

IMMORTAL PERFORMANCES

recordings@immortalperformances.org ✧ www.immortalperformances.org

Oct 2, 2024

Tristan und Isolde Met 1933 (IPCD 1162-2)

REMASTERED CD 2

We remastered CD 2 (Act III) of this Leider-Melchior 1933 Met broadcast in order to correct a major note in the *Liebestod* in which Leider uncharacteristically flatted. Such instances are very rare in a great singer's vocal career and are soon forgotten in the performance which goes on. A recording, however, repeats the flat note every time it is played so that it becomes a permanent misrepresentation. When I reheard our published set I was appalled that I hadn't tried to correct it and so, belatedly, I went ahead and replaced the bad note with the right one, taken from her commercial disc.

In addition, I sought to rescue her from the gloom of the thickened tone and drew out some of the missing overtones that are connected to the dynamics of her uppermost range and that brought in a touch of increased grit. This seemed to present her gloriously sung *Liebestod* as best as could be unveiled from this wretchedly poor recording.

Understand, the performance is additionally afflicted by a loss of presence or focus every time a singer was not stage center. The Met, in 1933, was using only one overhead microphone so that any character that was upstage could barely be heard. Melchior, in his wounded state, was distantly heard. In many instances when Kurneval responded to him he also lost all vocal dimension. Then there were damaged portions which needed further repair and additional filtering that should have been applied. In addition, in the considerable noisiness of the sound, there was an unrecognized gap. The original recordist had closed the gap so that the only sign of it seemed to be a clumsy join. Now that it drew my focus it emerges that the gap lost some minutes of music. This missing music has now been reintroduced.

Lastly, I returned to the edition we published to consider what some persons had asked when they heard it. Essentially, if I recreated the first 16 minutes and replaced one or another passage that was hopelessly defective or garbled, why did I not replace a number of other sequences which were so distorted as to be practically unlistenable? I thought that to be a good question and so I reconsidered my approach and went on to replace many of the most offending passages hopefully as unobtrusively as possible. I did this through recognizing that the central focus belongs to Leider, not Melchior (whose Tristan we previously published in 8 performances between 1935-1948).

The recording is still a messy, atrociously noisy preservation but it builds to Leider's unforgettable *Liebestod* with all the needed foreground to give it emotional and musical context. The overall experience, ending with Leider's glorious singing, remains a shining ray in the vocal history of the Golden Age of Wagner at the Met.

Richard Caniell
Sound Engineer