THE BIRD-CATCHER'S SONG
from The Magic Flute (1791)
Text: Emanuel Schikaneder
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)

Mozart's last opera is a sublime allegory on universal themes, at once comic and serious. In its fairy-tale-like story, Papageno represents the simple ordinary man—the child of nature. His job is catching birds for the Queen of the Night, but what he really wants to catch is a wife. Soon after the opening of Act I, he makes his entrance with this song.

1. The bird-catcher am I, and always merry;
As bird-catcher I'm known by young and old throughout the land.
I know how to lure them, and make them understand my pipes.
So I'm happy and gay, for all the birds are mine.

2. The bird-catcher am I, and always merry;
As bird-catcher I'm known by young and old throughout the land.
I'd like to have a net for girls and catch them by the dozen.
Then I'd lock them up with me, and all the girls would be mine.

3. If all the girls were mine, I'd fetch a fine lump of sugar;
I'd chase the girl I like the best and give the sugar lump to her.
She'd kiss me then most tenderly, she'd be my wife and I her man.
She'd fall asleep beside me then, I'd rock her like a child to sleep.

The music, in popular style and composed of the simplest chords, non-chord tones, and modulations, is unusual for its use of Pan-pipes, which Papageno plays between phrases. How is this composition subtle—how saved from monotony? (Omitted here is the orchestral introduction, which is identical with the song.)

Andante

Papageno

Orchestra (reduction)

Alt und Jung im ganzen Land.
Alt und Jung im ganzen Land.
gäb ich gleich den Zucker her.

mit dem Locken umzugehn, und mich aufs Pfeifen zu verstehn. (pfeift)
Netz für Mädchen möchte ich, ich fing sie dutzendweis für mich!
küßte sie mich zärtlich dann, war sie mein Weib und ich ihr Mann.

Drum kann ich froh und lustig sein, denn alle Vögel
Dann sperrte ich sie bei mir ein, und alle Mädchen
Sie schlief an meiner Seite ein, ich wiegte wie ein

sind ja mein. (pfeift)
waren mein.
Kind sie ein.