

**Lieder eines armen Mädchens: a Song Cycle for the Cabaret**

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### ***Lieder eines armen Mädchens: A Song Cycle for the Cabaret***

It is 1921. A small crowd is gathered in the Café Größenwahn. A light shines on a pale, thin figure standing alone on the stage. She is the epitome of innocence and frailty; a victim of circumstance. The music starts, and the girl relates her tale of suffering, forgotten and abandoned on the streets of Berlin, her voice carrying through the audience, but reflecting the weakness and tenuousness of her position. A hush falls through the crowd, the audience mesmerized by the pathetic creature before them. The song ends, and there is silence, the spectators collectively attempting to comprehend what they have witnessed. And then – applause.

From the very first performance of Friedrich Hollaender's *Lieder eines armen Mädchens*, the music, text, and the characterization of performer Blandine Ebinger captivated audiences. Throughout the 1920s, songs from this set would be featured frequently in cabarets and other performance venues, and the character of Lieschen Puderbach, the subject of the songs, became one of Ebinger's signature roles. An examination of the text, music, and performance practice surrounding this set will demonstrate the significance of these songs as examples of music emerging from the Weimar Republic cabaret scene in the 1920s.<sup>1</sup>

Almost from birth, Friedrich Hollaender, the author and composer of *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* seemed destined for a career in music and entertainment. His parents were composer Victor Hollaender and singer/entertainer Rosa Perle, who both worked at the Barnum and Bailey circus in London when Friedrich was born. They recognized

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<sup>1</sup> Kühn, Volker. *Die Zehnte Muse*. Köln: VGS, 1993: 63.

their son's musical aptitude and encouraged him to study music, culminating in composition studies with Engelbert Humperdinck. During the First World War, Hollaender served as the director for the Theater on the West Front, which performed operettas written by Friedrich's father and other variety shows for German troops fighting in France. In 1919 Max Reinhardt hired Hollaender as the house composer at his new cabaret, the Schall und Rauch. From this point on, Hollaender devoted his career to writing music and texts for cabarets and films during the Weimar Republic.<sup>2</sup>

At the Schall und Rauch, Hollaender became enamored with a young performer, Blandine Ebinger, and they married in 1919. Ebinger was a *diseuse*, a French term used to describe female cabaret performers who presented monologues. Taken from the verb meaning "to speak," cabaret performers like Ebinger approached their presentation of songs in a way that utilized great flexibility in vocal inflection, not bound by melody or rhythm, but free to use a variety of vocalizations to express the text and portray the character.<sup>3</sup> Characterization was the focus of these performances, with music playing a subservient, if important, role.

Friedrich Hollaender viewed the cabaret as a vehicle for social criticism, an opportunity to call citizens to action under the guise of light entertainment. In the numbers of the cabaret, Hollaender saw a medium by which societal change could be effected through presenting contemporary political and social issues in a subtle yet

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<sup>2</sup> Budzinski, Klaus and Reinhard Hippen. *Metzler Kabarett Lexikon*. Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1996, 152-154.

<sup>3</sup> Lareau, Alan. "The Blonde Lady Sings: Women in Weimar Cabaret." *Practicing Modernity: Female Creativity in the Weimar Republic*, ed. Christiane Schönfeld. Würzburg, Germany: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006, 198-99.

pointed way. Further, because the scenes and songs presented in the cabaret were nothing more than brief vignettes, the music and text necessarily had to be free of excessive artifice: the effect of the music and text had to be immediate, focused, and clearly portray the intended meaning. The challenge lay in creating poignant, biting attacks and portraits within a very limited timeframe. Friedrich Hollaender articulated his philosophy regarding the role of cabaret and the ideals of the art form in an article appearing in *Die Weltbühne* in February of 1932:

Within it (Cabaret) there lies an aggressiveness that will forever distinguish it from all operatic, choral, and symphonic music. Cabaret that fails to take pleasure in the attack, that lacks the taste for battle, is not fit to live...Under the cover of an evening's relaxing entertainment, cabaret, like nothing else, suddenly dispenses a poison cookie. Suggestively administered and hastily swallowed, its effect reaches far beyond the harmless evening to make otherwise placid blood boil and inspire a sluggish brain to think.

