Edition Fischer-Dieskau (III) – L. v. Beethoven: Folksong Arrangements

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American Record Guide (R. Moore - 2009.07.01)

From the Archives

BEETHOVEN: Folksong Arrangements

In September 1952 the young Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau recorded these songs at the studio of RIAS in Berlin. It was the only time that the singer would work with Michael Raucheisen, at that time a leading champion of lieder. According to the liner notes, on the day of the recording, other musicians happened to be on hand, including the entire RIAS Chamber Chorus, and were evidently recruited on the spot to participate in the recording. The notes offer an interesting account of how this recording came to be.

How the music itself came to be is just as interesting. George Thompson, Edinburgh amateur musician, folksong collector, editor, and publisher, first commissioned Ignaz Pleyel, Leopold Kozeluch, and later (and most notably) Haydn to produce richer and more polished arrangements of Scottish songs that Thompson loved. From 1792 to 1804 Haydn wrote 429 arrangements. In 1806 Beethoven joined the project, replacing Haydn, who had withdrawn owing to his age. This recording includes the ten songs of Beethoven's Scottische Lieder, Op. 108, selections from groups of Irish and Welsh songs, and other folksongs.

F-D sings these with varied accompaniments of violin, cello, and chorus. His voice is at its loveliest, and the sound quality is very listenable. It's a bit of a novelty, and the lessoften heard whimsical and lighthearted side of the singer shines through delightfully. Notes, texts, translations.

»audite« Ludger Böckenhoff • Tel.: +49 (0)5231-870320 • Fax: +49 (0)5231-870321 • info@audite.de • www.audite.de