

MOZART: Songs

Marianne Beate Kielland, mz; Nils Anders

Mortensen, p

LAWO 1111—65 minutes

Mozart only wrote about three dozen songs, and there are 21 of them here, so it's probably all most of us will need. He is not known for his songs, but they often sound a lot like Schubert's (who was known for songs). We have songs from all of his life, starting at 12 years old and ending the year he died. His widow published 30 songs in 1800, and that is the basic collection. You can hear Mozart in these songs, naturally, but sometimes you go a long stretch where you are not sure who wrote a given song, and then suddenly you know it is Mozart—something leaps out at you.

This is an excellent collection if you want a single singer. She is really very good, and her voice is easy to listen to. But after a while everything sounds alike, and you wish a few singers had shared the recital, just for variety of timbre.

There are Mozart song records where the songs are shared by two singers—male and female. Kurt Moses reviewed one such, with Joan Rodgers and John Mark Ainsley (July/Aug 1999). He found that the soprano had a far more beautiful voice than the tenor, as well as better technique and expression. The contrast made the program unacceptable.

The other shared recitals were reviewed by Ralph Lucano (Sept/Oct 2008). Ruth Ziesak on Naxos was wonderful, but the tenor who shared the recital (Lothar Odinius) had a tight voice and a nagging manner that gets tiresome.

Sophie Karthhauser and Stephan Loges (a baritone) on Cypres sound much better matched and even do a few songs as duets. Both of those are two discs and claim completeness but are not identical.

There are 20 or 30 solo albums of these songs, by people from Schwarzkopf to Schreier. I like this new one because I like her voice—she reminds me of Janet Baker—but many of our readers already have favorite voices in these songs.

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