

Epigramme (Epigrams)

Five madrigals after poems by Lessing, for 4/8-part mixed choir a cappella (or 8 voices) · Opus 27 · 1926

Movements	Stilleben' ('Still Life'), 'Hymnus' ('Hymn'), 'Vita brevis', 'Irrtum' ('Mistake'), 'Grabschrift' (Epitaph)
Duration	15 minutes
Publisher	Simrock (1927), now Boosey & Hawkes
Availability	Available from Boosey&Hawkes: in print (M221120601). English translation available privately.
Other versions	English translation available
First performance	Krefeld, Tonkünstlerfest, Jun. 1927
Other performances	Schödel, München Radio, Oct. 1927 Herzig, Waldenburg, Nov. 1927 Schanze, Zwickau, Jan. 1928 Wiener Madrigalvereinigung/Hans Gál, Vienna Radio, Nov. 1928 Holles Madrigalvereinigung/Holle, Prague, Jan. 1929; Basle, Mar. 1933 Caecilienverein, Weinheim, May 1930 Dresdener Madrigal-Vereinigung, Dresden, Feb. 1932; Leipzig Radio, May 1932 Wiener Madrigalvereinigung/Hans Gál, Vienna, Mar. 1935, Dec. 1935

Kammerchor des NDWR, Köln, Aug. 1950

Chor des Hessischen Rundfunks, Frankfurt Radio, Aug. 1966

BBC Singers/Joly, BBC Radio, May 1990

Clothworkers Consort, Leeds & York, Jun. 2016 ('Stilleben')

Clothworkers Consort of Leeds, Edinburgh Nov 1916

Borealis, Bolton Priory, Jun 2019

About the work

Some press reviews of the Krefeld Music Festival, 1927:

"These madrigals are one of the best things that have been produced in the last few years. Lessing's witty satire has found a congenial setting here, whose irony sparkles in all facets. The setting of the voices is done with extreme clarity. The effects always stay within the bounds of what is fine. We hope to meet these epigrams in the concert halls soon."

(Allgemeine Musikzeitung, Berlin)

"They raise an artistic laugh. The pieces sound seductive in their characteristically genuine humour and don't omit any of the wit of the poems."

(Die Musik, Berlin)

"Very amusing small-scale art with the most subtle of techniques, full of spirit and wit. Next to Weber's choruses the greatest success of the whole festival."

(Deutsche Tonkünstlerzeitung, Berlin)

"I can't recall that such sources of witty and healthy humour were ever offered to a small choir."

(R. Kastner in the Berliner Morgenpost)

"These neatly and wittily crafted showpieces deserved the tumultuous applause that they received."

(M. Marschalk in the Vossische Zeitung)

"The work that had the greatest success was the 'Madrigals' by Hans Gal, who combines a masterly skill with trenchant humour."

(Prof. Hermann Springer in the Deutsche Tageszeitung.)

"Even at the high point of the madrigal, in the 16th century there was never such fresh and witty choral music-making. Gal has here found a way of setting Lessing madrigals in a truly classical manner."

(Adolf Aber in the Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten)

"Works of art in a delightfully artistic mood. Masterly formal skill combined with delicate satire, which apprehends the wit securely and knowingly."

(Frankfurter Zeitung)

"Irresistible humour!"

(Dr. Max Unger in the Allgemeine Zeitung, Chemnitz)

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