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## Herzgewächse [Foliage of the Heart], op. 20



Title	Herzgewächse [Foliage of the Heart] for High Soprano, Harp, Celesta and Harmonium, op. 20
Time of origin	1911
Premiere	2 Dezember 1923, New York
Duration	ca. 3 min.

Schönberg began drafting his Lied "Herzgewächse," to a poem from Maurice Maeterlinck's "Serres Chaudes" (published in English as "Hothouses") for high soprano, celesta, harmonium and harp, on 4 December 1911 and completed the composition just five days later. At the time, he was cultivating an intensive intellectual exchange with the painter Wassily Kandinsky; during that same month, Schönberg had taken part in the Blaue Reiter exhibit in Munich, showing some of his own paintings. Kandinsky was especially impressed by the directness of the paintings' expressivity, imparted in a penetrating pictorial language which Kandinsky, not without admiration, called "Nurmalerei" ("purely painting").

Kandinsky himself established a direct connection to Schönberg's music in the context of the exhibition: in the "Almanac" to the Blaue Reiter exhibition, published in 1912, the score of Schönberg's composition "Herzgewächse" was printed as an appendix. Thus a work that experiments with tonal colors in a particularly expressive manner found its way into the Almanac: the coloristic opulence of an orchestral movement resounds in a chamber music setting that is enhanced by the registers of a harmonium.

Astonishingly, the first performance authorized by Schönberg did not take place until 17 April 1928 as part of a subscription concert given by Rudolf Kolisch's Wiener Streichquartett. (Since the piece had been available in print since 1920 and had been performed, Schönberg spoke merely of a "Viennese premiere.") The vocal part is perhaps technically the most difficult in Schönberg's oeuvre: it begins in the small octave, descending to g sharp below the treble staff but soon rises dramatically; towards the end, the part demands an f''' in quadruple piano before descending back to tones within the single-stroked octave.

The soprano Marianne Rau-Hoeglauer, whose vocal range spanned from this low g sharp to f''', was tumultuously acclaimed at this Viennese performance in 1928. Alban Berg, impressed by the richness of color in Schönberg's score, reported of this event to the composer, who was not able to attend: "We reveled in those sounds, sounds we had scarcely dreamed of. It is so wonderful; every one of your works creates an unprecedented sensation in the listener on first hearing – even if it is 20 years old, like this one [...] The performance was fabulous in every respect. There were moments such as at the words 'sinnbildhaft ist seiner Blumen Zier' and the entire ending when we completely forgot to breathe – and that's how it affected everyone in the hall, I'd venture

to say – not just me. And it was the same – only more so - during the second performance of the Lied – which was not given for, say, pedagogical reasons; the musicians were actually forced into it by the audience, which simply would not cease applauding.”

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