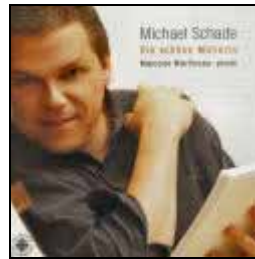


DISCS OF THE MONTH

Schubert – Die schöne Müllerin
Michael Schade;
Malcolm Martineau
CBC MVCD 1170



I dislike overstatement – a lot. The age of hype is dead and that makes this CD nearly impossible to review. However, because you likely already know this music, its poem cycle by Wilhelm Müller and the anecdotal material that goes with it, we'll spend precious column space dealing with the heart of this effort.

For too many years the name Michael Schade has, for me, evoked the light, clear and powerful voice of the young tenor who once jokingly told me that he and his wife referred to *The Magic Flute* as the “mortgage opera”. Fine, we all have bills to pay and frankly, a better Tamino has been hard to find anywhere.

What Schade has cultivated in the past decade, however, is his own artistic growth. The results are profound. His operatic work internationally and his several recordings have kept him both in the public eye and in peak singing form. His top end is as sweet as ever whether pianissimo or overdriving your speakers. But most truly shocking is the power and colour of his baritone-ish low end. *Müllerin's* first track “Das Wandern”, with its familiar joyously wandering accompaniment presents a voice that made me double check the CD cover to see this was really Michael Schade. Clearly he's expanded and strengthened that end of his range in astonishing fashion. Reviewing his operatic repertoire quickly explains why. Other tracks where this powerful low end arrests your attention are “Mein” and “Der Jäger”.

Most satisfying, however, is the skill and maturity Schade brings to his text. The drama of the opera singer is always married to the storytelling poet in a combination so deft that contrasts such as the tender “Der Neugierige” and “Ungeduld” couldn't be more artfully breathtaking.

In fairness to pianist Malcolm Martineau, Schade could hardly have chosen a better partner. This *Müllerin* wouldn't be what it is were it not for this impressive collaboration.

It belongs on your shelf beside those by Schreier and Fischer-Dieskau.

Alex Baran

Future concert notes: Michael Schade will perform with the Toronto Symphony on January 26 - 27 and in recital with the Aldeburgh Connection on May 31, 2006.