

## Jessye Norman - Alban Berg (1995)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 23 September 2011 18:47 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 January 2014 12:48

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01. Sieben fruhe lieder-Nachr 02. Sieben fruhe lieder-Schilflied 03. Sieben fruhe lieder-Die nachtigall 04. Sieben fruhe lieder-Traumgekront 05. Sieben fruhe lieder-In zimmer 06. Sieben fruhe lieder-Liebesode 07. Sieben fruhe lieder-Sommertage [play](#) 08. Funf Orch-Seele, wie bist du schoener 09. Funf Orch-Sahst du nach dem gewitterregen 10. Funf Orch-Uber die grenzen des all 11. Funf Orch-Nichts ist gekommen 12. Funf Orch-Hier ist friede

[play](#)

13. Jugendlieder-Wo der goldregen steht 14. Jugendlieder-Lied des schiffermadels 15. Jugendlieder-Schnsucht II 16. Jugendlieder-Geliebte schone 17. Jugendlieder-Vielgeliebte schone frau 18. Jugendlieder-Ferne lieder 19. Jugendlieder-Schattenleben 20. Jugendlieder-Voruber 21. Jugendlieder-Liebe 22. Jugendlieder-Mignon 23. Jugendlieder-Grabchrift 24. Jugendlieder-Schliebe mir augen beide 1907 25. Jugendlieder-Schliebe mir augen beide 1925 26. Jugendlieder-Er klagt das der fruhling so kortz

Ann Schein (piano) London Symphonie Orchestra Pierre Boulez - conductor, 1995

The fact that its Jessye Norman performing these songs is not the only reason why I think this is a great record. I think this record gives you a great view on the evolution of Alban Berg as a composer. The three different sets of songs belong to a different period in his life: the early songs are still truely romantic, the "Seven early songs" show a composer searching for new ways of expression and the Altenberg-lieder show him using a totally new and different soundscape. I think Jessye Norman is the perfect singer for these songs, the early 20th century repertoire suits her perfectly (she has made beautiful recordings of works of Arnold Shönberg as well). It's just a pity that these last years she seems to focus on singing Christmas carols and other easy listening music. ---frans, amazon.com

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A prominent American soprano, Jessye Norman was the daughter of a schoolteacher and an insurance broker. She started singing spirituals at the age of four at Mount Calvary Baptist Church; one Saturday while doing her chores she heard an opera for the first time, broadcast on the radio. She became an instant opera fan and started listening to recordings of Marian Anderson and Leontyne Price. Nat "King" Cole was also a major inspiration for her.

When she was 16, she started studying at Howard University in Washington, where her voice teacher was Carolyn Grant. She sang in the university chorus and had a job as soloist the Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ. In 1965 she won the National Society of Arts and Letters singing competition. She continued her studies at Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, and at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, where her most important studies were with Elizabeth Mannion and Pierre Bernac.

In 1968 she won the Munich Competition, leading to her operatic debut as Elisabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* in Berlin. A major European operatic career quickly developed: she appeared as Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* at Maggio Musicale in Florence in 1971, Verdi's *Aïda* at La Scala in Milan in 1972, and as Cassandra in Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at London's Covent Garden the same year. These roles are all princesses and bespeak a major part of her stage persona, a commanding and noble bearing, partly due to her uncommon height and size. But this is even more a function of her unique, rich, and powerful voice. She has an uncommonly wide range, encompassing all female voice registers from contralto to high dramatic soprano.

As her operatic career developed, she also made important recital debuts, including London and New York in 1973. She made an extensive North American concert debut in 1976 and 1977, but did not appear in opera in the United States until 1982. This was with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, in a double bill as Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Queen Jocasta in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. Her Metropolitan Opera debut was as Cassandra in 1983, the opening night of the Met's centennial season.

Her interpretation of Strauss's *Four Last Songs* is legendary. Its slowness is controversial, but the tonal qualities of her voice are ideal for these final works of the great Romantic German lieder tradition. She also sings the *Gurrelieder* of Arnold Schoenberg, and the same composer's *Erwartung*. She sang that opera on a memorable double bill at the Met with Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, which was broadcast nationally. She has also appeared on live broadcasts of season-opening concerts of the New York Philharmonic.

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In addition to the direct and emotionally expressive qualities of her singing, her performances also impress through formidable intellectual understanding of the music and its style, as well as first-rate musicianship. She studies the languages of the music she sings, and has been acclaimed in her singing of Mussorgsky songs in the original Russian, in the German Romantic lieder repertoire, and in French music from Berlioz to contemporary composers. --- Joseph Stevenson, allmusic.com

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