
MUSIC REVIEW

Gerhard Hüscher sings Schubert lieder

by Kathy Burdman

Late last year, Arabesque Recordings, a subsidiary of Caedmon Records, released an historic three-record set of Schubert lieder recordings of Gerhard Hüscher, the father of modern lieder art. The recordings are magnificent, and should go far if widely known to revive the lost art of lieder singing and appreciation in America, an art which the Republic sorely needs revived.

The lied, or classical German song, is one of the forms of great music most accessible to the average citizen, bringing the great poetry of the 18th and 19th century quickly into the heart through the medium of great music. The form was widely used for mass education and the popularization of great ideas by not only Franz Schubert (1797-1828), but also by the giants of music history including Ludwig van Beethoven. The lied was extended to English by Franz Josef Haydn, Mozart's and Beethoven's teacher, who wrote numerous English lieder to attempt to revive the great English poetic culture of Milton.

Gerhard Hüscher was among the first to record the complete Schubert lieder in the 1930s. The Arabesque set contains one of the best full-length recordings available of the song cycles "Die Schöne Müllerin," and "Winterreise," recorded in 1935 and 1933. Many Americans know these recordings from their old 78 RPM productions. Also presented are 16 of Schubert's last songs, including his beloved settings of the poems of Heinrich Heine.

Hüscher had the ability, which is greatly watered-down in today's singers, to sing the actual *words* of the poems set by Schubert so that he communicates real ideas. It was for this sort of singer, with this declamatory, almost spoken power, that the great composers wrote. The aim of Schubert and other lieder composers was to build nation-states by spreading literacy and the elevated, creative spirit of poetical thinking.

Hüscher, still alive at 80 and teaching music in West Germany, clearly grasped this. Compare his didactic

singing, for example, with that of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the current best-selling star of the lieder circuit. Fischer-Dieskau has concentrated all efforts on producing a beautiful sound, not on communicating poetic ideas. His prodigious technical skill is used to give a smooth, watery sound which conveys sweeping *emotion-states* of joy, rage, and sorrow, but not concepts. The words are lost.

Hüscher, by contrast, succeeds in the most difficult task of the lieder art: to present the idea content of poetry, and yet also convey the greater musical ideas which exist on yet a higher level than the literal word-ideas. This is what Beethoven called "absolute music," the power music brings us to "read between the lines" for new ideas.

Hüscher achieves this in the "Die Schöne Müllerin" cycle by imparting the idea of eternity, the eternal life of the soul. Wilhelm Müller's 20-poem cycle follows a young mill apprentice's gay wanderings along a brook, which brings him to work at a new mill, a fantasy love for the beautiful miller's daughter (die schöne Müllerin), rejection, and then suicide in the brook. Those are the words, but Schubert and Hüscher have conveyed the idea that the boy may die, but his soul is still immortal, or that perhaps he has merely killed his adolescent self, and had grown up into a sadder but wiser man.

A glimpse of the whole cycle may be had in the final song, "The Brook's Cradle Song" to the boy. Over its course, and over the cycle as a whole, Hüscher slows gradually. He sets up a geometry of time frames, which slowing, become more stretched in time. The transinvariant between them is the idea of eternity.

Hüscher's emphasis on a word is always *conceptual*. "Gute *ruh* . . . Die *Treu* ist hier" ("good *rest* . . . *truth* is here"), the brook sings to the boy; real truth is in mental peace, neither in manic love nor depressive rejection. "Gute *Nacht*," Hüscher sings the last verse, "Bis *alles* wacht" (good night until Christ shall raise *all* the dead)—(all shall be saved.) "Schlaf *aus* deine *Freude*, schlaf *aus* dein *Leid*!" ("Sleep *out* your joy, sleep *out* your pain") they are ephemeral. "Und der Himmel da *oben*, wie *ist* er so *weit*!" "It is the Heavens above, which are so far," that show us true eternity.

Why has not the public been flooded with these great recordings, which Gerhard Hüscher and his great contemporaries such as Heinrich Schluschnuss made so many of during the 1930s and 1940s? The answer is that the British oligarchy, which owns EMI Ltd. and the Dutch oligarchy, owners of Philips Records, have suppressed the tapes, record industry sources told *EIR* recently. Particularly Schluschnuss, one of the greatest opera and lieder singers ever to sing poetry, has had hundreds of operas and dozen of lieder recordings suppressed. People have tried to get the Schluschnuss tapes out of Philips, and utterly failed," my source stated. "They won't let anyone touch their files."