

Types of melody lines in Hugo Wolf's lieder:
Transition from the *Italian Songbook* to lieder composed in his later years

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Abstract

I examine the differences between Vols. I and II of Hugo Wolf's *Italian Songbook*, and the development of the lieder in his later years. I categorise Wolf's compositions into three periods and show how his creative process in composing melody lines seems to change in the third period. His use of single repeated notes in his lieder peaked in Vol. I. Although Wolf's use of single repeated notes was a big component in the formation of his declamatory lieder, in Vol. II, the use of single repeated notes reduced. The types of melody lines without single repeated notes were divided into three main categories: types of scale, sequences of two or three notes, and the zigzag pattern. The types of scale reduced from Vols. I to II but increased in his last six lieder. Moreover, the sequences of two or three notes vanished in these lieder, although the zigzag pattern continued with the exception of *Michelangelo Lieder*—composed as his last songs. In the third period, he began to attempt new techniques, and there was a clear departure to melody lines combining different notes and types of scales.

Keywords

Hugo Wolf, German lieder, *Italian Songbook*, *Michelangelo-Lieder*

Hugo Wolf (1860–1903), a well-known Austrian composer, composed 314 lieder in his lifetime. In terms of the tendency and degree of completeness, the compositions of his lieder can be categorised into three periods: first period, 1875–1888; second period, 1888–1891; and third period, 1896–1897.¹ In the second period in particular, he prolifically composed very mature

This paper is a conflation, revision, and expansion of two earlier studies on Hugo Wolf: Umebayashi (2006) and Umebayashi (2009).

¹ The present study considers the first period, from 1875–1888, during which Wolf composed 87 lieder; however most of these were not part of songbooks and were published posthumously. In the second period, Wolf was prolific and composed 198 lieder; apart from one, all of these were arranged in songbooks. After four and a half years of this period, during which Wolf suffered through a composing block, he began to compose again and completed 31 lieder. This marks the third period of his life and his last years. All the lieder from the second and third periods were

lieder—such as *Mörike* and *Goethe-Lieder*—that became representative of his works. *Italian Songbook*, written in the second and third periods, was one such remarkable work: Vol. I (22 songs) was composed in November and December of 1891, and Vol. II (24 songs), in March and April of 1896.² In the third period, he completed four lieder, and in 1897 he composed his last songbook—*Michelangelo-Lieder* (three songs).

All the poems in *Italian Songbook* are about love; thus, in terms of subject matter there are no differences between Vols. I and II. However, the types of melody lines did change owing to a hiatus of four and a half years. In this paper using data on the differences between Vols. I and II, I would like to examine the development of *Italian Songbook* and the lieder in his later years.

Declamation and single repeated notes

In the middle of the 20th century, Wolf came to be regarded as the composer who took the declamatory lied to its highest point of development.³ Before launching into my analysis, I would like to consider the concept of ‘declamation’ as put forth in previous studies. Declamation in music can be defined as ‘the relation between verbal stress and melodic accent in the setting and delivery of a text’.⁴ In terms of musical analyses, Adolf Fecker’s *Sprache und Musik*⁵ (Language and Music) is considered a leading resource in the declamation of the German lieder. Fecker classified the relationship between language and music into six categories.⁶ In particular, Category I ‘recite’ and Category II ‘declaim’ comprise melodies very closely associated

published during his lifetime. For more details on the classification of these periods, see Umebayashi (2001), pp. 20–24.

² Initially, Wolf had planned to include only 33 lieder in the *Italian Songbook*. However, he wrote a letter to his friend Emil Kauffmann on 2 April 1892, in which he stated that although he had originally thought of 33 lieder, 11 lieder were still incomplete (‘Es fehlen noch 11, da ich mirs in den Kopf gesetzt 33 Italienische zu veröffentlichen’). See Internationale Hugo Wolf-Gesellschaft, *Hugo Wolf Briefe* 2010, Band 2, p. 69). This letter reveals his difficulty in composing during this period. However, things worked out and again in 1896, he decided to compose 24 new lieder. On 1 May 1896, he wrote to Kauffmann again that on the previous day he had completed the 24th Italian lied and finally reached the number previously decided upon (‘dass ich gestern das 24. der italienischen Lieder geschrieben u. damit die Zahl, die im vorhinein bestimmt war, wirklich erreicht habe’) (see *ibid.*, Band 3, p. 108).

