

Franz Schubert - Lieder orchestrated by Max Reger & Anton Webern (2015)

Written by bluesever

Monday, 02 September 2019 15:00 -

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1 *An Die Musik* D 547 2:07 2 *Erlkönig* D 328 3:49 3 *Du Bist Die Ruh'* D 776 3:09 4
Greisengesang D 778 6:02 5 *An Den Mond* D 296 3:54 6 *Prometheus* D 674 5:09 7 *Nacht
Und Träume* D 827 2:38 8 *Gesänge Des Harfners* D 478 8 *No. 1: Wer Sich Der
Einsamkeit Ergibt* 3:52 9 *No. 2: Wer Nie Sein Brot Mit Tränen Aß* 4:11 10 *No. 3: An Die
Türen Will Ich Schleichen* 2:06 11 *Gruppe Aus Dem Tartarus* D 583 3:01 12 *Tränenregen*
D 795 *No. 10* 5:35 13 *Der Wegweiser* D 911 *No. 20* 4:06 14 *Memnon* D 541 3:38 15 *Ihr
Bild* D 957 *No. 9* 2:42 16 *Litaney Auf Das Fest Aller Seelen* D 343 2:41 17 *Im Abendrot* D
799 3:36 Christian Elsner - tenor
Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin Marek Janowski - conductor

Given his magnificent achievement in the field of art song, and the vast volume and consistently high quality of his Lieder oeuvre, it is not surprising that the songs of Schubert have been recorded numerous times. It is not surprising either that many composers, such as Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, Benjamin Britten, Hector Berlioz, Max Reger, and Anton Webern made arrangements of Schubert's songs. What is surprising, however, is the fact that these arrangements – made by some of the greatest composers in musical history – are so seldom heard either in concert or on record.

With the release of this album, one hopes that the situation will change. It combines seventeen Schubert compositions, of which thirteen were orchestrated by the late-romantic German composer Max Reger, and the remaining four by a member of the Second Viennese School, Anton Webern. Listening to these songs, one will discover that the arrangements are made with such craftsmanship that they themselves became unparalleled works of art. The performers on this SACD are the Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin and the German tenor Christian Elsner, conducted by Marek Janowski. ---chandos.net

When it comes to songs, one need not have any qualm in describing Franz Schubert as the perfect “prolific composer.” More than 600 songs –art songs (or Lieder) with piano accompaniment, to be precise – flowed from his immensely productive quill. In fact, it is a miracle that basically defies rational argument that the quality of the pieces throughout this well-nigh unbelievable volume of work is almost consistently of the highest level. Schubert’s magnificent achievement in the field of art song has often been praised and acknowledged (and not only by musicologists), and the recordings of his songs and song cycles are legion.

This makes it all the more astonishing to discover that, to date, arrangements by other composers of these songs are grossly under-represented, both on the concert platform and in the recording studio, with but a few above-average recordings of these orchestrations in existence. Does that perhaps allow us to conclude that these versions cannot hold their own against the high level of the original? Let’s take a good look at the “arrangers”: these include composers of the calibre of Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms, Benjamin Britten, Hector Berlioz, and later on, Max Reger and Anton Webern. Let’s face it, none of them belong in the “Kleinmeister” (= lesser composer) category: and every single one was an excellent orchestrator. The rather indifferent interest in the orchestrations is probably due to the fact that an arrangement on the whole is not valued as highly as an original composition.
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