

Schubert: Sehnsucht – The Complete Choral Works for Male Voices, Vol. 1

Schubert, like many composers of his day, wrote part songs for men's voices. For the most part the texts dealt with nature or love, but the mood was almost always light and convivial. In Schubert's case they appear to have been written mostly for his circle of friends. We suspect they were meant for one singer per part (since, for one thing, Vienna had no male choral societies until 1843) but it is hard to imagine that other singers would sit on the sidelines if they could find copies of the music to read! Andreas Frese's liner notes tell us Schubert referred to pieces performed by a solo quartet as "choral works", so it is unclear how many singers were expected to sing.

Schubert wrote about 100 pieces for men's voices, some of which are later settings of the same poem. Here we have 21, most of them a cappella. Four, though, use piano accompaniment and six include horns. The chorus itself numbers 19, so they have strength when needed and a nice blend when quiet. Since there are so many songs with no obvious way to group them, competing recordings may have only a few pieces in common. Here a few of my favorites appear: 'Der Entfernten', 'Sehnsucht', and 'Nachthelle', to name the obvious ones. These, and indeed everything else, are done very nicely, with good blend and intonation. The horns are fine, as are guest soloists Christoph Pregardien (in 'Im Gegenwärtigen Vergangenes') and Andreas Weller (in 'Nachthelle'). This is in the same tier with similar recitals conducted by Reinemann and Shaw. If you prefer one to a part, we have excellent CDs from Schubert Hoch Vier and Die Singphoniker, who did all the part songs on five Calig CDs. © 2015 American Record Guide

Paul L Althouse

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