"Taking Liberties with Libretti? – Textbuch oder Textbruch?"
Translation of Libretti and Music Lyrics for Performance[1]
Presentation by Sandy Jones MA MPA FCIL
at the 'Anglophoner Tag' Seminar of the CIOL's German Society on 16 June 2018

I   Purpose, Structure and Thesis: Pivotal 'assertions'

1   Over the years, I have developed a passion for poetry translation, especially in structured rhythms and rhymes, as for musical purposes. I am also a published and prizewinning poet, composer, song-writer and poetry translator. My seminar presentation will be on the art of Libretto translation ('Taking liberties with libretti'/ 'Textbuch oder Textbruch?')

2   I emphasise that my focus is on Libretto translation for performance (NOT for CD insert booklets, opera-house supertitles, or other free-form purposes). In other words, my subject is that subset of poetry translation that must honour and preserve the rhythms, metres and rhyme schemes of the original source-language text, because it will be sung to the music to which the source lyrics were set.

3   I shall be focussing on translations of German opera into English, with three illustrative choices (Mozart's Zauberflöte, Wagner's Siegfried, and R Strauss's Rosenkavalier). I shall be addressing both the technical and artistic challenges of libretto translation (Section II); and the nature of the relationship between composer and librettist, and between composer and/or librettist and translator (Section III). I then offer brief commentary on the different features of libretto translation of the three composers I have selected (Section IV); provide a couple of excerpts of translated Libretti for each (Section V); and append as an Annex a list of authoritative writers on this subject[2] (Section VI).

4   I confess there is a certain personal irony in this subject for me: as a linguist and an opera-lover, I am an 'original-language snob' – I only want to hear opera sung in the original! But there are many legitimate reasons for performing in translation, which require skilful and sing-able translations, and I respect and am fascinated by the challenges and triumphs in this select form of literary translation. I look forward to a discussion of the range of these reasons and participants' perspectives on them.

5   I will also venture a few assertions based on my research, reading and professional experience:
Assertion 1: the nature and elements of this three-way Librettist-Composer-Translator relationship can materially affect how substantial a posterity, popularity and dissemination a given composer's works attain, especially outside the country/culture in which they were created.

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[2] *I also acknowledge a most illuminating correspondence on the matter in early 2018 with Rhodri Britton, conductor and Music Lecturer at the University of Mainz.*

Assertion 2: The best Libretto translators may not be professional linguists by trade, but they are often gifted poets. They may furthermore be a happy 'renaissance' combination of multiple skills: talented poets, qualified and passionate musicians, and creative and adept translators.

Assertion 3: This work is a labour of love, often driven by real passion; and rarely, if ever, a lucrative trade. The Translator may well be a great enthusiast for and proponent of 'their' composer (see Assertion 1).

Assertion 4: The best practitioners of libretto translation may not be theorists of this art; but the best theorists of it are usually themselves good practitioners. Our attention to the composers' own views is also essential, as they are more usually than not profound thinkers and theorists on this matter themselves - certainly Wagner, and Richard Strauss are both in this category.

Assertion 5: There is no one perfect or 'right' way to a successful libretto translation; but a plenitude of 'wrong ways', variously described with derogatory adjectives including 'plodding', 'trite', 'clumsy', 'contrived', 'unintelligible', inappropriate-register', 'overly-distant', and others.

II   Technical and Artistic Challenges of Libretto Translation

The challenges posed by this particular genre of translation are formidable, and the technical skills and – I would argue, more importantly, artistic gifts - it therefore requires are huge.

I think of it as what economists call a 'constrained optimisation' problem, where a number of parameters or elements must be respected, reflected and transmitted. It is a paradox: translating a work of art, which is itself (or should be) a thing of beauty, is not a utilitarian exercise in literal transmission or functional accuracy (e.g. translating a car manual or description of a nuclear power station). The translator must render: meaning, mood, alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, register and levels, ambiguity, figurative tropes - as well as metre, rhythm and rhyme. Inevitably there are trade-offs!