The laws inherent to this compressed form demand not only the rapid effect of the arresting word and the quickly understood gesture, they call imperiously for music that is provocative, short, revealing, essential; in its rhythm and coloring, in its melody and drama, the music must explode in a lightning flash and can permit itself no time to develop and build...its mood has to be present in the first beats.<sup>4</sup>

Much of Hollaender's philosophy regarding the cabaret chanson and its purpose is already recognizable in the music and texts of *Lieder eines Armen Mädchens*, despite its early appearance on the cabaret stage.

Friedrich Hollaender composed the *Lieder eines Armen Mädchens* for Blandine Ebinger between 1920 and 1924, and these songs were among the first performed in the cabaret for which he wrote both the text and the music. All told, the set comprised

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<sup>4</sup> Hollaender, Friedrich. "Cabaret." *Die Weltbühne* 28:5 (February 2, 1932), 169-71. In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, et. al. Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 566-67.

thirteen songs. However, there is no evidence that the cycle was performed in its entirety. Instead, Hollaender and Ebinger selected a limited number of songs from the set for each program. As a result, a few of the songs, including “O Mond” and “Currende” were widely performed and recognized as signature pieces for both the composer and the performer, while others remained relatively obscure even during the period in which they were conceived and performed.

The cycle is unified in its presentation of vignettes from the life of Lieschen Puderbach, a character name borrowed from the play *Die Wupper*, by Else Lasker-Schüler. While the character in the play, like the Lieschen of the song cycle, exists in the lowest strata of society and meets a tragic fate, there are no overt connections beyond the utilization of the name.<sup>5</sup> Also, although the songs of the cycle all contain similar thematic overtones, revolving particularly around death, poverty, and loneliness, there is not a strong sense of a through narrative. Indeed, the subjects of the songs and the experiences of the character suggest that Lieschen is actually a conglomeration of several characters of varying ages and backgrounds rather than a coherent grouping telling the story of a single protagonist. Thus, though the songs are connected through characterization and thematic material, they were likely never imagined as a complete cycle.

Hollaender wrote the lyrics in a Berlin dialect, which is evident in the written text and recordings of Blandine Ebinger. The spelling of the text reflects the stereotypical phonemes recognizable in the German spoken by lower class Berliners in the early

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<sup>5</sup> Kosta, Barbara. *Willing Seduction, The blue angel, Marlene Dietrich, and mass culture*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009: 178.

twentieth century. The most typical alterations from traditional German include replacing the hard initial “G” from words like “Geheimnis” with a soft “J” consonant “Jeheimnis.” This written representation reflects the tendency in this dialect to soften the traditional “g” [g] sound with a “j” [j] glide equivalent to the English letter “y.” Other alterations in the written text reflect similar discrepancies in the sound of the dialect relative to the traditional pronunciation and spelling of the language.

Of the original thirteen songs, music exists in transcribed manuscripts and recordings for eleven of them. Only one, “Groschenlied,” which enjoyed immense popularity, was published. The 13 Songs include:

1. Currende
2. Das Wunderkind
3. Drei Wünsche
4. In den Abendwind geflüstert
5. Jeheimnis der Blumen (no music exists for this song)
6. Die Hungerkünstlerin
7. Wenn ick mal tot bin
8. Mit einer scheußlichen Puppe (no music exists for this song)
9. Das Groschenlied
10. Nachtgebet
11. Wiegenlied an eine Mutter
12. O Mond
13. Abzählen<sup>6</sup>

The texts of *Lieder eines Armen Mädchens* ingeniously portray the societal realities of poverty, suffering, depravity, and death from the perspective of a young girl. The innocence and directness of the observations made by Lieschen Puderbach add humor to what would otherwise be depressing or appalling situations. At the same time, the juxtaposition of childlike innocence with themes of loneliness, death, and immorality,

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<sup>6</sup> Kühn, Volker. ‘...Und sonst gar nichts’: *Das Friedrich Hollaender Chanson Buch*. Hannover, Germany: Fackelträger, 1996, 37-54.

are at times jarring and pointed, full of irony and pathos meant to trigger empathetic and shocked reactions from members of the audience.

