audite

## Felix Mendelssohn: Lieder ohne Worte

**aud 97.482**

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Early Music Review (Richard Maunder - 2003.07.01)

REVIEW It is good to be able to hear this very beautiful Streicher und Sohn fortepiano of 1829, which admirably suits Kommerell's sensitive performance of a selection of Mendelssohn's superbly crafted though nowadays rather neglected pieces. I would have like more of them: just under 50 minutes is pretty short measure for a CD that could easily have been half as long again. The programme booklet, however, is a disgrace. Fortepianos have been played and recorded for many years, and there's no longer any need to adopt an apologetic tone for venturing 'into the unaccustomed sound world of an original instrument, where today's standards of technical perfection are lacking. What is supposed to be imperfect? It is nonsense to suggest that early piano actions are incapable of fast repetition when their depth of touch is much less than that of a modem instrument. One may disagree with such statements in the German essay, but the English version is totally incomprehensible, for the translator obviously knows nothing whatever about piano actions, and invariably mistranslates the technical terms. ‘Oberschlägige Mechanik’ means ‘down-striking action’, not ‘upperstriking mechanism’! ‘The keyboard is very free-moving’ (what? how disconcerting! – in fact the German means that the touch is very light). Surely anyone with even a passing acquaintance with Viennese fortepianos knows that the correct translation of Auslösemechanik is ‘escapement action’, not the almost meaningless ‘release mechanism’. And what on earth is a ‘catcher slat’? (Answer: ’Fängerleiste’, i.e. check rail). I could go on, but my best advice is to buy the CD for some delightful music on a beautiful instrument, and to throw away the booklet unread.



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