

Das Veilchen

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"**Das Veilchen**" ("The Violet"), K. 476, is a song for voice and piano by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, written in Vienna on 8 June 1785, to a poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

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Lyrics

Goethe wrote the poem in 1773 or early 1774. It was first published in March 1775 in his first Singspiel *Erwin und Elmire* which was first set to music in 1775 by the German composer Johann André, and in 1776 by Anna Amalia of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and by Carl David Stegmann. This was followed in 1785 by Ernst Wilhelm Wolf and Karl Christian Agthe.

In 1771, Goethe had written the poem "Heidenröslein" which tells of a young man's rejected love, the female represented by a rose. In "Das Veilchen", a careless girl disregards and destroys a violet, metaphor for a young man.



Ein Veilchen auf der Wiese
stand,
gebückt in sich und
unbekannt;
es war ein herzigs Veilchen.
Da kam ein' junge Schäferin
mit leichtem Schritt und
munterm Sinn
daher, daher,
die Wiese her und sang.

Ach! denkt das Veilchen,
wär' ich nur
die schönste Blume der

A violet in the meadow
stood,
with humble brow,
demure and good,
it was the sweetest violet.
There came along a
shepherdess
with youthful step and
happiness,
who sang, who sang
along the way this song.

Oh! thought the violet,
how I pine
for nature's beauty to be



"Das Veilchen"

0:00

MENU

Performed in 1952 by Janny van Wering (nl) (piano), Elisabeth Margano (soprano)

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Natur,	mine,
ach, nur ein kleines	if only for a moment.
Weilchen,	for then my love might
bis mich das Liebchen	notice me
abgepflückt	and on her bosom fasten
und an dem Busen matt	me,
gedrückt,	I wish, I wish
ach, nur, ach nur	if but a moment long.
ein Viertelstündchen lang!	
	But, cruel fate! The
Ach, aber ach! Das Mädchen	maiden came,
kam	without a glance or care
und nicht in acht das	for him,
Veilchen nahm,	she trampled down the
ertrat das arme Veilchen.	violet.
Es sank und starb, und freut'	He sank and died, but
sich noch:	happily:
und sterb' ich denn, so sterb'	and so I die then let me
ich doch	die
durch sie, durch sie,	for her, for her,
zu ihren Füßen doch!	beneath her darling feet.

Mozart added the following line to the end of his setting:

Das arme Veilchen! es war	Poor little violet! It was
ein herzigs Veilchen.	the sweetest violet.

Music

This song is Mozart's only setting to a text by Goethe. It not clear where exactly Mozart encountered the poem, but is likely through one of its settings by other composers of the time. Mozart made a telling addition by adding his last line.

The poem is written in three stanzas, but instead of using strophic form, Mozart creates a through-composed work, demonstrating his careful attention to the words of the poet by creating a different mood for each verse.^[1] At the end of the song, the composer adds his own words in a touching 5-bar coda.^[2]

The piece is 65 bars long and a performance lasts about 2 1/2 minutes. Its key signature is G major; its meter is 2/4. The vocal range covers only the interval of a ninth, from F⁴ to G⁵.

The piece starts with a 6-bar introduction of the melody of the first line by the piano. The first stanza takes up the next 15 bars. The entry of the shepherdess is marked by a modulation to D major; this is followed by a four-bar segment which summarises the violet's happy mood – and a general pause which precedes the mood swing of the second verse, a change of key to G minor to describe the violet's longing. This changes to the parallel key of B-flat major in the latter part of that verse when the violet expresses hope of being loved back, but ending in a falling phrygian lament. The narration of the third verse is a *recitativo accompagnato*

in E-flat major culminating in the trampling of the violet which is emphasised by a following general pause. The dying flower is described by a chromatically falling line, before the final modulation back to G major changes the pain into jubilation: to die at the beloved's feet. Then Mozart adds two phrases of his own as a coda; in recitative, in free time and using only two notes: "Das arme Veilchen!" (Poor little violet!), a long general pause, and closing the song *a tempo* with a quotation from the third line: "es war ein herziges Veilchen." (it was the sweetest violet.)

By other composers

Other composers, besides those mentioned above as composers of Goethe's singspiel, who have set this poem to music, include Philipp Christoph Kayser (de) (1776), Anton Schweitzer (1777), Joseph Anton Steffan (1779), Johann Friedrich Reichardt in 1780 and in 1783, the latter to praise by Clara Kathleen Rogers and Felix Mendelssohn, Karl Siegmund von Seckendorff (1779), Friedrich Heinrich Himmel (c. 1807), Peter Josef von Lindpaintner (1815), Václav Tomášek (1815), Carl Gottlieb Reissiger (1827), Clara Schumann (1853), Nikolai Medtner (1909), and Othmar Schoeck (1915). Musical settings in other languages include the composers Halfdan Kjerulf to a Danish translation by Adam Oehlenschläger, Johan Erik Nordblom (sv) to a Swedish text, and an English version by Clara Kathleen Rogers.

References

- ↑ "Das Veilchen" (<http://www.allmusic.com/work/das-veilchen-song-for-voice--piano-k-476-c123/description>) at AllMusic
- ↑ Record notes by William S. Mann 1956. EMI ASD 3858 063-01578; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf soprano, Walter Gieseking (piano), 13 to 16 April 1955

External links

- "Das Veilchen": Score (http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_cont.php?vsep=89&gen=edition&l=1&p1=26) and critical report (http://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/nma/nma_cont.php?vsep=90&l=1&p1=105) (**German**) in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*
- "Das Veilchen": Free scores at the International Music Score Library Project
- Mozart: "Das Veilchen" – im Kontext verschiedener Vertonungen (<http://www.wisskirchen-online.de/downloads/mozartdasveilchen.pdf>), Hubert Wißkirchen, 25 May 2011 (**German**)
- "Das Veilchen" (http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=6645), translations, list of musical settings, at recmusic.org
- "Das Veilchen" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1L5Ljp5Gy3k>) on YouTube, Kathleen Battle, 1990

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