Several of Hollaender's songs in the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* take advantage of the irony inherent in the juxtaposition of a child's life experience with adult situations. For example, in "Abzählen," ("Counting") the innocence of a childhood counting game is interspersed with text describing scenes from the bar where she makes her home. The second verse states:

One-two three four – Sherry liquor and light beer  
 Five-Six-Seven-Eight – Mother wails and father laughs  
 Six-Seven-Eight-Nine – On no night can I go to sleep  
 Seven-eight-nine-ten – Our mother is too beautiful  
 Eene meene ming mang kling klang ping pang  
 Coach driver's curse, young women yak  
 Card games and dice rattle  
 The policeman is a nice man, and now it's your turn.<sup>7</sup>

What makes this amalgamation particularly effective is that the child never renders any judgment in her lyrics. Instead, the images are presented simply and directly as factual observations. Because the child knows no other alternative than the environment in which she lives, she cannot make qualitative assessments of her situation. As a result, the judgment of whether or not this is an appropriate environment for this young child and the degree to which these observations are shocking is left to the audience members to determine for themselves. The primary objective of the cabaret is to entertain rather than proselytize. Thus, Hollaender avoids rendering judgment in his lyrics, and the goal is simply to awaken the minds of the audience members, encouraging them to reflect on

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<sup>7</sup> Text found from the manuscript copy found in the Deutsches Kabarett-Archiv, Mainz, Germany. Original music is the property of the estate of Blandine Ebinger. Translation by Jonathon Struve and Jute Anderson.

the situation and react in their own way both in the theater and in their subsequent actions.

Another theme that permeates the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* is an obsession with death, and the hope that comes in heaven. The texts frequently present this pathetic creature from a perspective that offers little hope for redemption or escape in this world. The reality of her life is one of poverty and suffering, and because she never complains about the unfairness of her situation, the acceptance of her existence and her resignation to the idea that a better life will only be possible in heaven enhance the tragic nature of the character. The character's life circumstances are dismal, without hope for redemption or escape except through death.

“Wenn ick mal tot bin” (“When I am dead”) is the most obvious example of the child's positive outlook towards death. The young girl describes her funeral, remarking how beautiful she will look, how all her friends and relatives will gather and mourn, and finally how she will be welcomed in heaven. In the third verse, Lieschen explains:

When I am dead, they light candles with yellow flames  
 They put them right and left of me, very close,  
 Then a golden light falls on my diseased bones  
 And our teacher, he begins to cry terribly!  
 Only aunt is very happy, when I am dead  
 When I am dead, I don't eat anymore.<sup>8</sup>

This verse also offers a prime example of Hollaender's ability to balance comedy with tragedy. The childlike innocence in the image of the funeral offers a kind of morbid humor, given the casual and direct way in which the child presents visions her death and

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<sup>8</sup> Text found from the manuscript copy found in the Deutsches Kabarett-Archiv, Mainz, Germany. Original music is the property of the estate of Blandine Ebinger. Translation by Jonathon Struve and Jute Anderson.



the reactions of her acquaintances and caregivers. Particularly in the case above, it is only possible to find humor in these images if they are conveyed from a young person's perspective, and only if that perspective is made clear. Although the tone of the text betrays a childlike quality, the performer is largely responsible for determining the characterization. Without a clear interpretation, all the humor and innocence inherent in these texts would be lost.

At times, Hollaender's texts make specific references to current events and works of art. The song "Hungerkünstlerin" is a direct reference to the Kafka story of the same name, published in 1922.<sup>9</sup> Hollaender simply adapts the idea of a performance artist living in a glass box and starving herself to the character of the song cycle. Hollaender's adaptation presumes popular intellectual knowledge of Kafka's story. Lieschen decides that she, like the character Fakira from Kafka's story, will starve as the wealthy public passes and observes. The text specifically references the protagonist from Kafka's story to clarify the adaptation. In the end, the story is a critique of the upper classes, who see the desperate poverty and starvation in their midst, but do little to alleviate the suffering of their fellow citizens. While they might feel sorry for them or even occasionally give a trifle to help them, there is a detachment from the poor and their situation that perpetuates the suffering of many. This text also includes a criticism of Kaiser Wilhelm, who, according to the text, "has never seen anyone hungry before," despite the fact that hunger and poverty were rampant in Germany under his leadership and exacerbated in the wake of the disastrous war that left Germany reeling. The line, dripping with

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<sup>9</sup> Lareau, Alan. *The Wild Stage: Literary Cabarets of the Weimar Republic*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995..

sarcasm, exposes the blindness that the upper classes and those responsible for governing the nation had towards the suffering of German citizens.

