

SCHUMANN AND BRAHMS: LIEDER ON RECORD, 1901-1952. HMV RLS 1547003, 8 discs.

SCHUMANN: Der Nussbaum (Fritz Schrödter, tenor); Ich grolle nicht (Félia Litvinne, soprano); Ich hab' im Traum geweinet (Nicolai Figner, tenor, in Russian); Er, der Herrlichste von allen (Marie Knüpfer-Egli, soprano); Intermezzo (Lilli Lehmann, soprano); Wanderlied (Willi Birrenkoven, tenor); Die beiden Grenadiere (Vittorio Arimondi, basso, in Italian); Volksliedchen, Der Schatzgräber, Der Soldat (Therese Behr-Schnabel, mezzo-soprano); Die Lotosblume, Du bist wie eine Blume (Giuseppe Borgatti, tenor, in Italian); Die Lotosblume, (Leo Slezak, tenor); Frühlingsnacht, Die Rose, die Lilie (Lydia Lipkowska, soprano, in Russian); Ich grolle nicht (Erik Schmedes, tenor); Frauenliebe und -leben (Julia Kulp, contralto); Die beiden Grenadiere (Feodor Chaliapin, basso, in Russian); Widmung (Frieda Hempel, soprano); Wanderlied, Du bist wie eine Blume (Friedrich Schorr, baritone); An den Sonnenschein, Volksliedchen, (Ursula van Diemen, soprano); Unterm Fenster (Lucrezia Bori, soprano; John McCormack, tenor, in English); So wahr die Sonne scheint (Jo Vincent, soprano, Louis van Tulder, tenor); Die beiden Grenadiere, Lied eines Schmiedes (Sir George Henschel, baritone); In der Fremde (Alice Raveau, contralto, in French); Aus den östlichen Rosen (Richard Tauber, tenor); Ich will meine Seele tauchen, Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome (Thom Denijs, baritone); Zum Schluss, Frühlingsnacht, Wer machte dich so krank?, Alte Laute (Elena Gerhardt, mezzo-soprano); Der Nussbaum, In der Fremde (Charles Panzera, baritone, in French); An den Sonnenschein, Marienwürmchen (Lotte Lehmann, soprano); Die beiden Grenadiere (Herbert Janssen, baritone); Mondnacht, Er ist's, O ihr Herren, Röselein, Röselein, Loreley, Ständchen (Elisabeth Schumann, soprano); Wer machte dich so krank?, Alte Laute, Mondnacht, Was soll ich sagen? (Karl Erb, tenor); Schöne Fremde, In der Fremde, Geisternähe, An den Sonnenschein (Ria Ginster, soprano); Frühlingsnacht (Willi Domgraf-Fassbaender, baritone); Die Lotosblume, Schneeglöckchen, Zum Schluss, Herzeleid, Liebeslied (Susan Metcalfe-Casals, mezzo-soprano); Dichterliebe, Dein Angesicht, Du bist wie eine Blume, Romanze (Flutenreicher Ebro) (Aksel Schiøtz, tenor); Meine Rose, Widmung (Frida Leider, soprano); Frühlingsfahrt (Hanns Hermann Nissen, baritone); Erstes Grün, Requiem (Flora Nielsen, soprano); Mondnacht (Hans Hotter, baritone); Meine Rose, Widmung (Karl Schmitt-Walter, baritone); Die Kartenlegerin (Elisabeth Höngen, contralto); Dein Angesicht (Pierre Bernac, baritone); Aufträge (Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano); Die Lotosblume, Die beiden Grenadiere (Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone); Der Nussbaum (Victoria de los Angeles, soprano).

