyll in poetry, the text asks for the relevance of idyll for the music of Niels W. Gade, exemplarily with regard to his choral-orchestral *Frühlings-Botschaft* op. 35 to a text by Emanuel Geibel. Contemporary reception, which explicitly classified the piece as 'idyll', praised it for several decades. Analysis of text and music suggests that this connectivity might be the consequence of the composition's managing of creating a hypertrophy of aesthetic and structural layers, yet in an ulterior manner. With regard to Schiller's utopia of Elysian idyll, Gade's composition appears to come close to its ideal: by evoking tension without struggle, idyll without stagnancy. And it might be these kinds of assets that form not only a central trait of Gade's choral-orchestral work but of his music in general.

The author:

Alexander Lotzow, dr. phil., lecturer, Institute of Musicology, Kiel University, Germany ·
lotzow@musik.uni-kiel.de · <http://www.uni-kiel.de/muwi/institut/personen/lotzow.html>