Hollaender's texts are full of simple pathos and expression. In each of the different vignettes from the set, he is able to capture a particular moment of tragedy in the young protagonist's life. He cleverly utilizes the childlike innocence of the character to invoke both sympathy and humor in a variety of settings. In summarizing the texts of the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens*, Alan Lareau writes: "The tales charm with their amusing naiveté broken by startling flashes of worldly wisdom. For all their poverty and isolation in back alleys, the children in these songs have gotten to know life at its most extreme, and they innocently unmask the social disparities and hypocrisies of the adult world."<sup>10</sup> Hollaender's texts offer a strong societal critique, one that is sharpened by his ability to examine rampant injustice, poverty, and suffering through the lens of this poor, waifish child.

In addition to his ingenious texts, Hollaender's music also simply but effectively expresses the plight of the young Lieschen and the situations in which she finds herself. Typical of most cabaret music, the music of *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* is straightforward, without complicated harmonic or formal constructions. The text takes precedence, and the music is relegated to a supportive role. As a result, strophic and modified strophic forms are most common, and diatonic harmonies are the rule,

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<sup>10</sup> Lareau, Alan. "Du hast ja eine Träne im Knopfloch': Friedrich Hollaender and the Kabarett-Chanson." In *Literarisches und politisches Kabarett von 1901 bis 1999*, ed. Sigrid Bauschinger, 111-129. Basel: A. Franck, 2000.

although Hollaender does make use of mode mixture and modulation in some of the songs.

In keeping with Hollaender's philosophy of music for the cabaret, the music of each song effectively sets the scene, either the physical environment or the emotional state of the protagonist, through an economy of means. Hollaender often uses the introduction as the vehicle for establishing the mood. For example, in "Das Wunderkind" Lieschen recalls performing at the circus, and the introduction quotes "Entrance of the Gladiators" by Julius Fucik, which is universally recognizable as circus music. The music for "Nachtgebet," by contrast, lacks an introduction. Instead, the music suggests religious prayer chants with its static chords and monotone vocal delivery punctuated at the end of each line with cadential figures.

Hollaender utilized a simple harmonic language in these songs. Major and minor mode mixture was occasionally employed to delineate changes of mood motivated by the text. "Currende" is an example of Hollaender's effective use of mode mixture. In this haunting song, Leschen Puderbach is living in an orphanage, and the orphan girls try to make money by wandering the streets as an itinerant choir, singing at the houses of the wealthy as they pass. Musically, Hollander presents a simple melody in D minor with motion in thirds that gradually descends. The descending motive winds its way down the scale, symbolic of the exhaustion of the young girls as they make their way through the streets and the weight of their existence, alone and unloved in the world. The form of the song is modified strophic, and a shift from d minor to D major in the final verse signifies an emotional shift from one of suffering and exhaustion to one of hope. In the

final verse, Lieschen recounts how the girls will one day receive favor in heaven and all suffering will cease. Hollaender's postlude consists of an ascending figure that suggests the girls' ascension to heaven. The final spoken "Danke schön" represents the character thanking a passer-by for their donation, and a few recordings include the sound of a coin dropping in a bucket to help aurally solidify this image. Hollaender's use of mode mixture in this song helps to delineate the emotional transformation of the girls from sadness on earth to joy in heaven.

Another example of Hollaender's use of mode mixture can be found in "Jroschenlied" ("Penny Song"), where Lieschen becomes distraught over stealing a penny from a laundry woman, obsessing over her crime and lamenting her lost soul. The verses, where the girl is irrationally and dramatically distraught over her actions, are set in a minor key. However, the chorus is in major, betraying the melodramatic nature of Lieschen's overwhelming guilt after stealing the penny, and reflecting the final chorus, where her guilt melts away. Hollaender also uses the melodic construction to highlight the emotional angst experienced by the young girl. The melody of the verse is limited in range and seems unsettled, indicative of the paranoid thoughts Lieschen has about her situation. By contrast, the melody of the chorus is rhythmically settled, covers a wider range, and exhibits more melodic direction. The chorus seems to reflect the text of the final chorus, where Lieschen regains her honor through forgiveness, and her guilt over this seemingly egregious act melts away.