BRAHMS: Feldeinsamkeit (Gustav Walter, tenor); Der Schmied (Edyth Walker, contralto); Minnelied (Leopold Demuth, baritone); Botschaft (Erik Schmedes, tenor); Wiegenlied (Laura Hilgermann, soprano); Ein Wanderer (Franz Naval, tenor); Liebestreu (Vladimir Kastorsky, basso, in Russian); Die Sonne scheint nicht mehr (Elisabeth Ohlhoff, soprano); Sapphische Ode (Anton Sistermans, basso); Da unten im Tale, Ach, englische Schäferin (Susanne Dessoir, soprano); O liebliche Wangen, Vor dem Fenster, Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer, Feinsliebchen, du sollst, Erlaube mir, feins Mädchen, Wie komm ich denn, Mein Mädel hat einen Rosenmund, Der Gang zum Liebchen, Therese, Der Tod, das ist die kühle

Nacht (Elena Gerhardt, mezzo-soprano); Sapphische Ode (Feodor Chaliapin, basso, in Russian); Im Waldeseinsamkeit, Komm bald (John McCormack, tenor); Wie Melodien zieht es mir, Das Mädchen spricht (Lotte Schöne, soprano); Sapphische Ode (Louise Kirkby Lunn, contralto); Alte Liebe (Hina Spani, soprano, in Italian); Geistliches Wiegenlied (Maria von Basilides, contralto); Sandmännchen (Selma Kurz, soprano); Ein Wanderer (Karin Branzell, contralto); Die Mainacht (Marian Anderson, contralto); Von ewiger Liebe (Lotte Lehmann, soprano); Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer (Dusolina Giannini, soprano); Ruhe, Süßliebchen (Sigrid Onegin, contralto); Heimweh II (O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück) (Richard Tauber, tenor, in English); Am Sonntagmorgen (Irene Joachim, soprano); Wie bist du, meine Königin, Feldeinsamkeit (Gerhard Hüsck, baritone); Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer (Sabine Kalter, contralto); Treue Liebe, Botschaft (Ria Ginster, soprano); Klänge II, Die Meere (Irene Kedroff, soprano, Nathalie Kedroff, mezzo-soprano); Lerchengesang, Heimweh II (O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück), O kühler Wald (Karl Erb, tenor); Nachtigall, Der Jäger, Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht, An eine Aolsharfe, Bitteres zu sagen, Blinde Kuh, Schwesterlein, In stiller Nacht, Vergebliches Ständchen (Elisabeth Schumann, soprano); Der Schmied, Liebestreu, Das Mädchen spricht, Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer (Marta Fuchs, soprano); Erinnerung, Ein Sonett, Verrat (Alexander Kipnis, basso); An die Nachtigall (Adelheid Armhold, soprano); Feldeinsamkeit (Maria Müller, soprano); Spanisches Lied (In dem Schatten meiner Locken) (Margarete Klose, contralto); Wenn ich mit Menschen (Emmi Leisner, contralto); Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen, Minnelied, Auf dem Kirchhofe (Herbert Janssen, baritone); Junge Lieder I (Meine Liebe ist grün, Gestillte Sehnsucht (Kirsten Flagstad, soprano); Wir wandelten, Ständchen, Sonntag (Aksel Schiøtz, tenor); Wiegenlied (Irmgard Seefried, soprano); Die Mainacht (Karl Schmitt-Walter, baritone); Och Modr, ich well en Ding han, Vergebliches Ständchen (Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano); Mit vierzig Jahren, Denn es gehet dem Menschen (Hans Hotter, baritone); Von ewiger Liebe (Victoria de los Angeles, soprano); Liebeslieder Walzer Nos. 6, 9, 16, 17, 18 (Irmgard Seefried, soprano, Elisabeth Höngen, contralto, Hugo Meyer-Welfing, tenor, Hans Hotter, baritone).