Another metaphor to describe this challenge is 'the Pentathlon Principle' of translation for musical performance, coined by the scholar P. Low. The five 'events' at which the translator-athlete must accumulate a winning total score (whilst not necessarily 'winning' each event) are: sing-ability (text suitable for performance); sense ('equivalence'); naturalness (in the target language); rhythm; and rhyme. Some language pairs make easier bedfellows in this regard: for example, in our context, it does help that English and German are both 'stress-timed' languages (compared, for example, to French as a 'syllable-timed' language). This feature assists particularly in translating the Ring Cycle, given the additional initial-syllable stress in early German (e.g. the Nibelungenlied texts on which Wagner drew for his Ring-Cycle Stabreim).

It is notoriously difficult to provide general principles or theory/dogma on what defines or constitutes a 'good literary translation'.   I have drawn on guidance and analysis by established authorities on poetry translation for music and theatre (e.g. Ranjit Bolt's 'The Art of Translation'), and I append at the Annex in Section VI a compiled list of some recognised authorities on poetry translation, including for music performance purposes.

However, I acknowledge that this paper, and my seminar presentation, will unavoidably be shorter than academic audiences would perhaps like on generalisations/theory, and therefore longer on examples and commentary on them. I hope to make the case that this is intellectually and presentationally respectable. Many writers on this subject have contended that examples of successful translations (the elephant adage – 'you recognise one when you see one') and conscious preferences are often a more trustworthy yardstick than attempted general principles, dogma or prescription; there is huge difficulty in framing academic rules for what is 'admissible' in translation. It is very hard to frame any kind of general guidance on what then makes a good re-creation'. But 'de gustibus non est disputandum' too, and two discerning and learned individuals can have genuinely divergent preferences.

A 'target-language' focus, on what works in the translated version, should often outrank an overly literal rendering. A commonly occurring paradox is that, the closer the libretto translation stays to the original, the more stilted and less direct they can become, even to the point that the translation is less intelligible than the original. There is a widespread consensus on the desirability of avoiding such hapless literalism, but instead creating a fresh, original and elegant paraphrase; and 'prima la musica, poi le parole[3]' – the music is primary, then the words - even though, of course, in the sequence of the creative process for opera (and other musical genres) the words must almost always be created first.

Some of the most accomplished professionals who work at the intersection of the words, the music and the translation – for example, a multilingual composer or conductor, or a musically-qualified translator – consider the very attempt 'an impossible squaring of the circle' almost doomed to failure, whilst nevertheless accepting that such translations are needed. And yet, when such a 're-creating' translation truly succeeds, it is so rare a triumph, born of such exquisite effort, taste and talent, that it can be almost luminously lovely.

I wish to move on, now, to a discussion of the two-way relationship between librettist and composer, and the three-way, triangular relationship between them and the translator – relationships that come in a variety of guises. This is not, in my assessment, a separate matter from the technical judgements and skills just discussed in Section II: I regard the quality of the end-product translation as often quite intimately bound up with the nature of these triangular relationships.

This can be illustrated or proven in a different way when the composer is consciously writing in the knowledge or intention that the opera will be sung in translation: it can be very instructive to see how the composers vary the vocal line when they know they are themselves responsible for both versions. This was done by Mozart, for example, with La finta Giardiniera/Die Gärnterin aus Liebe (Italian/ German) or many works by Händel, and also Haydn (German/ English).

III   *The Relationship between Librettist, Composer and Translator*

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[3] *A term coined by Antonio Salieri, Mozart's great rival.*

As stated, the two-way composer-librettist relationship can take many forms. There are composer-librettists (e.g. Wagner); enduring librettist-composer creative partnerships ('monogamous unions' e.g. Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannstal); composers with two or more regular librettist-partners (Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte or Emil Schikaneder), or one-off collaborations ('polygamous relationships').