At times, Hollaender's music sets a mood that seems to contradict the text and the situation. For instance, the music to "Hungerkünstlerin" maintains an upbeat,

energetic dance quality that contrasts with the longing of the protagonist and the hunger, suffering, and weakness expressed in the text. The mood of the music, rather than reflecting the emotional state of the protagonist, instead demonstrates the excitement of the audience who flock to see the spectacle of the starving artist in the glass cage. It also reflects the protagonist's initial excitement at receiving so much attention from an adoring public. In the end, however, the energetic music is bitterly ironic, as the performer tires of the limelight and pleads with her audience that someone come to her aid rather than simply watching with disaffected sympathy. Indeed, the upbeat music seems unstoppable and continues through her pleas for assistance until it is too late for Lieschen to be saved.

"Die Hungerkünstlerin" ("The Hunger Artist") is a strophic song with two distinct sections. The A section consists of bass iterations on the strong beats and chords in the right hand on the off beats, giving the song buoyancy and a dance-like quality. The second section eliminates the off-beat chords, and the music becomes somewhat more stately. In the final verse, Hollaender abruptly replaces the harmonic motion with static chords supporting the performer, who chants the final lines of text. This chant represents a strange sort of eulogy to the starving artist, which includes a description of her skeletal pictures in a biology textbook. The chant-like melody suggests religious funereal music. In addition, the lack of motion at the end of the song symbolizes the girl as she succumbs to the weakness and exhaustion induced by her starvation and her eventual death. Hollaender, however, does not allow the somber mood to prevail in the music. He includes a flippant final joke in the text, where the girl proudly describes her continued stardom as a figure in a scientific textbook, and the sudden final cadence in

the music serves to jolt the audience out of the solemnity surrounding the girl's starvation.

The melodies for the songs within the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* are straightforward, easily sing-able, and almost always present in the accompaniment. Because cabaret performers frequently eschewed singing the melody in favor of rhythmic speech, the accompaniment necessarily reinforced the melodic content of the songs, so that there was continuity to the melody even when the performers took liberties with the melodic and musical structure. Blandine Ebinger often chose to vary her delivery, freely moving between singing and intoned speech. This offered both variety in the performance of these strophic songs and the ability to utilize a wide range of vocal usage for dramatic effect.

Because recordings of original performances of *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* exist, it is possible to understand exactly how these pieces sounded. However, Ebinger's gestures and facial expressions were also an important feature of the performance, and there are unfortunately few photos, reviews, and recollections that specifically reveal this aspect of the presentation. Ebinger took great liberties in rhythm and melody as she performed. Her delivery often placed the music in dramatic tension with her expression of the text. Although the basic framework of each song was consistent, there was great flexibility for improvisation in tempo, rhythm, and harmony. Hollaender would also alter the accompaniment in subsequent verses of the songs for variety. One interesting example of the flexibility of these songs can be found in recordings of "Das Wunderkind." In one recording, this song begins with a reference to "O du lieber Augustin" (tune of

“Have you ever seen a Lassie?”) rather than “Entrance of the Gladiators.” The former tune is also referenced in the introduction to “Die Hungerkünstlerin.” This indicates that the alteration was necessary for variety if these two songs were presented on the same program.

From their first performance in 1921, the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* were met with enthusiastic audience receptions and glowing critical reviews. Max Hermann-Neisse wrote that at the appearance of Ebinger as Lieschen Puderbach, the environment of the performance venue was greatly altered. The once light-hearted crowd was silenced, drawn to the poor creature before them.<sup>11</sup> The music and text of Friedrich Hollaender coupled with Blandine Ebinger’s impassioned performances became a sensation on the cabaret stage in the 1920s. The frequent performance of songs from the set throughout the twenties, their critical acclaim, and their recognition and popularity among cabaret audiences help to solidify the position of *Lieder eines armen Mädchens* as a significant work for Hollaender specifically and the Weimar Cabaret more generally. Years later, in his autobiography, Hollaender wrote of Ebinger’s portrayal: “A figure, pathetic and endearing at the same time, Blandine Ebinger, who for many years moved audiences to laughter and tears...Major and minor, the comic tragedy, the mixture which I had prescribed. The first of my own texts, and the first, great interpretation.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kühn, Volker. *Die Zehnte Muse*. Köln: vgs, 1993: 63.

