



R. Strauss: Don Juan, Eine Alpensinfonie & Walzerfolge from Der Rosenkavalier

aud 95.611

EAN: 4022143956118



Infodad.com (2010.06.10)

Each of these CDs is not only fine on its own level but also part of a top-notch CD series – so listeners who enjoy them have many other ways to hear similar discs by the same artists or on the same themes. The 1971 recording of Mahler songs performed by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau – accompanied by 28-year-old Daniel Barenboim – is part of a four-disc “Birthday Edition” of the famed baritone’s previously unreleased radio recordings. The sound is good enough, even by 21st-century standards, to highlight Fischer-Dieskau’s wonderful control and supremely confident handling of his vocal instrument. There are songs here from Mahler’s youth, which are firmly in the German art-song tradition, plus better-known ones from Rückert-Lieder and Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen. In all of them, Fischer-Dieskau shows the suppleness and attentiveness to detail that made his recitals and recordings so consistently delightful. Simply hearing the contrast between the tuneful, upbeat *Ging heut Morgen über’s Feld* (which was later to figure so prominently in the composer’s First Symphony) and the extended, doleful and emotionally gripping *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* is enough to confirm Fischer-Dieskau’s deserved reputation for musicality, sensitivity and fine communication with the audience. Barenboim supports him well, playing with elegance and care. Listeners familiar with these songs will miss the orchestral accompaniment with which they are usually heard, but because the primary focus here is Fischer-Dieskau’s voice, the quality of the singing more than makes up for the absence of an orchestra. The orchestra is front and center in the Richard Strauss CD conducted by Karl Böhm, one of the great 20th-century conductors and one of the best exponents of this composer’s music. This release, Volume VIII in Audite’s “Edition Karl Böhm,” cannot be recommended wholeheartedly because of its sound – the recordings date to 1952 and 1954. But it still deserves a (+++) rating for the sheer quality of Böhm’s highly committed, beautifully proportioned readings. *Don Juan* here is not only exciting but also deeply moving – no mere orchestral showpiece, but a true tone poem about love and loss. *Eine Alpensinfonie* is also filled with effective tone painting – yes, it is overdone and somewhat episodic, more like an extended (or overextended) Strauss tone poem than a fully integrated symphonic work; but Böhm paces it, section by section, to tie the music together while also showcasing its contrasts of tempo and mood. And the waltzes from *Der Rosenkavalier* simply sparkle, as Böhm clearly strives for a big, lush sound (which is apparent even though the recording falls somewhat short of elegance), while offering just-right tempos and carefully delineated rhythms that showcase the special Strauss way with $\frac{3}{4}$ time. Sonic shortcomings aside, this is a very fine CD that highlights just how effective Strauss can be when conducted by a master of his music.