

Record Review: *Lieder nach Gedichten von Friedrich Schiller* by Franz Schubert (Composer), Christoph Pregardien (Tenor), & Andreas Staier (Fortepiano)

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Fermata

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RECORD REVIEW

Franz Schubert: *Lieder nach Gedichten von Friedrich Schiller*. Christoph Prégardien (Tenor), Andreas Staier (Fortepiano). Deutsche Harmonia Mundi 05472772962, 1993.

This recording deserves special attention for its revival of Schubert's Schiller settings, which have been largely ignored in the concert repertoire. The selections on this compact disc feature rarities such as the very early setting of the *Sturm und Drang* poem *Eine Leichenfantasie*, D. 7 (1811) and the dramatic ballads *Die Bürgschaft*, D. 246 and *Hectors Abschied*, D. 312 (both from 1815). The *Lieder* chosen by Christoph Prégardien and Andreas Staier illustrate Schubert's compositional approach to Schiller texts from the days of his apprenticeship to the years of his maturity (1811-1824).

In order to preserve the musico-dramatic continuity in the often complex Schiller ballads, young Schubert's narrative procedures in the early songs (1811-1815) included frequent modulations, recitative-arioso alternations as well as changes in tempo and meter. Due to the sectional nature of these compositions, the main challenge in performance lies in the preservation of musical and narratological coherence, which Prégardien and Staier handle with ease.

Prégardien's vocal flexibility is evident in the smooth transitions between the lyrical ariosos and recitative sections in the ballads (e.g., *Die Bürgschaft* and *Der Alpenjäger*) and in his ability to characterize the various dramatic personae. Prégardien's remarkable sensitivity to the text can also be discerned in his musical interpretation of more intimate *Lieder* settings such as *Sehnsucht*, *Die Götter Griechenlands* and *Der Pilgrim*, conveying the romantic longing for the ideal. Andreas Staier must be complimented for his musical and virtuosic proficiency at the keyboard. Staier rises from the role of an accompanist to that of an interpreter in his own right in the extended piano interludes which capture the atmosphere and mood of the text. Prégardien's and Staier's ability to sustain the constant dialogue between the voice and the piano make this partnership a success. It is, in fact, the synchronization of musical thought displayed by the performers lends conviction to their interpretation of these complex Schiller settings.

The superior calibre of the performance is further enhanced by the use of a fortepiano, i.e., an imitation of a Viennese fortepiano after Johann Fritz, ca. 1815. The instrument has a clear, transparent quality in sound which gives the dissonances a sharper timbre; it also effectively complements the vocal part by maintaining the balance of the ensemble.

Record Review: *Schubert: Lieder nach Gedichten von F. Schiller*

This high-quality compact disc recording, with its illuminating introductory essay on Schubert's Schiller settings by Thomas Seedorf and fine English and French translations, is one that music lovers cannot afford to miss.

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¹⁰ *Tot, Tone (by Music),* 52.

¹¹ See, for example, Newton, 147-148; Zachary Coke, *Art of Logic* (London, 1654), 218-220; Jean-Pierre de Crousaz, *La Logique* (London, 1724), 218.