

SOUND ADVICE

July 9 & 10, 2005

If you're looking for music by Schubert to enjoy over the summer, here's a good one. Canadian tenor Michael Schade has recorded the Schubert song cycle *Die schone Mullerin* with pianist Malcolm Martineau for CBC Records. Schubert has been a mainstay of Michael Schade's career. Recording the cycle *Die schone Mullerin* has long been a dream. Schade considers the cycle one of the cornerstones of the lyric tenor's repertoire.

Die schone Mullerin or the Beautiful Maid of the Mill by Schubert is a cycle of 20 songs to poems by Wilhelm Muller. It's the story of the fatal love a young apprentice has for the Miller's daughter. Throughout the song cycle, the stream that flows by the mill is a constant presence – almost a symbol for life itself. It's the young man's companion, advisor, comforter, source of innocence and drive. And, at the end, it becomes his death.

But death comes as a relief. As Michael Schade writes in the jacket notes:

"When the brook – clean, clear and constant – finally claims the young man, there is a sense of peace, as the cool stream gently rocks him in its watery fold. But death is not final – there will be a new day, a new season, lovers will unite, lovers will part, and the brook will continue to flow."

The final song – The Stream's Lullaby from *Die schone Mullerin* by Schubert. Tenor Michael Schade and pianist Malcolm Martineau.

***Schubert	Cut 20	7:35
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CBC Records	MVCD 1170
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The Stream's Lullaby – the final song from *Die schone Mullerin* – The Beautiful Maid of the Mill by Schubert. That was Cdn. tenor Michael Schade and pianist Malcolm Martineau, from a new CBC Records CD.

I liked this right off the bat, and with every hearing, I've grown to like it even more. Michael Schade is one of the top lyric tenors now, and here's the proof. There is some wonderful lyric tenor singing here. Schubert is rarely treated so well.

First of all, Schade's diction and enunciation are impeccable. Not once did I ever strain to hear a word or a consonant. And yet it's natural and un-forced. Schade has a huge range of different colours and shades to his voice. And he's constantly changing them, to highlight the text, comment on a mood, suggest an emotion. Pianist Malcolm Martineau is the perfect match – able to alter his sound too, depending on the musical and emotional demands of the songs. I've been un-impressed with other recent recordings featuring Malcolm Martineau – but he has redeemed himself with this one. Schade and Martineau make a great team.

And the recording captures and highlights the skills and talents of these too. It's a clear, focussed, open and warm recorded sound, with great balance between the voice and the piano.

My only minor concern here, was a bit of shouting in some of the earlier songs of the cycle.

But maybe it's an attempt to portray the over-confidence of the young apprentice initially, before his life begins to crumble.

This is an excellent new recording of *Die schone Mullerin* – one that can stand up to any others. Destined for a Juno Award next year, if not a Grammy. Highly recommended.

Five out of five.