



Franz Schubert: Lieder Collection

aud 95.583

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American Record Guide (R Moore - 2008.03.01)

The 14 songs come from the archives of the German radio and are identified in the small print as "The Cologne Broadcasts" and released by Audite after what sounds like state-of-the-art digital processing. The sound is somewhat boxy and tends to distort at louder volume levels, but it is remarkably good. Weissenborn accompanies in all but the final song, 'Prometheus', where the recorded sound is noticeably thinner.

In 1954 when these songs were recorded, F-D's voice was at its luscious best, though certainly the depth of his readings increased with the years. The suppleness and agility of his voice are glorious. Six songs from Schwanengesang are included with other songs that are among Schubert's most familiar. His singing of 'Nähe des Geliebten' and 'Wandlers Nachtlid II' is meltingly beautiful while 'Erlkönig' and 'Prometheus' are delivered with compelling narrative power—indeed I find this reading of 'Erlkönig' more compelling than later readings in its ability to distinguish the voices, though he makes the voice of the Erlkönig more menacing as he ages. His approach to the songs at this point in this life is more straightforward and less nuanced but also shows less of what some disparagingly call his tendency to over-interpret.

The accompanying notes tell us nothing about this Audite series, a project that includes other vintage recordings like F-D singing Winterreise and Brahms's Schöne Magelone. The notes by Kurt Malisch supply very good background on F-D's long relationship with Schubert's songs. No texts are included, but that will not be much of a factor for those who want to hear this amazing singer as he sounded in 1954.