The 'axes' of this relationship become more complex when the third dimension of the translator is added. The translator may be known to the Composer and/or Librettist; appointed or commissioned; not known to either; or the Translator may have sought the Composer or Librettist out themselves. This last scenario can happen in the Composer's/Librettist's lifetime or, of course, after their deaths. In the last scenario, there will always be questions of whether the Composer or Librettist would have approved of the Translator's efforts, and it is invidious ever to attempt to claim or imply that they would have enjoyed the Composer's imprimatur.

Studies of these translators and their backgrounds and relations with 'their composers' reveals that a good Libretto translator is not necessarily a professional translator, nor a working linguist. Often it is someone who is a poet in their own right, bi-lingual or multi-lingual, musically qualified and/or passionate; and a self-appointed advocate or proponent of the composer, with a mission to propagate and popularise the Composer's music in the Translator's own country[4].

What is fascinating is then to take stock of: how many translations of a given major work have been attempted; which were ever published and/or performed; which received the composer's approval; and which have stood the test of time, and earned themselves a posterity – a place in the canon, as it were, alongside the composer and librettist. An example is Alfred Kalisch for Strauss/von Hoffmanstal. I attempt some commentary on this in Section IV below.

In the following two tables I attempt an illustrative 'taxonomy' of these relationships for the three Opera Composers dealt with in this paper, as well as for a small selection of other Opera composers and creators of lieder, oratorios and cantatas.

Opera Creation: Taxonomy of Some Relationships between Composer, Librettist and Translator

	Composer (C)	Librettist (L)	Translator (T) into English
Composer as Librettist	Wagner 1869-1930 esp. Ring Cycle	*(NB other composers were often keenly aware of writing for other markets or languages e.gs, Mozart for Italian, and Handel and Haydn for English.)*	Andrew Porter 1976, for Goodall/Chandos 'Opera in English' series Jeremy Sams did new translations for ENO 2004-5 (Sams b 1957 ('theatre director, writer, translator,

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[4] *Sometimes, the translator is 'lost' to posterity. For example, I could not trace the translator of the first version in English of Beethoven's Fidelio, published by the Publisher Oliver Ditson in Boston in 1864.*

Established/enduring C-L relationship	R Strauss 1864-1949	Hugo von Hoffmanstal	orchestrator, composer'). Alfred Kalisch 1912 (Kalisch a passionate advocate of Strauss' music; they knew one another, Kalisch wrote a chapter for E Newman's biography of Strauss)
	W A Mozart 1756-1791	(i) Emanuel Schikaneder (librettist, impresario, actor, singer, composer) Zauberflöte. (Ii) Lorenzo Da Ponte: Figaro (Beaumarchais), Don Giovanni, Cosi	Jeremy Sams 2000
	Alban Berg 1885-1935	Frank Wedekind 1864-1918	Richard Stokes (professor of German Lieder at RAM and German literary translator) transl for ENO 2002
Serial/one-off C-L partnerings	Handel 1685-1759	Various collaborators	
	Beethoven 1770-1827 Fidelio	Joseph Sonnleithner, adapting from Jean-Nicolas Bouilly	
No formal relationship of T with C and/or L (T self-appointed/after C/L's death)	Many composers and…	… their librettists	Many latter-day translators.

Some other examples of these relationships (Oratorio, Kantate, Lieder)

One-off collaborations/ text adoptions	Mendelssohn 'Volkslied', using Freiligrath's translation of Burns, 1842	Robert Burns 'O wert thou in the cauld blast'	Ferdinand Freiligrath (poet, poetry translator, admirer of Burns) transl Burns 1838
T selects C and/or L	J S Bach Cantatas e.g. 21 using Liturgy		EH Thorne (organist) and GW Daisley (Vicar of Enfield) 1930s
			John Rutter 1996
	Franz Schubert 1797-1828; 23rd Psalm, text from 1662 Book of Common Prayer		

IV   Salient Aspects of Translating Three Specific Composers

I have selected three sample works, in German as source language, by different German and Austrian composers. I have deliberately chosen a variety of relationship structures which, as noted, appear influential:
(a) an enduring, established partnership between composer and librettist (Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hoffmanstal)
(b) a composer who was his own librettist (Wagner); and
(c) a composer with more than one significant partnership with a librettist, Mozart; in this case, on Zauberflöte, working with Emil Schikaneder as librettist.