<sup>12</sup> Hollaender, Friedrich. *Von Kopf bis Fuss. Mein Leben mit Text und Musik*. München; Wien printed, 1965. (Autobiography)

This strange set of songs moved countless audience members in the 1920s. They represent an important contribution to the culture and understanding of Germany during the Weimar Republic. Because of their impact, these songs should not be relegated to a forgotten past, but rather recognized for their cleverly devised lyrics, simple, direct music, and striking performances that made them popular during the tumultuous Weimar era. However, beyond their historical significance, the songs ought not to endure as mere relics of a past epoch. Rather, the character of Lieschen Puderbach reaches out across history, and her story continues to speak to us, a constant reminder of the poor innocent children who grow up in unimaginable situations, leaving them with little hope and seemingly insurmountable obstacles. They are a reminder that despite our great advances, there continue to be people living in the same dire circumstances as the protagonist of the *Lieder eines armen Mädchens*. These songs point out our hypocrisy, and despite their entertaining nature, they also continue to call us to action, to reach out to the Lieschens of the present era and restore their hope and faith in the world around them.

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## 2 Kurrende (Itinerant Choir)

Auf den Höfen, Geldes wegen,  
singen wir Kurrendemeechen  
Unter Leitung einer Dame,  
Fräulein Mikulewsky ist ihr Name.  
Aus Kattun sind unsre Kleider,  
früh verlorn die Eltern leider,  
Wir sind Waisen, Schwarz und klagend,  
Alle gleiche Hüte tragend.

Öffnet, öffnet eure Fenster,  
Menschen sind wir, nicht Gespenster.  
Dringt's auch heiser aus den Kehlen,  
denn wir singen, singen mit den Seelen.  
Unsre Nasen sind erfroren,  
Gott der Herr hat uns geboren,  
Gott der Herr wird uns ernähren  
wohl mit Wurzeln und mit süßen Beeren.

Wie die Vögel, die nicht säen  
wird auch uns nicht übergehen.  
Ach, schon morgen kann's geschehen,  
daß verwandelt wir im lauter Feen.  
Wenn wir sprechen mit den Knaben,  
kriegen viele Nasenbluten,  
Drum verbieten's die Statuten  
und auch, weil wir doch die Bleichsucht haben.

Unsre Eltern komm'n im Traume,  
und sie winken mit dem Finger leise,  
Und wir fassen sie am Saume,  
aber sie entschweben aus dem Kreise.  
Und der Morgen kommt wie Spülicht,  
und im Altersheim von gegenüber  
Hocken Greise, starrn ins Glühlicht,  
und sie nicken, nicken zu uns ruber.

Und wir winken, und sie grüßen,  
Sie die Alten, wir die Waisen.  
Müssen wir die Fenster schließen,  
Wird es öd und traurig bei den Greisen.  
Aber einmal wird es tagen,  
Gott der Herr öffnet seine Hände,  
Um ins Zauberschloß zu tragen armes,  
armes Mädchen der Kurrende.

Drumm mißachtet nicht die Waisen,  
die das höchste Glück erfahren,  
Die einst Cherubime heißen,  
und mit Flügeln, langen weißen,  
Als Gottes Lieblingskinder um den diamantenen  
Himmelsthron sich werden scha-ren!  
Danke schön...

At the houses of the wealthy, for money's sake, We itinerant  
choir girls sing.  
Under the direction of a lady,  
Miss Mikulewsky is her name.  
Our dresses are made from cotton.  
Sadly, we lost our parents early in life.  
We are orphans, dark and lamenting,  
All of us wearing the same hats.

Open, open your windows,  
We are people, not apparitions.  
Our song is pushed out of our sore throats, because we  
sing, sing with our souls.  
Our noses are frozen,  
God the Lord has given birth to us.  
God the Lord will nourish us  
well with roots and sweet berries.

Like the birds, who do not sow seeds,  
Do not overlook us.  
Oh, already tomorrow it could happen,  
That we will be changed into fairies.  
When we talk with the boys,  
Many get nosebleeds,  
And that's why the rules forbid that,  
And also because we have anemia.

Our parents come in dreams,  
And they wave softly with a finger.  
And we try to hold on to their hems,  
But they float out of the space.  
And the morning arrives in dim light,  
And in the old people's home across from us.  
Old people sit, staring into the glowing light,  
And they nod, nod to us.

And we wave, and they greet,  
They the old ones, we the orphans.  
We must close the windows,  
When we do it is lonely and sad for the old ones.  
But some day it will be better,  
God the Lord will open his hands  
And carry the poor, poor girls of the itinerant choir into the  
magic castle.

