

SCHUMANN Zwölf Gedichte von Justinus Kerner. *Es leuchtet meine Liebe. Mein Wagen rollet langsam. Belsazar. Sechs Gedichte und Requiem* • Paul Armin Edelmann (bar); Charles Spencer (pn) • CAPRICCIO 5172 (59:49 📖 German only)

One has to come to the realization that, after a decade from the late 1970s through the late 1980s when we struggled to find good singers in almost every range of voice, we are now living through an era in which good singers of almost every range and every style of classical music can be found in many countries of the world. Germany is one such, having produced its fair share of good singers over the past 20 years, and to this list we must now add the name of Paul Armin Edelmann. The son of famed bass-baritone Otto Edelmann, Paul not only has a lovelier voice (but is no less fine an artist) but is even more handsome than his father—a potent combination nowadays when visual attractiveness counts nearly as much as acting skills and vocal ability.

Indeed, I'd go so far as to say that Paul Armin Edelmann's voice sounds more like the late Hermann Prey's than his father's, although the slight darkness of timbre that Otto possessed is also in his son's voice. Moreover, he is an exceptional lieder singer, as an interpreter even better than Prey (or Gerhard Hüsch or Heinrich Schlusnus, to name but two famous German baritones of the past once highly thought of in lieder singing). He understands the meaning of words as well as the pacing of the music, delivering these songs (even so famous a one as *Wanderlied* in the *12 Poems of Justinus Kerner*) in an almost conversational pace and phrasing, yet never going so far outside the written score than one is disturbed by his individual readings.

Indeed, Edelmann's voice is so extensive in range that he can go upwards, in head voice, into the tenor range at times, an astonishing feat which he does not draw attention to but simply makes use of as an expressive device to convey the music and text. Edelmann's interpretations tend towards the outward, or dramatic, side of these songs, which isn't to say that his singing is not sensitive (it is), only that he prefers to "act" the lyrics as if they were part of a stage role. This is certainly a valid way of performing this material, however, and he keeps the listener tuned in to his way of interpretation. A good example is his performance of *Belsazar* as compared to Johannes Martin Kränzle's fine version. Kränzle (who is also an opera singer) is a deeper baritone, almost a bass-baritone, and his interpretation is quite fine in its own right, but to then listen to Edelmann is to hear the words (and the character) brought out in almost 3-D.

I would be remiss if I did not also lavish praise on Charles Spencer. This is a first-class accompanist, one of the very finest I've ever heard playing in a lieder recital. Like Edelmann he understands accent and nuance, he keeps things moving, and he uses "space" well in his pacing and shaping of the accompaniments.

Although it's not as uncommon to hear a German singer with both voice and intelligence, Edelmann possesses these attributes in such a high degree that I have no hesitation in placing him near the top of his profession. If you are a fancier of voices, you will revel in his voice as such; if a fancier of good lieder interpretation, you will be doubly impressed.

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