As for the relationship with the translator, the latter was sometimes known to and in active collaboration with the composer and/or librettist, and/or the translator was an authority on, or advocate for, that composer. This has already been noted to be the case with Alfred Kalisch for Strauss' 'Rosenkavalier'. Another (non-operatic) example was Ferdinand Freiligrath's translations of Mendelssohn's Lieder settings of some of Robert Burns' airs.

The examples I have chosen also deliberately show different examples or approaches to the relationship of prosody to music, that is, the extent to which the music imitates or is rigidly fixed by the prosody of the libretto's verse form(s).   The words must fit the music; this need not, however, be a straitjacket, but can rather be viewed as a 'semiotic resource' in its own right.

Mozart

Mozart's Librettist for 'Die Zauberflöte', Emanuel Schikaneder, was a flamboyant impresario, actor, singer and producer - as well as being given to grandiosity and womanising, and had briefly been a mason (as was Mozart, more enduringly and committedly). Their collaboration on Zauberflöte came about at a time when Mozart was experimenting more with opera buffa and Volkstheater as well as opera seria, and Mozart called it a Singspiel (though Salieri praised it as an 'operone'). Schikaneder created a libretto and a production concept that was a confection of many different forms, registers and styles, and also called for complex stage machinery and special effects. Heterogeneous in the extreme as it was, it gave Mozart scope for an extraordinary range of music, ideas and ideals.

Yet the basic operatic form conformed to the norms of the time: interspersed spoken text, sung recitative and formal arias.   Rhyme, stanzaic structure and metre (particularly in arias, as opposed to recitatives - although these also typically had an established form, of 7 or 11 syllables with irregular end rhymes) were central to most operas composed between opera's inception (ca 1600) and the late 19th century. The question was not whether the text used poetic metre, but which particular metre(s) were used. The most widely chosen aria form was two strophes, each with the same number of lines, usually four. These 'fixed musical forms' constrained librettists well into the 19th century. Unsurprisingly, these are the characteristics of the two samples I have chosen from Magic Flute, albeit with six-line stanzas.

There are language and translation theorists who contend that the translator – even when translating for performance - may eschew the obligation to replicate the rhyme scheme. I dissent.

The translation I have chosen, by Jeremy Sams, is in my view a remarkably elegant, limpid piece of English-language poetry which captures the content, spirit and thrust of the German, as well the exact metric scheme and a suitable rhyme scheme; although – perhaps precisely because - it is not a slavishly literal rendering.

Zauberflöte was an instant success in Vienna in 1791, but suffered an almost complete eclipse in the 19th century. It was not until 1911 that it had a serious showing in Britain, as a result of pioneering work by Edward Dent, Professor of Music at Cambridge, and it was performed in Dent's translation into English. This version became a mainstay of Sadlers' Wells repertory from the 1920s, and also at Covent Garden Opera Company from very soon after its formation in 1947. It was not performed in German at Covent Garden until the 1962 version produced and conducted by Otto Klemperer, though productions alternated between English and German for another 15-20 years.

Wagner: Distillation of some scholarly writings on translating Wagner[5]

I will discuss Wagner at rather greater length. He himself intellectualised deeply the process of opera composition and reflected, theorised and wrote at length about 'Versmelodie', and the interweaving of alliteration, concision and free rhythm. The translated version needs to fit the notes, but reflect, and if needed, refresh, the relationship between verbal, musical and 'mimic-scenic' parts which the translation process itself may have altered. As a composer Wagner was deeply concerned with the 'semiotic web'.

Much has also been written about his chosen form/metre of 'Stabreim', alliterative verse. Wagner's expressed the 'poet's job of condensing and compressing (verdichten) actions and motives', since his main reason for preferring Stabreim was its economy and terseness, enabling the avoidance of duplication and repetition. Stabreim has a smaller proportion of conjunctions and prepositions and a higher proportion of root syllables than other forms of verse – or prose. In effect, Wagner bought himself greater flexibility in musical structure by dispensing with some of the constraints of syntax.