³ This is the translation of *Der Vollender des deklamatorischen Lieder*. See Engel, (1954), p. 110. In the same way, Rita Egger and Walter Wiora also regarded him in this light. Refer to the following works: Egger (1963), p. 7 and Wiora (1971), p. 145.

⁴ See Jander and Carter (2001), p. 122.

⁵ Fecker (1984).

⁶ *ibid.* pp. 45–46. It is classified into six categories: Category I *rezitieren* (recite), II *deklamieren* (declaim), III *ikonisieren* (represent material by note), IV *symbolisieren* (symbolise), V *konstruieren* (construct in literal transition, but in this category it means construct melodies by dodecaphony), and VI *manipulieren* (manipulate in literal transition, but in this category it means convert and dismember poems such as Pierre Boulez and Luigi Nono).

with speech.⁷ According to Fecker's definition, Category I includes single repeated notes and the repetition of motifs, whereas Category II encompasses musical expression using other elements such as melody lines (except single repeated notes), harmony, metre, and rhythm. There is also a flexible transfer between the two categories,⁸ and Wolf's lieder are a blend of both categories.⁹ Indeed, in many of his mature lieder, Wolf used many single repeated notes (Category I), bringing to the fore the relationship between the words and the music through less movement of notes. This kind of relationship between declamation and single repeated notes, as seen in his lieder, appears in an earlier study: Rita Egger's *Die deklamationsrhythmik Hugo Wolfs in historischer sicht*¹⁰ (Hugo Wolf's declamation of rhythm in historic view). Using Wolf's music as an example, Egger classified the rhythm of Wolf's lieder into three types based on many single repeated notes¹¹: (1) *die metrische Deklamation* (the metric declamation); (2) *die taktgetreue Abweichungen von der metrischen Deklamation* (the deviations of trust in beats from the metric declamation); and (3) *die synkopische abweichungen von der metrischen deklamation* (the deviations by syncopation from the metric declamation). Helmut Türmer's *Die Melodik in den Liedern von Hugo Wolf*¹² (The melody in the songs of Hugo Wolf) is another illustration of the same point. In one of the chapters in his study, 'Repetitionsmelodik' (Melody of Repetition),¹³ he argued that single repeated notes have *recitativische Charakter* (recitative character) constructed by two basic elements: *Deklamationsrhythmik* (rhythm of declamation) and *Deklamationsmelodik* (melody of declamation).

The melody lines in Wolf's lieder do not include many single repeated notes, much in line with Fecker's Category II classification. In *Italian Songbook*, for example, the rate of use of single repeated notes differs entirely between the two volumes: there is considerable use of these notes in Vol. I, composed in the latter part of the second period, but decreased use in Vol. II, composed in the first part of the third period. If the repetition of single notes were the only requisite for a lieder being considered declamatory, then Wolf's lieder in Vol. II would not be considered declamatory. In effect, the decrease in the use of single repeated notes in Vol. II creates melody lines that greatly differ from those in Vol. I, leading to new types of melodies. I will now examine how these differences were developed in Wolf's subsequent lieder, as

⁷ *ibid.* pp. 50–59.

⁸ *ibid.* p. 182.

⁹ *ibid.* p. 191.

¹⁰ Egger (1963).

¹¹ *ibid.* pp. 10–38.

¹² Thürmer (1970).

