

**In Forgotten Tones**  
**The *Sangsprüche* of Master Frauenlob**  
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**Information:**

The renown of the medieval poet-singer Heinrich of Meissen, also known as Frauenlob (Praise of Women), is based not only on his wonderful and wide-ranging opus of *Leichdichtungen*, or lays, (a long poetic form based on the medieval sequence), but also on his musically and literally ambitious *Sangsprüchen* (a shorter poetic form) in which Frauenlob composed brilliant melodies to his own lyrical texts. Found in manuscripts, which also contain the works of other *Minnesänger* (German poet-singers of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries fascinated by the ideas of courtly love), Frauenlob's *Sangsprüche* provide a corresponding *Ton*, or melodic and metrical template, for each *Spruch* (lyrical, contemplative text). Examples of these *Töne* include the *Flugton* (flight tune), the *Langer Ton* (long tune), the *Grüner Ton* (green tune) and the *Würgendrüssel* etc.. Thus, a *Ton* is comprised of individually defined forms of meter, rhyme, and melody. Frauenlob composed many *Sangsprüche* to his own *Tönen*, and thus became one of the most formative singer-composers during the transition from the medieval *Minnesang* to the later tradition of the *Meistersinger*. Many of Heinrich of Meissen's most significant *Sangsprüche* tend not to be concerned with the aspects of *Minne* (courtly love), which so occupied the minds of the *Minnesänger* at this time. Rather, Frauenlob rose above *Minne*, preferring to delve into more complex philosophical, ethical, and theological concepts. With this focus on the *Sangspruch* as a contemplative art form, Master Frauenlob is, in part, closely connected to the medieval mystics, most notably to his contemporary, Master Eckart, the German theologian, philosopher, and mystic. This repertoire, interpreted through the lens of today's historically-informed performance practice, brings well-deserved recognition to these little-known masterworks of the medieval era. *In Forgotten Tones*, recorded by Sabine Lutzenberger and Norbert Rodenkirchen, is their second collaboration on CD, which presents Master Frauenlob's highly regarded music and poetry. Their acclaimed CD, *Der Taugenhort des Heinrich von Meissen*, has been praised as a seminal recording of this repertoire. The material for *In Forgotten Tones* was gathered from manuscripts containing original texts and melodies in musical notation from the Jena Songbook and the Vienna Frauenlob Manuscript, as well as the Kolmar Manuscript, the Codex Manesse and the Weimar "Paper" Manuscript. The "Sangsprüche" are augmented by instrumental settings from melodies and melodic fragments from the *Minnesang* tradition as well as from the sequence *Granum Sinapis*, which is attributed to the mystic Master Eckart and sung to the melody of Adam de St. Victor's "Prunis datum".  
(Text: Norbert Rodenkirchen, English translation by Meredith Beck)

## **Translations:**

1)

Grüner Ton / Green tune

Ich saz uf einer gruene (Contemplation on honor)

In the verdant countryside, I recline and reflect on how I might sustain the favor of the world, yet remain true to God. No useful thoughts came to my mind, thoughts which might somehow guide me to pragmatic measures. My foolishness led me to consider many bold and daring possibilities --- all of which I dismissed. Then, from a child's perspective, a realization came to me, and it is this; not one in this world, who is without wealth, sits in a place of honor. With this in mind, I suffered greatly. I chastised Madame Honor: "You are but a silly maiden, contend with the matter of wealth." She sighed and spoke: "You foolish man. It is so that wealth is more highly valued than I, yet one can surely live as a rich man and also with me. Though: Wealth, without Virtue, seems to me to be a miserable failure.

3)

Zarter Ton / Tender tune

Mit jungen junc (Moral exhortation to the young prince)

With the youthful young, the aging aged, the sprightly fleet, the brazen sinners and the comely beauties, one should appraise this accordingly. Much that one aspires to over the moments of a year's time; these moments have the sages reckoned to our account. As with those who are above you, and as it is when equals serve equals in kind, yet honor is redoubled, when those above intercede for those below. Follow he who counsels you with consummate strength of the heart. I say to you, free yourself from the flood of shame! Remain steadfast in the abundance of joy, and speak tenderly to the aged and the young, and thus will you join and abide in the manifold sanctuary of glory. From an exalted place, a benevolent word strengthens the will of the meek.

4)

Flug Ton / Flight tune

Es jehnt die sehened blinden (Contemplation on art)

The blindsighted say: Unsurpassed in art and intellect are the exalted masters! No one measures up to their rarefied sensibilities without falsehood. Behold the wind and the rain, which possess the very abundance of godly power ere two thousand years, a masterly feat! The wellspring of high wisdom will never run dry. The more deeply one drinks from flow, the more delight is at hand. To whom nature bestows this upon, he can accomplish the very same, both now and as it was long ago. This avows God.

Swer minnen schilt vil vuehren (Contemplation on love)

He, who carries the shield of courtly love, and who, from his love, aspires to receive a badge of honor, then will he follow her and prove that his own shield truly prevails, and that none other stands alongside. Piercing wounds are forsworn. He sees to it that the shield sways not, nor do his thoughts waver, since from a deceptive dream, much suffering can arise. In this way, that which is in his heart will be mirrored in the shield of courtly love, a love, which does not heedlessly chide, and thus, a love temperate and mild. He skirts the cleft, and thus, in effect, does Love remain true to love and abides unbroken.

