

**53 Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär** [If I were a bird], composed 2005.

**Detlef Cordes** is a German singer and composer who sets to music poems by Heine, Rilke and other Romantic writers. When approached about a score for this song, Detlef completely rewrote it. You can hear his original version at [www.kulturumsonst.com](http://www.kulturumsonst.com), where he publishes his works.

Sung in German; English translation by Charles G. Leland, *The works of Heinrich Heine* (New York, 1900).

Other settings of this poem: 1

Ich steh auf des Berges Spitze,  
Und werde sentimental.  
"Wenn ich ein Vöglein wäre!"  
Seufz ich vieltausendmal.

I stood on the mountain-summit, -  
Grew sentimental there,  
And sighed a thousand times over:  
'Would that a bird I were!'

Wenn ich eine Schwalbe wäre,  
So flög ich zu dir, mein Kind,  
Und baute mir mein Nestchen,  
Wo deine Fenster sind.

Oh were I but a swallow,  
My Love, I'd fly to thee,  
And build above thy window  
A little nest for me.

Wenn ich eine Nachtigall wäre,  
So flög ich zu dir, mein Kind,  
Und sänge dir nachts meine  
Lieder Herab von der grünen Lind'.

And were I a nightingale, swiftly,  
My Love, I'd fly to thee,  
And sing my songs at thy window,  
All night from the green lime-tree.

Wenn ich ein Gimpel\* wäre,  
So flög ich gleich an dein Herz;  
Du bist ja hold den Gimpeln,  
Und heilest Gimpelschmerz.

And if I were a booby,  
I'd seek in thy heart repose;  
For thou art sweet on boobies,  
And healest booby woes.

\*In German "Gimpel" means both "fool" and "bullfinch," making the pun untranslatable without changing species.