¹³ *ibid.* pp. 18–29.

compared with *Italian Songbook*.¹⁴

The lieder in Wolf's later years

The last lied in *Italian Songbook*—‘Was für ein Lied soll dir gesungen werden’—was composed on 30 April 1896. After this, Wolf composed only six more lieder, listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Wolf's lieder in his later years¹⁵

Number	Title	Songbook	Composed
(1)	Morgenstimmung	<i>Reinick</i>	Sep 8–Oct 23, 1896
(2)	Keine gleicht von allen Schönen	<i>Vier Gedichte</i> *	Dec 18–25, 1896
(3)	Sonne der Schlummerlosen	<i>Vier Gedichte</i> *	Dec 29–31, 1896
(4)	Wohl denk' ich oft	<i>Michelangelo</i>	March 18, 1897
(5)	Alles endet, was entsteht	<i>Michelangelo</i>	March 20, 1897
(6)	Fühlt meine Seele	<i>Michelangelo</i>	March 22–28, 1897

* *Vier Gedichte nach Heine, Shakespeare und Lord Byron*

In this paper, I deal with the six lieder mentioned in Table 1. I omit the lied *Gudmunds erster Gesang*, which was originally composed in 1891 as the musical score to the play *das Fest auf Solhaug* (Act 1, scene 11) and revised to a lied in 1896.

The rate of single repeated notes in the melody lines

Wolf used many single repeated notes in his lieder, and proof of this is shown by calculating the number of repeated notes divided by all the other notes in each lied. Table 2 lists the rate of repetition notes in each songbook in 1896.¹⁶

¹⁴ It is not my intention to discuss harmony in Wolf's lieder, though it is important to provide support for the melody lines. With regard to the structure of the harmony, the following two books are useful: Stein (1991) and Youens (1992). For a very interesting perspective on circularity and repetition in the harmony, refer to Matthew Baileyshea's study of 'Mühevoll komm ich und beladen' from *Spanish Songbook* (Baileyshea 2006).

¹⁵ In the second period, Wolf composed *Italian Songbook* intensively, at a stretch. However, the three lieder composed in 1896 differed from *Italian Songbook*. *Reinick-Lieder* comprised three lieder, and another two lieder were composed on 24 Jan 1888, and 1 Aug 1889. Two lieder from *Vier Gedichte nach Heine, Shakespeare und Lord Byron* were composed on 24 Jan 1888, and 11 May 1889.

¹⁶ In and after Table 2, some of the totals do not always add up to 100% because all the calculations in the tables are rounded off from fractions to percentages with one decimal place.

Table 2. The rate of repetition notes

Songbook	Number	Year	%									
			0– 10.0	10.1– 20.0	20.1– 30.0	30.1– 40.0	40.1– 50.0	50.1– 60.0	60.1– 70.0	70.1– 80.0	80.1– 90.0	90.1– 100
<i>Mörike</i>	53	1888	0	5.7	26.4	28.3	20.8	15.1	3.8	0	0	0
<i>Eichendorff</i>	13*	1888	0	11.8	11.8	35.3	23.5	17.6	0	0	0	0
<i>Goethe</i>	51	1888–89	0	9.8	5.9	21.6	31.4	17.6	11.8	2.0	0	0
<i>Spain (Sacred)</i>	10	1889–90	0	0	0	0	10	40	40	10	0	0
<i>Spain (Secular)</i>	34	1889–90	0	5.9	14.7	23.5	29.4	23.5	2.9	0	0	0
<i>Keller</i>	6	1890	0	0	33.3	16.7	16.7	16.7	0	16.7	0	0
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. I)	22	1890–91	0	0	0	9.1	27.3	18.2	18.2	27.3	0	0
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. II)	24	1896	8.3	4.2	25.0	33.3	16.7	8.3	4.2	0	0	0
(1)–(3)	3	1896	33.3	0	33.3	0	33.3	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Michelangelo</i> (4)–(6)	3	1897	0	33.3	33.3	0	33.3	0	0	0	0	0

* *Eichendorff-Lieder* comprises seventeen lieder and three appendices. Four of these lieder as well as the appendices were composed in 1880, 1886, and 1887; however, because of the difference in the compositional periods, these four lieder and the appendices are not included in Table 2.

