



Franz Schubert: Die Winterreise (1952)

aud 95.580

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[Fanfare](#) (Alan Swanson - 2008.01.01)

This is the second of Fischer-Dieskau's many recordings of Schubert's cycle. The booklet cover of this 1952 radio recording shows a still lean and hungry youth instead of the usual photo of a comfortable, middle-aged bourgeois.

Whatever one thinks of the subsequent development of Fischer-Dieskau as a singer of Lieder, there can be no doubt that this early recording of this cycle is a salient reminder of that tingle we all got in the spine when we first heard his voice. This is a young man with something interesting to say about these songs, even if it is not everything. Three aspects stand out from the first: the beauty of the voice, the absolute clarity of the diction, and a most enviable breath control that lets long phrases be neither broken nor lost.

One can praise and grumble, but I find that my notes are mostly of small things: an odd, but consistent, handling of appoggiaturas, a tendency to scoop slightly in upward leaps over a fifth, sounding a bit pressed on the high G, and other niggles. The overall result, however, is coherent within the framework of a young man's view of the cycle. This gives a song like "Täuschung" a nice lightness, but it means, in this case, that the last song, "Der Leiermann," doesn't come off with the full pathos it needs. But it's still pretty good.

The same cannot be said of his accompanist, Hermann Reutter. This may be partly due to the recording itself—the relation between singer and pianist greatly favors the singer—and to the piano, which is fairly dull, but it is also true that Reutter only really seems to catch on in the second part of the cycle.

The year 1955 brought the famous recording with Gerald Moore on EMI, whose re-release was warmly recommended by Raymond Beagle in 26:3. Though the later recording is about one minute faster overall, certain critical moments are up to half a minute slower, the last song, for instance. One cannot expect the voice to have changed too much in only three years, but the later performance evidences a slightly darker, rounder, sound, only partly due to the recording, I think. Barring the timing differences, there is a similarity to the phrasing. If you have the later recording, you will not need this new one, unless one must have everything by this singer. That said, however, this earlier version has a directness that is refreshing and I am pleased to have heard it.

The notes to this recording by Kurt Malisch are a model of malice. They praise every recording by the hero and then denigrate each and every performance by someone else. Fischer-Dieskau's interpretative claims are not strengthened by such pettiness. The insert assumes that this skewing is all we need to know about this recording and that the listener has no use for the words or their translation. Never mind. The quality

of the re-mastering is excellent, the singing a pleasure. Throw away the notes and have a good time.