Spurred by the success of the Hugo Wolf Society reissue and the mammoth Schubert anthology, the indefatigable Keith Hardwick has combed the EMI archives to honor the next two great masters in the royal line of the German Lied. He has come up with over 130 different songs (and numerous duplications) sung by "77 great singers . . . including many previously unpublished items." That such a collection is possible gives one pause, for Lieder have always been the poor relation in the record catalogs. There is only one borrowing from American Victor (an unpublished duet) which leaves the resources of that company practically untapped, not to mention Polydor and other German labels. And it is worth noting that most of the songs included are done with the original piano accompaniment: only four Schumann Lieder are afflicted with what used to pass for an orchestra. Of course, this is not to say that the piano recorded well in the early days, but one gets used to it. "The records," says the Producer's note, "are given in roughly chronological order

(slightly modified to provide variety of timbre), except that all the Schumann (or Brahms) records made by the singer are grouped together."

As in the Schubert collection, the patriarch among the singers is Gustav Walter, recorded in 1904, aged 71, 28 years after his retirement. His credentials as a personal friend of Brahms are matched by Anton Sistermans, whose records are so rare as to be practically unknown. Along with Johannes Messchaert and Raymond von zur Mühlen (who unfortunately did not record), Sistermans was preeminent among Lieder singers of his day. All three were pupils of Julius Stockhausen, called the father of the Lieder recital, and the teacher of many early Wagner singers. Sistermans was entrusted with the world premiere of Brahms' Vier ernste Gesänge. Another friend of Brahms was Sir George Henschel, also a composer and the first conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Henschel always sang to his own piano accompaniment. These men were Lieder specialists. Toward the end of the century, some of the finest opera singers began to give recitals (Sembrich, Schumann-Heink, Gadski, and Bispham are missing from this set; Lilli Lehmann heads those who are included). In the first quarter of this century, the field was dominated by Julia Culp and Elena Gerhardt, neither of whom sang in opera. The 1930's became the golden age of the Lieder recital, at least in New York: Lotte Lehmann; Elisabeth Schumann, Heinrich Schlusnus, Ria Ginster, and others, would appear several times in a season.

In comparing the older singers with their recent counterparts, one should bear in mind that what once were the techniques of recording have developed into an art. From the earliest days of HMV, the man most responsible for artist repertory was Fred Gaisberg. During the '30's, Walter Legge gradually took over, and he remained predominant until his retirement in 1967. Gaisberg, Legge tells us (see Schwarzkopf: On and Off the Record), "believed that his job was to get the best artists into the studio and get onto wax the best sound pictures of what the artist habitually did in public, intermittently using his persuasive diplomatic skill as nurse-maid and tranquilizer to temperaments. Having watched him at work, I decided that recording must be a collaboration between the artists and what we now call 'producers.' I wanted better results than are normally possible in public performances: I was determined to put onto disc the best that artist could do under the best possible conditions." Legge, the perfectionist, further tells us of coaching the singers to meet his standards of interpretation. The cutoff date of this anthology is 1952, roughly the end of the 78-rpm era. Before the days of tape splicing and editing, it was not possible to alter what was once on the record. What Legge accomplished on LP is legendary.

Whatever favorite songs or singers we may miss in this program, I for one am grateful that some of the performances included are less than masterpieces, for each throws some sort of light on the songs as well as the singers. Some of the opera artists are obviously not at home in the repertory; some have original ideas. Lieder, even more than opera, change color when translated; we have some very interesting if not always convincing examples here.

The amazing Gustav Walter is very nearly as moving in Feldeinsamkeit as in the well remembered Schubert Am Meer. Perhaps the tempo is a little fast (for recording?) but the song is impressively sustained, and the turns are beautifully done. Next in order of seniority is Lilli Lehmann, who sings Schumann's Intermezzo (1907) slowly and dreamily with a good legato line. For all the limitations of the recording, at 59 with a long Wagnerian career behind her, she is still impressive. Sir George Henschel, at 78, gives us a delightful Lied eines Schmiedes and a surprisingly free Die beiden Grenadiere (1928). We may compare this with the quite straight Italian performance of Arimondi (1903) who marches through the song with his big round bass voice. Chaliapin (1911) singing in Russian, makes some alterations in the vocal line but keeps the song generally in shape. The two more-recent performances by Janssen (1936) and Fischer-Dieskau (1951) are more orthodox.

