



Edith Mathis sings Mozart, Bartók, Brahms, Schumann and Strauss: Selected Lieder

aud 95.647

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American Record Guide (Krishan Oberoi - 2020.01.01)

Swiss soprano Edith Mathis had such a natural, intuitive command of the lieder genre that her name deserves to be remembered with the same reverence as Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Fritz Wunderlich. It may be owing to gender bias, or simply the fact that she stopped recording in her 40s, but Mathis never quite achieved that level of recognition. That's unfortunate, given her extraordinary gifts. This previously unreleased recital program from the 1975 Lucerne Festival should go a long way in rectifying the neglect of Mathis's contribution to lieder performance in the 20th Century.

The program includes Mozart, Bartók, Brahms, Schumann, Strauss, and Wolf. Mathis was perhaps most famous for her Mozart performances, and this recital demonstrates why. She brings uncommon nuance to Mozart's German lieder and exquisite artistry to his French lieder. The rest of the program is just as effective. Her performances of Bartók's songs are nothing short of revelatory; she approaches them with a clean, refined touch unlike so many modern performances, which tend to overdramatize them. And even the well worn Brahms and Schumann lieder are worth hearing again in her unique interpretation.

With historical performances, the quality of recorded sound is always a concern. While the ambient noise and hiss here are more pronounced than modern recordings, such concerns are immediately forgotten once the music begins. Mathis had a resonant instrument, and it is captured here in compelling detail. The voice is supple in the middle register, and bright but not strident in the upper register. She had a wonderful command of dynamics, and is able to sing softly (which she does often) without losing support. Quiet singing in the upper register is controlled but not restricted, and the vibrato is even all through. This is truly a voice worth preserving and worth hearing in its prime. Karl Engel accompanies, and the full range of the piano is well balanced, without the airy quality that so often characterizes historic piano recordings.

Mathis, who is still alive in Switzerland, seems to have turned her attention primarily to teaching in the 1980s. One certainly hopes that she can impart some of her profound knowledge of lieder performance to her students.

Edith Mathis
Mozart, Bartók, Brahms, Schumann, Strauss, Wolf
with Karl Engel, p
Audite 95647—80 minutes

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