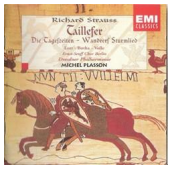
Richard Strauss: Taillefer - Die Tageszeiten - Wanderers Sturmlied (Plasson) [1998]



1. Taillefer, Op.52 2. Wanderers Sturmlied, Op.14 3. Der Morgan 4. Mittagsruh 5. Der Abend 6. Die Nacht Felicity Lott (soprano) Johan Botha, tenor Michael Volle, baritone (1st work) Ernst-Senff Chor Berlin Dresdner Philharmonie Michel Plasson - conductor

Richard Strauss is of course better known for his tone poems, operas, and song cycles. Like Berlioz, he revels in orchestral tone and uses that instrument expertly to accompany his singers in his operatic and lieder output. Few are aware that he did compose for chorus, and likewise used the orchestra just as well to accompany massed singers as well as he did his solo vocalists.

The present album is undoubtedly a first-ever recording for the majority of the works on this CD, although I have in my collection, a 1950's-era Urania mono LP recording of "Taillefer" with Arthur Rother conducting. In my opinion, the weakest of the works on this CD is "Taillefer." Started originally as a work with no particular basis, it was ultimately written to commemorate the jubilee anniversary of Heidelberg University in 1903, at which occasion Strauss received an honorary Doctorate. "Wanderers Sturmlied" is an early work using a text by Goethe. The real masterwork on this album is the cycle, "Die Tageszeiten," where Strauss used poems by Joseph von Eichendorff as source material, and who was to provide inspiration to Strauss in the future with the poems for the "Four Last Songs." The last piece in "Die Tageszeiten," "Die Nacht," almost takes on the same atmosphere that pervades throughout in the "Four Last Songs," although it doesn't reach the level that "Im Abendrot" does in the later work.

The Ernst-Senff Choir of Berlin, soloists Johan Botha, Michael Volle, and Felicity Lott, and the Dresden Philharmonic did a great job in bringing these obscure Strauss pieces to light, and it is my hope that this CD will communicate the fact that these pieces deserve to be heard more often. --- Wade H. Rice Jr., amazon.com

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