



Edition Fischer-Dieskau (IV) – Lieder by Beethoven and Brahms

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German Audite has been releasing a number of radio recordings that Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau made in his early years on German radio. After a first series of recordings, featuring works by Schubert, Mahler, Brahms and Schubert, they have begun another line entitled 'Edition Fischer-Dieskau'. All these recordings come from the 1950s, shortly after Fischer-Dieskau's career began in 1948.

This disc features a selection of songs by Beethoven and Brahms, recorded in 1951 and 1952 with Hertha Klust, one of Fischer-Dieskau's regular accompanists of the period. While Fischer-Dieskau is best known for his recordings and performances of Schubert, Wolf and Schumann, he also sang most of the German lied repertoire.

As the liner-notes say, he was "one of the first singers to take Beethoven's lieder truly seriously." The Beethoven recordings here are intimate and warm, with good quality sound and a decent balance between the voice and piano, though the piano can sound wimpy at times; when the voice is powerful, the piano seems to tinkle away in the background.

He seems to have a special affinity with this music; many of the songs are gentle and lyrical, and contrast with his often turbulent performances of Schubert and Wolf in the same period. These performances are available in other discs from Audite in the same series, the Edition Fischer-Dieskau. One example here of his range is in the Italian grave song In questa tomba oscura, where the lyrical outer sections show a powerful sensitivity, whereas the middle section shows how far he could go with his voice in powerful theatricality. And the miniature cantata An die Hoffnung, based on a "philosophico-religious" poem stands out as a high point here, showing the vast range of emotion that F-D was able to put into his music.

The Brahms songs, all from one session in 1952, feature a better-sounding piano, though the voice, when loud, distorts just a bit. This more tempestuous music shows the young Fischer-Dieskau in his element: brash, unbridled and bold. He lets loose during some of the songs - such as Wie Rafft Ich Mich - as he does in other contemporary recordings of some of the more stormy Schubert songs. He didn't record a lot of Brahms in his career, so this is a good chance to hear him in repertoire that was not his staple.

All in all, Fischer-Dieskau fans will likely grab this and the other discs in the series as soon as possible. Any "new" recording of this golden voice is worth hearing. While occasional lieder fans might not see the need for these discs, and stick with the more stable recordings of the 1960s and 1970s, completists will find these the essential documents that show him as his voice and style were developing.