Wagnerian opera is 'Gestalt', a fusion of words, music and drama into a Gesamtkunstwerk – all of which must survive the translation process without 'immolation'! The music to which Wagner sets his words is also shot through with recurring leitmotivs (unifying 'melodische Momente') which the translation must allow to shine through, not cloud or mask. An additional challenge is Wagner's frequent deliberate 'modal incongruence', where words or actions are saying one thing, and the music quite another, even contradictory, thing.

Finally, but significantly, there are Wagner's many audacious, colourful and alluring neologisms. Brünnhilde is Wotan's 'Wunschmaid' – his 'wish-maiden' or 'wish-daughter'. But it is a challenge to craft a translation that conveys his love for her; his sense of ownership, including sexual tension; his intent that she be the super-eminent favourite child; and that his purpose for her and the Valkyries is that they should be the agents of the fulfilment of his will. Thus the grand – and fateful - irony that it is Brünnhilde, of all people, who disobeys him.

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[5] *Many theses have been written on Wagner's operas, his poetic, musical and theories, and indeed also on the challenge of translating his works for performance. I drew for this very brief summary on a doctoral thesis by Karen Wilson-DeRoze, University of Leicester, which I commend to the reader interested in deeper reading: "Translating Wagner: A multimodal stylistic challenge. Two volumes: analysis and commentary; and a new translation."*

I offer here a brief summary of the most significant contenders for the laurels of Wagner-translators for performance, as the analysis may be instructive.

- Alfred Forman, translation 1877. Forman knew Wagner. Translation not performed.
- Frederick and Henrietta Corder, translation 1880s, published by Schott. In use for some decades.
- Ernest Newman, translation 1910, published by Breitkopf and Härtel. Used in performance.
- Frederick Jameson, translation 1908, used for the first complete performance of the Ring Cycle in English at Covent Garden in 1908 and again 1909[6].
- Stewart Robb, translation 1960, not performed.
- Andrew Porter[7], translation 1970 commissioned by Sadler's Wells (now English National Opera), recorded 1972 and published 1977 by EMI. In use for several decades.
- Jeremy Sams, 1957 -, translation 2004/5. Largely well-received. Too early to judge whether it has now eclipsed Porter.

Here are a few excerpts from the commentary by Jeremy Sams in the ENO Programme that accompanied the premiere performance in 2004 using his translation: "Translation is an interesting paradox. Sometimes things have to radically changed in order to seem the same. Perhaps that's what the word translation means... rediscovery of the familiar in unfamiliar guise... compromise is often more fertile, indeed more accurate than any attempt at literal rendering… Wagner's text is studded with almost wilfully convoluted sentence structures, hand-picked archaisms… it is a language of his own devising, the shapes of which often define the shape of the music. Fair enough.. if you're in the business of re-inventing drama, opera and music, why not invent a new language while you're at it?.. His attempts to make language dance and sing, his alliterations and assonances, his puns and rhymes, are part of the sheer joy of Wagner's poetry'.

The translation I have used for the illustrative excerpts here is Andrew Porter's translation. It seems very alive to rendering the intent and impact of the Stabreim, and also goes to great lengths to replicate features such as alliteration – see his English version of the line 'lockt dich zu ihm die lachende Lohe?'

