



Edition Fischer-Dieskau (V) – F. Schubert: Die Winterreise (1948)

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BBC Music Magazine (Hilary Finch - 01.02.2009)

Some of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's very first performances of Winterreise were sung to patients in military hospitals when he was stationed in Italy towards the end of the Second World War. On 19 January 1948, at the age of 22, and in a bombed-out Berlin in which his countrymen were, in his own words, groping in the dark, he stepped into the studios of German Radio, and made his first ever, radio recording of a work he would record more than 30 times throughout his life.

The studio equipment was fragile; the power supply was irregular; the piano was slightly out of tune. But, transcending the tensions and the tiredness, Fischer-Dieskau and his accompanist Klaus Billig set down a performance of remarkable strength and determination, sculpted with the deep seriousness and quest for perfection which would distinguish every subsequent recording.

The young Fischer-Dieskau gives unflinching voice here to extremes of hope and despair: there's a weight of sorrow through every vowel, every line of "Gefror'ne Tränen"; a sense, in half-voice, of the fragility of the self in the face of the merciless strength of the elements; and a tenderly tremulous, fleeting hope within "Frühlingstraum" and within the final question to "Der Leiermann". Could German culture be re-born? Fischer-Dieskau is here incarnating some of his innermost responses, just as, four years earlier, Richard Strauss had voiced his own in Metamorphosen. No benchmark comparison is appropriate here: you will want to possess this extraordinarily moving, perfectly imperfect recording for what it uniquely is