Therefore do not underestimate the orphans, who will  
experience the highest happiness.  
Who will one day be called Cherubim  
And with wings long and white,  
As God's favorite children will assemble around the  
diamond-studded heavenly throne!  
Thank you

## 4 Das Groschenlied (The Penny Song)

Wo Mutter wäscht im Vorderhaus,  
da is et mir jeschehn.  
Da lag een Jroschen uffm Tisch  
und hat mir anjesehn  
Frau Wischnack jing mal raus wat holn –  
der Jroschen, der lag da -,  
Und plötzlich hatt ick ihn jestohln,  
weeß nich, wie det jeschah.  
Wie bin ick bloß dazu jekom'n,  
det ick det Jeld hab wechjenomm'n?  
Een Jroschen liegt auf meiner Ehre,  
Een Jroschen, unscheinbar und kleen.  
Wenn ick't bloß nich jewesen wäre;  
Ick kann mir jar nich mehr in Spiegel sehn.

Ick wollte Friedan imponiern,  
die hat sich immer so.  
Die wurde jrün und jelb vor Neid,  
ick wurde nich von froh.  
Ick kann ooch nich spazierenjehn,  
mir jehd durch meinen Sinn:  
Nu müßten alle Leute sehn,  
wat ick for eene bin.  
Mir is, als kiekten Stuhl und Uhr:  
Wat hat denn unser Liesken nur?  
Een Jroschen liegt auf meiner Ehre,  
Een Jroschen, unscheinbar und kleen.  
Wenn ick't bloß nich jewesen wäre;  
Ick kann mir jar nich mehr in Spiegel sehn.

Der Jroschen brennt, der Jroschen brennt,  
ick wälz mir nachts im Schlafe.  
Wenn't duster is und alles pennt,  
wart ick uff meene Strafe.  
Herr Jusus wird mir nich verzeihn  
und ooch der Otto nich  
(ich sollte seine Braute sein –  
nu hab ick eenen Stich).  
Wenn der mir sollte trotzdem nehmen,  
ick müßte mir zu Tode Schämen.  
Een Jroschen liegt auf meiner Ehre,  
Een Jroschen, unscheinbar und kleen.  
Wenn ick't bloß nich jewesen wäre;  
Ick kann mir jar nich mehr in Spiegel sehn.

Where mother does the laundry near the house, That's  
where it happened to me.  
There lay a penny on the table  
And it looked at me.  
Mrs. Wischnack once went out to get something, And the  
penny just lay there.  
And suddenly I stole it,  
I don't know how it happened.  
How did I ever get there,  
That I took the money away?  
A penny lies on my honor  
A penny, insignificant and small  
If only I had not been there  
I cannot at myself anymore.

I wanted to impress Friedan,  
She thinks she's important.  
She turned green and yellow from envy,  
But it did not make me happy.  
Also, I cannot go for a walk  
Because I am always thinking about it:  
Now everyone must see  
What kind of girl I am.  
It feels as if even chairs and clocks look at me and say:  
What's wrong with our Liesken?  
A penny lies on my honor  
A penny, insignificant and small  
If only I had not been there  
I cannot at myself anymore

The penny burns, the penny burns,  
I toss and turn at night in my sleep.  
When it is dark and everyone's asleep,  
I wait for my punishment.  
Lord Jesus will not forgive me  
And neither will Otto.  
(I wanted to be his bride,  
but now I have a stigma).  
If he should take me anyway,  
I would be ashamed to death.  
A penny lies on my honor  
A penny, insignificant and small  
If only I had not been there  
I cannot at myself anymore

Heut nacht hat tick so'n schönen Traum,  
mir war so leicht und frei,  
Ich ruhte untern Kirschenbaum,  
een Engel war dabei!  
Der sprach: "Na, Liesken, steh man uff,  
ick komm von lieben Jott!  
Nu brauchste nich zu fürchten mehr  
'ne Strafe oder Spott.  
Kauf dir 'ne Kuchenkrümeltüte:  
Dir is verziehn durch Jottes Jüte!  
    Nu hab ick wieder meine Ehre,  
    Nu is die Welt ooch wieder schön!  
    Es war mir eene jute Lehre.  
Nu kann ick wieder unter Leute jehn!

Tonight I had this nice dream,  
I felt so light and free.  
I rested under a cherry tree,  
An angel was there too!  
The angel said: "Well, Liesken, get up,  
I come from the dear God:  
You don't need to fear punishment  
Or ridicule anymore.  
Buy yourself a bag of cake crumbs;  
Tou are forgiven through God's grace!  
    Now I have my honor again,  
    Now the world is beautiful again.  
    It was a good lesson.  
    Now I can move among the people!