Richard Strauss

Richard Strauss composed some 14 operas, of which about seven are well-known and frequently-performed: Rosenkavalier, Elektra, Salome, Capriccio, Ariadne auf Naxos, Die Frau ohne Schatten, Die Aegyptische Helena. Like Wagner, Strauss also reflected – agonised – on the dilemma of the primacy of words or music, indeed this artistic debate is a central theme personified in his opera 'Capriccio', whose main character, the Countess, cannot choose between the composer Flamand

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[6] *The Ring was first performed in Bayreuth in 1876 and in London in 1882 (though Wagner began work on what was then 'Siegrieds Tod' in 1848). The first Covent Garden Ring in German was in 1892. It was regularly heard in German until WWI and then again through the 1920s. It returned in English in 1935. Georg Solti played an important part in the shift towards German-language performances as the preferred medium, with a new production in 1962. Solti had taken the same significant step with Rosenkavalier at his Covent Garden debut in 1959.*

[7] *Porter (1928-2015) was a successful music critic for several London newspapers and the New Yorker.*

and the poet Olivier. Both Capriccio and Rosenkavalier hark back to the era of Strauss's beloved Mozart.

Alfred Kalisch translated four of Strauss's main operas, and these translations are those most frequently used today, a century later: for Rosenkavalier, Elektra, Ariadne and Helena. This is unquestionably a feat of considerable durability for a translator's work. The 'authoritative' translations of the other Strauss works are all 'one-offs': Salome – Hedwig Lachmann; Capriccio – Maria Massey; Die Frau – Gertrude Holland. Other translators of his 'lesser' works have included Herbert Bedford for Die Schweigsame Frau, Ducloux and Wakeling for Die Liebe der Danae, and Andrew Porter for Intermezzo (and also Danae).

Alfred Kalisch (1863-1933) was a British music critic and librettist. He was the son of a Jewish theologian of German origin, who began a career in law before opting for music journalism aged 31. He began writing on musical subjects in 1894, working for various papers including *The World,* 1899–1915. He was a strong champion of Richard Strauss in English. He also translated the libretto of Mascagni's *Iris*. He knew Strauss well as a person from various meetings during their collaboration, and he contributed the Chapter 'Richard Strauss: the Man' to Ernest Newman's biography of Strauss, at Newman's invitation; Newman acknowledged that he knew almost nothing of Strauss's personality and private life, and Kalisch provided a 'first-hand character sketch and colourful portrait' from a basis of affection and respect.

Kalisch's main challenge in 'Rosenkavalier' is the extraordinary 'invented' language crafted by Hofmannstal, which he himself termed 'Sprachkostüm'. Hoffmannstal had an unusually wide knowledge of, and drew on, European literature, especially French authors including Moliere and Beaumarchais. However, he placed Rosenkavalier in Vienna in about 1745 and drew on the diaries of Prince Johann Josef Khevenhueller-Metsch, Master of the Household of Empress Maria Theresa; these were written in ceremonial style and provided Hoffmannstal with a unique source of 18th-century speech and manner. For example, he has Octavian and the Marschallin speak to one another in the third person and/or the 'Sie' form of the second person. And yet, when characters are musing to themselves, they do so in colloquial language and shortened phrases. Add to this that the script for some of the more bucolic or comic characters is written in broad local Austrian dialect. The translator needed to be equal to the task of these shifts in style, class, tone, register and emotion – as well as the wide span between highly emotional personal tragedy, and pure farce.

Kalisch was more than equal to the task. One feels he was, and remains, a worthy retainer – in both senses of the word – of Strauss' artistic legacy, and a rare example of a translator with an enduring posterity and reputation of his own.

V   *Sample Excerpts of Libretto Translation for the Three Composers*

Va   Mozart: Zauberflöte, The Magic Flute, 1791. Librettist: Emanuel Schikaneder. Translation: Jeremy Sams, 2000.
Act 2, Arias 6 & 7
Königin der Nacht
Der Hölle Rache kocht in meinem Herzen
Tod und Verzweiflung flammen um mich her!

Fühlt nicht durch dich Sarastro Todesschmerzen,
Sarastro Todeschmerzen
So bist du meine Tochter nimmermehr!

Verstoßen sei auf ewig, verlassen sei auf ewig
Zertrümmert sei auf ewig alle Bande der Natur –
Verstoßen, verlassen, und zertrümmert -
alle Bande der Natur!
Wenn nicht durch dich Sarastro wird erblassen!
Hört! Rachegötter! Hört der Mutter Schwur!