Table 2 shows that the highest usage of single repeated notes was in the second half of 1888 in *Goethe-Lieder*; both the *Spain* songbooks (*Sacred* and *Secular*), and *Keller-Lieder*. From among these songbooks, the features of *Spain (Sacred)* are different. Although Wolf composed both *Spain (Sacred)* and *Spain (Secular)* together and only divided them later according to subject matter, only the *Sacred* lieder included a high number of single repeated notes. The reason only the *Sacred* lieder showed differences is that single repeated notes are closely associated with Christianity, and this is the only songbook based on Christianity.¹⁷ In *Italian Songbook* Vol. I, Wolf's last work in the second period, there is a marked increase in the rate of single repeated notes despite there being no connection with Christianity in this songbook; at the same time, there was no lieder in which the rate of single repeated notes was below 30%. In Vol. II in 1896 though, single repeated notes decreased distinctively. 'Schweig' einmal still'¹⁸ in Vol. II is unique in that the melody lines contain no single repeated notes. This tendency towards a decrease in the rate of single repeated notes was seen in Wolf's later years; interestingly, none of his lieder comprise over 50% of single repeated notes, though he continued to use these notes in

¹⁷ For the relationship between single repeated notes and Christianity, see Umebayashi (2005).

¹⁸ In the last line of this poem, a woman makes cynical remarks to a man who sings her a poor serenade. Therefore, Eric Sams suggested that the main melody line of Italian Serenade—which Wolf composed as a quartet in 1887 and arranged for orchestral work in 1892—was used in the melody line of this lieder as a parody. See Sams (1992), p. 363. This explanation is more fully developed in Umebayashi (2006).

his final years.

Melody lines that did not include single repeated notes

Wolf's use of single repeated notes peaked in *Italian Songbook* Vol. I after which there was a decrease. In this case, what can be said about the transition of melody lines without single repeated notes? Here I propose to change the method of analysis. To begin with, I divide the melody lines according to the lines of the poems, treating them as one unit. I then classify them on the basis of whether or not they include single repeated notes. Finally, I examine the note arrangements only in the melody lines, without including the repeated notes. Table 3 shows the number of lines in each poem as well as the number of lines including (and excluding) single repeated notes in each songbook in 1896.

Table 3. The percentage of repeated notes in each line of the poems in the songbooks

Songbook	Number of lines	Number of lines included	Number of lines excluded
<i>Mörike</i>	941	728 (77.4%)	213 (22.6%)
<i>Eichendorff</i>	216	162 (75.0%)	54 (25.0%)
<i>Goethe</i>	920	674 (73.3%)	236 (25.7%)
<i>Spain (Sacred)</i>	218	201 (92.2%)	18 (7.8%)
<i>Spain (Secular)</i>	669	499 (74.6%)	170 (25.4%)
<i>Keller</i>	102	68 (66.7%)	34 (33.3%)
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. I)	184	179 (97.3%)	5 (2.7%)
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. II)	209	162 (77.5%)	47 (22.5%)
(1)–(3)	32	17 (53.1%)	15 (46.9%)
<i>Michelangelo</i> (4)–(6)	36	22 (61.1%)	14 (38.9%)

Between Vols. I and II in *Italian Songbook*, there were no major differences in the number of lines. However, 77.5% of lines in Vol. II included single repeated notes, whereas this number was 97.3% in Vol. I. This tendency towards a decrease in single repeated notes was a prevalent feature of Wolf's lieder in his later years. The percentage data for single repeated notes in Vol. II is very similar to the percentages in *Mörike*, *Eichendorff*, and *Goethe-Lieder*; however judging from Table 2, Vol. II had fewer single repeated notes compared to any other songbook. In other

words, there was a definite reduction in the use of these notes in each line, and the melody lines were released from these notes.

Let us now examine melody patterns without focusing on the use of single repeated notes. Melody patterns can be classified into the following types:

- (1) Melodies including elements of the scales (Ex. 1)
- (2) Melodies including sequences of two or three notes (Ex. 2)

The melody line in Ex. 2 is constructed by sequences of two notes.

- (3) Melodies including zigzag lines (Ex. 3)

In measure 7 of Ex. 3, the arrangement of notes is E (flat)-A-C-F (sharp)-A-G-B (flat), representing the three-degree sequence of different notes: A-C, F (sharp)-A, and G-B (flat).

- (4) Others

Some of the melodies are made up of multiple patterns, for instance Ex. 4, which contains two types of sequence and scale: The first half is a sequence of two notes and the second half is scale.



