

Alma

Tom Lehrer

Last december 13th, there appeared in the newspapers the juiciest, spiciest, raciest obituary that has ever been my pleasure to read. it was that of a lady name alma mahler gropius werfel who had her lifetime, managed to acquire as lovers practically all of the top creative men in central europe, and, among these lovers, who were listed in the obituary, by the way, which was what made it interesting, there were three whom she went so far as to marry.

One of the leading composers of the day: gustav mahler, composer of das lied von der erde and other light classics. one of the leading architects: walter gropius of the bauhaus school of design.

One of the leading writers: franz werfel, author of the song of bernadette and other masterpieces. it's people like that who make you realize how little you've accomplished. it is a sobering thought

For example, that when mozart was my age he had been dead for two years. it seemed to me, I'm reading this obituary, that the story of alma was the stuff of which ballads should be made so here we go.

The loveliest girl in vienna
Was alma, the smartest as well.
Once you picked her up on your antenna,
You'd never be free of her spell.

Her lovers were many and varied,
From the day she began her -- beguine.
There were three famous ones whom she married,
And God knows how many between.

Alma, tell us!
All modern women are jealous.
Which of your magical wands
Got you gustav and walter and franz?

The first one she married was mahler,
Whose buddies all knew him as gustav.
And each time he saw her he'd holler:
"ach, that is the fraulein I most have!"

Their marriage, however, was murder.
He'd scream to the heavens above,
"i'm writing das lied von der erde,
And she only wants to make love!"

Alma, tell us!
All modern women are jealous.
You should have a statue in bronze
For bagging gustav and walter and franz.

While married to gus, she met gropius,
And soon she was swinging with walter.
Gus died, and her tear drops were copious.
She cried all the way to the altar.

But he would work late at the bauhaus,
And only came home now and then.
She said, "what am I running? a chow house?"

It's time to change partners again."

Alma, tell us!
All modern women are jealous.
Though you didn't even use ponds,
You got gustav and walter and franz.

While married to walt she'd met werfel,
And he too was caught in her net.
He married her, but he was carefell,
'cause alma was no bernadette.

And that is the story of alma,
Who knew how to receive and to give.
The body that reached her embalma'
Was one that had known how to live.

Alma, tell us!
How can they help being jealous?
Ducks always envy the swans
Who get gustav and walter,
You never did falter,
With gustav and walter and franz.

I know some people feel that marriage as an institution is dying out, but I disagree and the point was driven home to me rather forcefully not long ago by a letter I received which said: "d
G, I love you and I cannot live without you. marry me, or I will kill myself."
well, I was a little disturbed at that until I took another look at the envelope and saw that it was addressed
Ccupant.

Speaking of love, one problem that recurs more and more frequently these days in books, and plays, and movies on, is the inability of people to communicate with the people they love. husbands and
Who can't communicate; children who can't communicate with their parents, and so on. and the characters in these books, and plays, and so on, and in real life, I might add, spend hours bemoaning
Fact that they can't communicate. I feel that if a person can't communicate the very least he can do is to shut up.