On finally hearing Sistermans, I am perplexed and disappointed. Like so many who sing the Sapphische Ode (1906), he breaks the long phrases and hardly suggests "emotion recollected in tranquility" which is, as I understand it, what this song is all about. Did he sing it this way for Brahms? Should we simply blame the recording? To my surprise, of the two other contrasting performances, I find myself preferring Chaliapin in Russian (1913). His tempo is good, his phrasing is admirable, though perhaps the voice is on the strong side. Kirkby Lunn's voice quality is attractive (1923), but in a slow and careful tempo she breaks the long phrases. (Most of my life, I have been hoping to hear an acoustic Columbia of the song played by Casals.)

Two versions of Ich grolle nicht (aside from Schiøtz's complete Dichterliebe) are of unusual interest. Félia Litvinne (1903), in French, is better recorded than in some of her other essays, and she is quite thrilling at the high climax. Unfortunately, the piano postlude is cut off. Erik Schmedes (1906) shows an admirably clean tone, if a little hard, and sings with proper emphasis. His climax is strong without strain. Interestingly, Schiøtz, in the cycle, prefers the lower alternative at the climax. A number of Brahms folksong arrangements are included by such artists as Gerhardt and Schumann, but specially appealing to me is Susanne Dessoir's 1910 recording of Da unten im Tale. The song, as I hear it, is a dialogue between a pleading lover and his mistrusting mistress. Dessoir is one of the few singers to make this clear.

Julia Culp is credited with the earliest recording of Frauenliebe und -leben. In fact, if you count her incomplete version of 1906, she made the first two. The 1909 performance is given here entire, a document of first importance. To me, hers is one of the loveliest voices I know (unfortunately only from records) and, though her range was short, one does not feel her limitations. Her biographical note (like some others in the set) has obviously been carried over from the Schubert anthology, for it states that two of her electric recordings "are selected here."

Elena Gerhardt is represented in three stages of her career. O liebliche Wangen, accompanied by Nikisch, dates from 1911 and shows the youthful voice. But there is more substance in her electric recordings of 1926-29 and from the privately issued set of 1939. I used to consider Vor dem Fenster (1926) her finest, and I see little reason to change this verdict. Here is a demonstration of great elasticity within a perfect frame. She tells the story in the most beautiful German. Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer (1927) makes you feel the hopeless yearning of the dying girl as neither Giannini (1933), Kalter (1933), nor Fuchs (1937) succeed in doing, lovely as their performances are. From the 1939 set, Therese is particularly endearing and Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht profoundly moving. In the latter song, the bright voice of Schumann (1936) moves us in a rather different way.

In der Fremde, from Schumann's Liederkreis, Op. 39, has three versions, two of them in French. Ria Ginster (1935) gives a model performance in the original. Those of Alice Raveau and Panzera (both 1932) have a beautiful flow. (I once used this song to demonstrate the effect of translation, introducing it as Fauré, and no one seemed to suspect the ruse).

Frieda Hempel, after she left the opera, was one of the most delightful of Lieder singers. Her Widmung is exuberant and full of devotion, the contrasting section deeply peaceful (1923). In comparison, that of Frida Leider (1943) is somehow hectic and confused. For this I blame Raucheisen at the piano, who seems to be having a bad day. Schmitt-Walter (1948), on the other hand, provides a model.

John McCormack's love of Leider was proverbial; here he sings two of Brahms--Im Waldeseinsamkeit and Komm bald (both 1924)--with wonderful simplicity and expressiveness. Of the seven songs by Karl Erb, I particularly like Schumann's Was soll ich sagen? (1937), and Brahms' Lerchengesang (1936) and O kühler Wald (1937). Tom Denijs, another fine Dutch Lieder specialist, made the first electric Dichterliebe (1928) from which two songs have been extracted. Regrettably, Lotte Lehmann's American recordings were not available for inclusion, as neither the two little Schumann songs (1932) nor Von ewiger Liebe (1927) do her full justice. In the Brahms, she is accompanied by the Berlin State Opera Orchestra under Fritz Zweig, and she seems hurried. But Elisabeth Schumann is at her radiant best in Schumann's Er ist's (1930), Loreley, and Ständchen, and Brahms' Nachtigall, Der Jäger (both 1935), an unpublished In stiller Nacht (1938), and a very rapid but pointed Vergebliches Ständchen (1935).