Ex. 1: 'Wie soll ihr fröhlich sein' in *Italian Songbook* Vol. II, measures 5–6.



Ex. 2: 'O wüsstest du, wie viel ich deinetwegen' in *Italian Songbook* Vol. II, measures 3–4.



Ex. 3: 'Ich hab in Penna einen Liebsten' in *Italian Songbook* Vol. II, measures 7–8.



Ex. 4: 'Mein Liebster ist so klein' in *Italian Songbook* Vol. I, measures 31–34.

Table 4¹⁹ summarises the types of melody lines without repeated notes in each songbook.

Table 4. The types of melody lines without repeated notes (in percentages)

Songbook \ Type	Scale	Sequence of two or three tones	Zigzag	Others
<i>Mörke</i>	65.7%	8.5%	1.9%	23.9%
<i>Eichendorff</i>	83.3%	1.9%	1.9%	13.0%
<i>Goethe</i>	64.4%	9.7%	3.4%	22.5%
<i>Spain (Sacred)</i>	82.4%	0%	5.9%	11.8%
<i>Spain (Secular)</i>	81.2%	3.5%	5.9%	9.4%
<i>Keller</i>	67.6%	2.9%	2.9%	26.5%
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. I)	71.4%	28.6%	0%	0%
<i>Italia</i> (Vol. II)	59.2%	10.2%	16.3%	14.3%
(1)–(3)	81.3%	0%	6.3%	12.5%
<i>Michelangelo</i> (4)–(6)	85.7%	0%	0%	14.3%

As a whole, types of scale are used frequently. In terms of types of scale, Vol. I of *Italian Songbook* is constructed much like other songbooks in the second period; however, 28.6% of sequences of two or three notes differ markedly. In contrast, in Vol. II, instead of a reduction in types of scale and sequences of two or three notes, there is an increase in the types of zigzag patterns. As Tables 3 and 4 indicate, the reduction in the number of single repeated notes changed the movement of the melody lines in Vol. II. Further, after Vol. II the use of these notes was more reduced, leading to a further change in melody: On one hand the types of scale increased to over 80%, but on the other hand the types of sequences of two or three notes reduced until they were nonexistent, and the types of zigzag patterns reduced. In other words, the lieder in Wolf's later years included fewer single repeated notes and were constructed not by various types of patterns, but by types of scale.

Conclusion

I have examined the differences between *Italian Songbook* Vol. I—composed in the latter half of the second period—and Vol. II, written in the first part of the third period. I have also

¹⁹ In the case of multiple patterns in each line, such as in Ex. 4, I increase the number of denominators and then calculate the patterns.

shown the influence of this songbook on Wolf's later lieder and the changes that resulted therein.

The percentage of single repeated notes differed between volumes: In Vol. I—written in the second period—this percentage was very high. In Vol. II—written in the third period, after a four-and-a-half-year hiatus—there was a reduction in the use of single repeated notes. This tendency towards reduction was even more marked in the six lieder written in his later years, which saw a further decrease in this percentage. The types of melody lines without single repeated notes were divided into three main categories: types of scale, sequences of two or three notes, and the zigzag pattern. The types of scale reduced from Vol. I to Vol. II, but increased in his last six lieder. In addition, the sequences of two or three notes vanished completely in these lieder, although the zigzag pattern continued.

In conclusion, in the third period, Wolf's creativity in composing the lieder clearly changed. He departed from his dependence on single repeated notes and composed melody lines that combined different notes, particularly types of scale.

Wolf's use of single repeated notes in his lieder peaked in the second period, and was a big component in the formation of his declamatory lieder. In the third period, he began to attempt new techniques. However, this was short lived as after completing the third lied in *Michelangelo-Lieder* in 1897, he suffered from syphilitic insanity and could no longer compose.²⁰ If he had composed further, he might have gone beyond the declamatory lieder, which he had perfected.

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²⁰ A fourth lied of *Michelangelo-Lieder*, 'Irdische und himmlische Liebe', was considered substandard and destroyed before the composer's breakdown in September 1897. See Sams (1992), p. 378.

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