## 5 Die hungerkünstlerin (The starving artist)

Weil ick zu Hause viel jehungert habe,  
 Jab schließlich ick der heiligen Kunst mir hin.  
 Stolz nenn ick mir *das Mädchen aus dem Grabe*  
 Jenannt Fakira, Hungerkünstlerin.  
 In einem Käfig ohne Tür und Ritzen,  
 Aus dickem Glas, wie im Aquarium,  
 Sieht man mir dreiundzwanzig Tage sitzen  
 Und jarnischt essen, wertes Publikum,  
 Ick wirke manchmal wie ne Offenbarung,  
 Det rührt von meinem blassen Antlitz her.  
 Paar Flaschen Wasser dienen mir zur Nahrung,  
 Ick treibe keinerlei Geschlechtsverkehr.

Vor hohe und vor allerhöchste Kreise  
 Hab ick jehungert, was mir tief bejückt.  
 Ick hab von Kaiser Wilhelm Junstbeweise:  
 Er hat in Breslau mir die Hand jedrückt.  
 Daß der bejeistert war, kann ick begreifen,  
 Er hatte ja noch keenen hungern sehn.  
 Ick aber mach mir nischt aus Kranz und Schleifen,  
 Ick möchte mal mit jemand essen jehn.  
 Denn von dem vielen Hungern kriegt man Hunger,  
 Und meine Gage is ein Hungerlohn.  
 Ick träum, vor Restorangs herumzulungern  
 Mit süßem Bratenduft und Jrammofon.

Mitleid von Menschen,  
 die mir nachts betrachten,  
 Muß ick verzerrt durch meine Scheiben sehn.  
 Sie! Sag'n Sie mal: Kann ick Ihr Mitleid pachten,  
 Und wolln Sie mal for mir in Käfig jehn?  
 Hier is es schön! Und hier is alles Scheibe!  
 Man nährt sich so von überschüßje Kraft.  
 Und wenn ick einmal uff de Strecke bleibe,  
 Holt mir per Auto ab die Wissenschaft!

Dann stehe ick in anatomschen Werken  
 (Ein Unikum, wo man nur einmal hat):  
 FAKIRA ließ vor andre sich nischt merken,  
 Doch eines Taes war sie det Hungern satt.  
 Sie war noch jung und is nich alt jeworden,  
 Abbildung 3 zeigt deutlich ihr Schkelett,  
 Abbildung 4 die allerhöchsten Orden.

Sie starb an einem Kalbskotlett.

Because at home I experience hunger a lot.  
 I finally gave myself over to that holy art.  
 Proud I call that girl from the grave  
 Her name was Fakira, the hungry artist.  
 In a cage without door or scratch,  
 Made out of thick glass like an aquarium,  
 You can see me now sit for 23 days  
 Without eating anything, valued audience.  
 I sometimes have the effect of a revelation  
 That comes from my pale face.  
 A few bottles of water serve as my nourishment  
 I don't engage in any kind of sexual encounter.

In front of very high circles I have hungered, which  
 made me very happy.  
 I have signs of favor from Kaiser Willhelm  
 He shook my hand in Breslau.  
 I can understand that he was excited,  
 because he had never seen someone hungry.  
 But I do not think much of wreaths or ribbons  
 I want sometimes to go out eating  
 Because from all that hunger one gets hungry  
 And my income is just a pittance.  
 I dream of hanging around restaurants  
 With sweet smells of roasting and music.

Compassion from people  
 Who watch me in the evening  
 I must see distorted through the panes of glass  
 Hey! Tell me: Can I borrow your compassion  
 And would you like to sit for me in the cage.  
 It is nice here! It is all glass!  
 One feeds oneself of surplus strength.  
 And should I once be unable to go home,  
 Then science comes and picks me up in a car.

Then I stand in anatomical books.  
 (a unique sample man has seen only once)  
 Fakira didn't let other people notice anything  
 But one day she was tired of hungering  
 She was still young and did not grow old.  
 Illustration 3 shows her skeleton clearly.  
 Illustration 4 the highest awards

She died from a veal cutlet.

**Lieder Eines armen Mädchens: A Song Cycle for the Cabaret**

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