Sarastro
In deisen heil'gen Hallen
Kennt man die Rache nicht
Und ist ein Mensch gefallen.
Führt Liebe ihn zu Pflicht.
Dann wandelt er an Freundes Hand
Vergnügt und froh ins bess're Land.

In diesen heil'gen Mauern
Wo Mensch den Menschen liebt,
Kann kein Veräter lauern,
Weil man den Feind vergibt.
Wen solche Lehren nicht erfreu'n
Verdienet nicht, ein Mensch zu sein.

Queen of the Night
The wrath of hell is burning in my bosom,
death and destruction blaze about my head.
If you refuse to kill Sarastro,
all my love for you is dead.
then all your mother's love for you is dead.

My curse will reign forever, all nature's ties I'll sever,
you'll wish that you had never been born.
I'll curse you, despise you, and reject you.
Fear my anger and my scorn.
If - you - refuse to kill him!
hear, gods of vengeance, hear what I have sworn!

Sarastro
We worship at the altar
of man's humanity to man.
So if a friend should falter
we'll help him if we can.
He will go forth from our embrace
to make the world a better place,

Where vengeance is forbidden,
where love has conquered sin,
no enemy lies hidden,
no traitor lurks within.
The man who spurns our holy laws
does not deserve to serve our cause.

Vb   Wagner: Götterdämmerung, Twilight of the Gods, 1848.
Librettist: The Composer. Translation: Andrew Porter, 1976

Final Scene, Brünnhilde's Immolation
Brünnhilde
Mein Erbe nun nehm' ich zu eigen
Verfluchter reif! Furchtbarer Ring!
Dein Gold fass' ich und geb' es nun fort.
Der Wassertiefe weise Schwestern,
des Rheines schwimmende Töchter,
euch dank' ich redlichen Rat.
was ihr begehrt, ich geb es euch:
Aus meiner Asche nehmt es zu eigen!
Das Feuer, das mich verbrennt,
rein'ge vom Fluch den Ring!
Ihr in der Flut löst ihn auf,
und lauter bewahrt das lichte Gold,
das Euch zum Unheil geraubt.
……

Grane, mein Roß, sie mir gegrüßt!
Weißt du auch, mein Freund,
wohin ich dich führe?
Im Feuer leuchtend, liegt dort dein Herr,
Siegfried, mein seliger Held.
Dem Freunde zu folgen, wieherst du freudig?
Lockt dich zu ihm die lachende Lohe?

Fühl meine Brust auch, wie sie entbrennt;
Helles Feuer das Herz mir erfasst,
ihn zu umschlingen, umschlossen von ihm,
in mächtigster Minne vermählt ihm zu sein!
Heiajoho! Grane!

Grüß deinen Herren!
Siegfried! Siegfried! Sieh!
Selig grüßt dich dein Weib!

My heritage I claim from the hero.
Accursed gold! Terrible ring!
My hand grasps you to cast you away.

You sisters who are wise and graceful,
you Rhinemaids who dwell in the waters,
I shall obey your advice.
What you desire I'll give to you:
and from my ashes gather your treasure!
This fire, burning my frame,
cleanses the curse from the ring!
There in the Rhine, the ring shall be pure;
preserve it, and guard your shining gold
whose theft has caused all our woe.

…..
Grane, my horse! I greet my friend!
Can you tell, my friend,
to where I must lead you?
In fiery glory blazes your lord,
Siegfried, my hero and love.
To follow your master, ah! You are neighing![8]
Lured by the fire, the light and its laughter?
I, too, am yearning to join him there;
Glorious radiance has seized on my heart.
I shall embrace him, united with him,
in sacred yearning, with him ever one!
Hiayoho! Grane!
Ride to your master!
Siegfried! Siegfried! See!
Brünnhilde greets you as wife!