One of Tauber's best recordings is Aus den östlichen Rosen (1935); his O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück (1943) is curious. Singing in English (but not the translation printed in the brochure) he is not easy to follow. I am not sure I would recognize the singer. Of Kipnis' three fine Brahms songs (1936), my favorite is the bitterly dramatic Verrat. Janssen makes much of the text in Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen (1937) and the declamatory Auf dem Kirchhofe (1937). Lotte Schöne sings Wie

Melodien zieht es mir in an unpublished take (1926) which is very similar to her well-known recording. To my taste, though the voice is lovely, the tempo is slow. I have heard that Sembrich's singing of this song (which she did not record) was unforgettable, swift and light as the breeze. Brahms' direction is simply zart.

Flagstad's voice is especially rich in Gestillte Sehnsucht (1949), the second of two songs with viola that Brahms wrote for Joachim. Though intended for a contralto, it offers no problems for Flagstad. Ria Ginster's cool voice serves well in Brahms' expressive Treue Liebe and the exuberant Botschaft (1933), also in Schumann's Schöne Fremde and Geisternähe (1935). The Russian basso Kastorsky, singing in his own language, is an unexpected interpreter of Liebestreu, a mother and daughter dialogue (1909). Things are put right in Marta Fuch's rendition, elastic in tempo and working to a broad climax (1937). Die Maimacht with its difficult long phrases defeats many singers, but not Marian Anderson (1936) or Karl Schmitt-Walter (1948). Flora Nielsen, a disciple of Gerhardt, is notable in Schumann's characteristic Erstes Grün (1948) and Gerhard Hüsch does full justice to Brahms' Wie bist du meine Königin (1934). The rarely heard Brahms Spanisches Lied, sung by Margarete Klose (1939) makes a nice contrast with the familiar Wolf setting, In dem Schatten meiner Locken. Of Aksel Schiøtz's famous Dichterliebe (1946), it is scarcely necessary to speak. Hans Hotter's contributions, especially the seldom heard Mit vierzig Jahren, and the first of the Ernste Gesänge (1951), are impeccably interpreted. The Schumann portion of the program begins and ends with Der Nussbaum. Fritz Schrödter (1902) sings pleasantly under difficulties, for the piano, without benefit of pedals, sounds curiously disjointed. No such problem impedes Victoria de los Angeles (1951) whose voice is particularly luscious but whose diction could be more pointed.

Much more could be said about these and all the other songs and singers, but I hope I have indicated most of the high spots. There remain the duets, two by Brahms charmingly sung by Irène and Nathalie Kedroff with Nadia Boulanger at the piano (1938) and two by Schumann, the first by Jo Vincent and Louis van Tulder (1930), the second sung in English by Lucrezia Bori and John McCormack (1925, unpublished). Collectors may remember Umterm Fenster recorded long ago by Farrar and Clement, singing delightfully in French though the German text is a translation from Burns!

Finally a selection from Liebeslieder Walzer, Op. 52 of Brahms (1947). This is a recording by Seefried, Höngen, Meyer-Welfing, and Hotter, with Friedrich Wührer and Hermann von Nordberg at the pianos. Reissued as the second side for a Ljuba Welitsch recital (EMI DH 373), it was previously reviewed in these pages (Vol. XIII, No. 1). There, I praised the performance but complained of the lack of clarity in reproduction. I am not bothered in that way this time, thanks, no doubt, to Keith Hardwick.

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