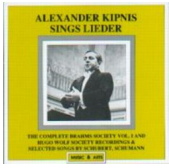
Alexander Kipnis Sings Lieder 1927-1936



01 - Brahms - Vier ernste Gesänge Denn es gehet dem Menschen 02 - Brahms - Vier ernste Gesänge Ich wandte mich und sahe 03 - Brahms - Vier ernste Gesänge O Tod, O Tod, wie bitter 04 - Brahms - Vier ernste Gesänge Wenn, ich mit menschen 05 - Brahms – Verrat 06 - Brahms – Einnerung 07 - Brahms - An die Nachtigall 08 - Brahms - Ein Sonett 09 - Brahms – Sonntag 10 - Brahms - Von ewiger Liebe 11 - Brahms - O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück 12 - Brahms – Ständchen 13 - Brahms - Vergebliches Ständchen 14 - Brahms - Die Mainacht 15 - Schubert - Der Wegweiser 16 - Schubert - Der Doppelgänger 17 - Schubert – Aufenthalt 18 - Schubert - Am meer 19 - Schubert - Der Linderbaum 20 - Brahms - Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer 21 - Brahms – Feldeinsamkeit 22 - Schubert – Erlkonig 23 - Schubert – Ungeduld 24 - Schumann – Mondnacht 25 - Schumann – Wanderlied 26 - Strauss - Traum durch die Dämmerung 27 - Strauss - Zueignung Alexander Kipnis, bass Piano accompaniments by Coenraad Valentyne Bos, Ernst Victor Wolf, Gerald Moore, Arthur Bergh, Frank Bibb

Alexander Kipnis represented for many the very model of a bass singer, with a voice deep, round, and solid. Although a native Ukrainian, he studied predominantly in Germany; perhaps because of this he specialized in the major bass roles of Wagner, Mozart and Strauss. Kipnis also became one of the most respected lieder singers of his age and made numerous recordings which keep his memory very much alive.

Born in extreme poverty in a Ukrainian ghetto, Kipnis was able to learn music and perform at the local synagogue; later he moved to a slightly more prosperous temple in Bessarabia (in Moldavia). When he returned to Ukraine, he became a jack-of-all-trades with a small theatrical troop, working in the crew as well as acting and singing. When he was 19, he entered the Warsaw Conservatory, intending to become a band conductor. However, he still sang in synagogues to provide himself with an income, and in 1912, at a teacher's encouragement, he left Warsaw for Berlin to study singing (as well as to avoid conscription into the Russian army).

When WWI broke out, the Russian Kipnis was arrested and jailed. A German colonel, whose brother was an opera impresario, heard him sing and had Kipnis audition for him (in jail!); the singer was subsequently engaged by the Hamburg Opera. Under supervision, Kipnis was permitted to both study and fulfill his contract. Following two years in Hamburg, he was engaged by the Royal Opera in Wiesbaden where he built an impressive repertory. By the end of the war, Kipnis' reputation had spread well beyond Germany, and he began performing throughout Europe.

In 1922, he traveled to the United States as a member of the Wagner Festival Company and was shortly thereafter engaged by the Chicago Civic Opera Company; there he continued to sing major roles for nine seasons (also during this time becoming an American citizen). Despite being a true bass (rather than the bass-baritone more typical of the role), he undertook the demanding role of Wotan in Wagner's Ring Cycle.

During this time Kipnis also attracted attention for his recital performances. The New York Times described him as "not only one of the greatest contemporary operatic basses but also one of the foremost living masters of the lied."

Upon leaving the Chicago opera, Kipnis returned to Germany to become principal bass with the Berlin State Opera and a leading artist at the Bayreuth and (later) Salzburg festivals. This same period also found him at the Glyndebourne Festival and Covent Garden in England and at Argentina's Teatro Colón. With Hitler's rise in Germany, Kipnis, a Jew, transferred his performing activities to Austria. When the Anschluss took place, Kipnis moved to America, where he remained for the rest of his career.

His Metropolitan Opera debut came on January 6, 1940, in Parsifal. Critic Olin Downes commented, "Mr. Kipnis immediately won the favor of his audience. He invested the role with the utmost significance." Kipnis remained at the Met for seven seasons, where his primary roles were King Marke in Tristan und Isolde, Arkel in Pelleas et Melisande, Hermann in Tannhäuser, Hunding in Die Walküre, Hagen in Götterdämmerung, and Sarastro in Die Zauberflöte. He also sang Boris Godunov in the original Russian while the rest of the cast sang in Italian. Kipnis retired in 1946, and undertook a distinguished second career as a voice teacher.

Kipnis was married to Mildred Levy of Chicago for 53 years. Their son, Igor, is a well-known harpsichordist. ---All Music Guide

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