5)

Würgendrüssel

Des himels arzenie (A song to the Virgin Mary)

You, heavenly-honeyed salve, free of vicissitude; your flourishing felicity imparts healing. I speak of you, praiseworthy balm, you, mother of god and bride, you, bounteous apothecary. When your beauty, sweetly scented and sublime, to those who, with a devoted heart, call out to you, and when your beauteousness reveals itself through a shy smile from behind the veil, you are the streaming beams of sunlight and the brilliance of stars shining brightly all around. The eternal Godhead has reckoned you into the ledger among the seventy-two exalted names that God and his followers bear, those, who to you, revealed the healing salve and stood ready to serve you and you alone. And you, heir to the Father and his loyal maid, aid us in fulfilling your legacy, you, most trusted of God, that we may also be your heirs.

7)

Granum Sinapis (The Parable of the Mustard Seed by Master Eckart)

In the beginning, high above all comprehension, then as now, was the word. O magnificent treasure, where the beginning was born from the beginning, evermore. O bosom of the Father from whom the beauty of the word ceaselessly flows. Yet the womb held fast to the word, this is true. The sweet spirit streams forth from the flow of the two and from the fervor of devotion. Both avow the binding together of the two. Unequal and unique, the three become one. Can you see it? No? It alone knows itself wholly. The merging of the three manifests an essence, which is deeply terrifying. Never has reason grasped the meaning of the circle: here is depth without end. Check and mate of time, shape, and place. The miraculous circle is the source; its point of origin stands firm. To ascend the mountain of this point is futile without endeavoring to gain clarity, which otherwise would envelope you in the mist of obscurity. The path leads you into a wondrous desert; its width and breadth is vast and immeasurable. The desert knows neither time nor space; its essence is unique. Never has a human foot crossed the realm of this desert; never has reason ventured forth here. It exists, and yet no one knows what it is. From here, from there, from near and far, from the depths and the heights; this is it. From light and clarity, no less from the shadows, the unnamed, and the unknown, without beginning or end; it is neither this nor that. Who knows his dwelling, he should step forward and reveal to us his form! Become as a child, become deaf, become blind! The light of your soul must pass into nothingness! All things and nothingness emanate all around! Leave time, leave space; eschew, as well, all imagery! Walk, not the well-tread path, rather the narrow trail, and you will discover the way to the desert. O my soul: go out and God enters in! All of my being sinks into God's nothingness; it sinks into the flow without end. If I flee from you, you come to me. If I lose myself: O perpetual Goodness, above all creation.

9)

Langer Ton / Long tune

Man sieht in meiner vuende krame (Contemplation on inspiration)

Whoever would like, should have a look in my box of miscellany, simply to see how hard I labor. Therein one can easily discover that which is valuable, comfortable, and formidable. To the astute observer, sharp, and to the mediator, malleable; both following, as they ought, the guidance of the pure spirit, as befits here, yet there befits not; but there again is that, that which here would not befit. Who, as a wise falconer, lets his boldest thoughts take flight; he gives heed to counsel as do I, if I refresh him with the lure of discovery. I entice him in such a way that he comes directly to my hand. If he is artfully lured, he will find the call mild and agreeable. To behold the graceful path of the falcon's flight is, in contrast, to

view a false image. Casting off gently and pulling back smoothly should be carried out with great finesse. And if he gives but a cursory glance, then his hunger will go unsatisfied and the prey will elude him.

Wort sint der dinge zeichen (Contemplation on language)

Words are symbols of the thing, states the master. Thus, there must always be something in the orbit of words that resembles this, be it in sound, type, or origin. If any one thing proclaims its name, then I scrutinize it carefully to see whether each virtue is named in accordance with its appointed action. In keeping with the artfulness of the ruse and the fairness of the law, such as one reveals here, that the names of the virtues correspond to these actions. With this, shame, together with her progeny, attends to what is just and what is rightfully hers in accordance with her actions. At this juncture, I stand ready and able to travel to a hidden lake. The laudable journey to the height of virtue compares to a field of clover in bloom, which will never be tainted by the snow of shame. Her name announces an exemplary union, that of her journey and also of her commendable nobility. This is not thought to be a miracle.

11)

Grüne Weise / Green tune

Wer sagt mir daz geverte (Contemplation on nature)

Who will explain to me this conveyance, and how nature engenders all natural things? Life bound up with pleasure, this is the source of all things. And this serves nature and all that walks, crawls, swims or flies. Nature is so all-powerful, that God, in nature, displays this power in all his creatures. All this which heaven holds captive, all this falls to the earth as snow and is conveyed back to nature. Nature bends, through her will, the secrets of hell. Nature is as a woman; what was then, what is eternal, and what can be glimpsed in the future, is governed by her and will be universally accepted. That which is below and above and betwixt, and which wafts through nature, will not be made turbid other than through the impure breath of men.

Luft, wazzer, viur unt erde

Air, water, fire, and earth are the four elements, which are thus named. They differ from one another, yet join together. I have read that air is warm and moist and that water is cold and moist. Warm and dry is fire, as is my strength. Earth remains cold and dry. And, with masterly prowess, the four elements exist together: the combination of air and water must be moist which thus cools the earth and the water. Air and fire can, in contrast, bind warmth together. Dryness, as I perceive, locks earth and fire together. In the powerful curing of air and earth, moisture must issue forth, whose natural strength it imbues.

13)

Vergessener Ton / Forgotten tune

Daz ende sagt volkommenheit der dinge (Contemplation on form)

The end tells of the perfection of all things. How high, how deep, how heavy and how light, how far, how wide: the end of all things is a square! The beginning, indeed, shows good sense, from whose sure hand it flows. The perfect end is, in contrast, an asset, which is guarded by the wise. As good as the beginning may be, as rich as the middle which joins it in good company, yet only does the end has any say over perfection with all its stratum. He whose deed impedes a good end, this deed will never be achieved unscathed. I can guarantee you that!

*(all translations German translations from Middle High German by Norbert Rodenkirchen and all English translations by Meredith Beck)*