Vc   Richard Strauss: Rosenkavalier, 1911.
Librettist: Hugo von Hoffmannstal. Translation: Alfred Kalisch, 1912.
End of Act 3. Marschallin:
"Heut oder morgen oder den übernächsten Tag".
Hab' ich mir's denn nicht vorgesagt?
Das alles kommt halt über jede Frau.
Hab' ich's den nicht gewußt?
Hab' ich nicht ein Gelübde tan,
Dass ich's mit einem ganz gefaßten Herzen ertragen werd' . . .
"Heut oder morgen oder den übernächsten Tag". ..

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[8] For comparison, here are the translations offered by the three principal translators of the Ring Cycle for performance: Porter, Sams, Frederick Jameson, and now also DeRoze:
Jameson: 'To follow your master joyfully neigh'st thou?'
Sams: 'You're longing to see him, that's why you're whinnying!'
DeRoze: 'You'll meet with your master neighing with merriment!'
In judging between these options, one should go beyond the felicity or otherwise of word choice, to note that all three of the following words/word-groups are notated to triplets 'Freunde zu', 'wieherst du', 'freudig'.   The effect of triplet notation means that the music is itself 'whinnying'!

Hab' mir's gelobt, Ihn lieb zu haben in der richtigen Weis'.
Daß ich selbst Sein Lieb' zu einer andern noch lieb hab!
Hab' mir freilich nicht gedacht,
daß es so bald mir auf erlegt sollt' werden!
Es sind die mehreren Dinge auf der Welt,
So daß sie ein's nicht glauben tät'.
Wenn man sie möcht' erzählen hör'n.
Alleinig wer's erlebt,
der glaubt daran und weiß nicht wie —
Da steht der Bub' und da steh' ich,
und mit dem fremden Mädel dort
Wird Er so glücklich sein, als wie halt Männer
Das Glücklichsein verstehen.
In Gottes Namen.

"Now or to-morrow: if not to-morrow, very soon"
Did I not say the words myself?
There is no woman can escape her fate!
Did I not know the truth?
Did I not swear by all the Saints
That I with chastened heart and tranquil spirit would bear the blow...
"Now or to-morrow: if not to-morrow, very soon" —

I made a vow to love him rightly as a good woman should,
Nay, e'en to love the love he bore another I promised!
But in truth I did not think
That all so soon my vow would claim fulfilment.
Full many a thing is ordained in this world,
Which we should scarce believe could be,
If we heard others tell of them…
But soon he whom they wound
believes in them, and knows not how —
There stands the boy, and here stand I,
and with his love, new found this day,
He will have happiness. After the manner of men,
who think they know it all.
'Tis done — so be it.

VI   Annex: Some Authoritative Writers on Poetry Translation

Aristotle, 'Poetics'

Matthew Arnold, 'On Translating Homer', 1861

Willis Barnstone, 'An ABC of Translating Poetry' 2001

Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', 1921

Ranjit Bolt, 'The Art of Translation'

Jorge Luis Borges, various writings and self-translations from Spanish

Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, 1633-1685: 'An Essay on Translated Verse'

John Dryden, preface to 'The Fables' (translations of Ovid and Homer) 1700; 'To the Earl of Roscommon, on his Excellent Essay on Translated Verse'

Robert Frost, 'A poem is what gets lost in translation' – much-plagiarised quotation

Stephen Fry, 'The Ode less Travelled'

Gerard Manley Hopkins, various compositions and translations of poetry into Latin, German and other languages

Horace, Ars Poetica', Epistles

Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics' 1958; 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation' 1959

Samuel Johnson, various 'Essays' and poems in Latin and Greek

Vladimir Nabokov' 'The Art of Translation' 1941, and various self-translations from Russian

Edgar Allen Poe: translations of his poems, and collaborations by him, with Baudelaire, Mallarme and others

Alexander Pope, Preface to the Iliad of Homer

Erzra Pound, 'An ABC of Reading' 1934

Sandra Smith, translator of Irene Nemirovsky's 'Suite Francaise'

Stephen Spender, 1909-1995, various poetry, poetry criticism and translations

Richard Stokes, 'The Book of Lieder' 2011