

artists and texts. Unfortunately translations are not supplied. I have access to the translations and you can find them online, but I am annoyed when record companies do not make them available.

R MOORE

### *Dreams of a New Day*

Songs by Black Composers  
Will Liverman, bar; Paul Sanchez, p  
Cedille 200—61 minutes

For his excellent debut solo album, “Whither Must I Wander” (M/J 2020), Will Liverman chose songs about travel. This album celebrates the contributions of Black composers and musicians. I find it even better than his earlier album not only because it is well performed but especially because it is so important at this time when white supremacy is so destructively pernicious.

I suspect that the names of most of these composers will be as unfamiliar to many of you as they are to me: Damien Sneed, Henry Burleigh, Leslie Adams, Margaret Bonds, Thomas Kerr, Shawn E. Okpebholo, Robert Owens, and Richard Farina. These are first-rate songs that deserve to be known and performed, and it is hard to imagine them performed better than they are here by Liverman and Sanchez.

The songs are in a wide variety of styles. I have known ‘Kashmiri Song’ (Pale Hands I Loved) as a 1902 Victorian parlor ballad by Amy Woodforde-Finden steeped in sentimentality. Burleigh wrote his setting in 1915 in a very different style, much more elegiac and stately.

Okpebholo’s two heartbreaking songs are the most powerful of this overwhelmingly effective album.

One song in particular, ‘Ballad of Birmingham,’ evoked deep weeping in me. The text tells the story from the point of view of the mother of one of the young girls killed in the Birmingham church bombing. Her daughter wanted to join a civil rights march, but her mother told her she could not go for fear that it would be too dangerous. Instead she could go to church where she’d be safe. When she heard the explosion, she rushed to the church and “clawed through bits of glass and brick” then lifted out her daughter’s shoe.

Liverman grew up in the gospel tradition of Pentecostal churches of Norfolk, Virginia and was inspired to pursue singing as a career after attending a Metropolitan Opera perform-

ance at age 15. He is now a rising star there, having made his Met debut as Malcolm Fleet in Nico Muhly’s *Marnie*, and has performed at the Met as Papageno in *The Magic Flute* and Horemhab in the Met premiere of Philip Glass’s *Akhnaten*. He calls himself “an ambassador for diversity in the arts”, and the variety of this program attests to that role.

Here is a singer with a wonderfully rich, powerful, and expressive voice. His enunciation and shaping of the text are luminous. We hear his voice across its wide dynamic range from vibrantly forceful to tenderly sweet. King offers thoroughly complementary accompaniment.

Texts are by Langston Hughes, Adela Florence Nicolson (who wrote under the pseudonym Laurence Hope), Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Dudley Randall, Marcus Amaker, and Richard Farina. The words are powerful and the singing is exquisite. Liverman’s translucent diction makes texts unnecessary, but they are included in one of the booklets. The other includes notes about the songs.

R MOORE

### *Tenor Hits of the 1930s*

Martin Mitterrutzner, German Radio/ Christoph Poppen—SWR 19104—71:37

The title is literally true: these pieces were big hits for tenors in the 1930s. But it refers to the German-speaking world, and the pieces were often written earlier. ‘O Sole Mio’ is here, and it dates from around 1900. ‘Santa Lucia’ is from 1850. ‘Plaisir d’Amour’ is from 50 years earlier yet. Those are Italian songs (except ‘Plaisir’), and there are others here; but the main repertoire is German or Viennese.

The first and third songs are by Hans May, the second by Richard Taubner. As soon as I heard them I thought of Joseph Schmidt, whose recordings of them in the 1930s made them famous. The booklet notes also begin with Joseph Schmidt, whose films and radio appearances defined the German tenor of the period. I have 7 CDs of Joseph Schmidt, and I assure you that no one can match him in this music. He was Romanian and Jewish, but he was the perfect German tenor, as Fritz Wunderlich was 30 years later. (The Nazis didn’t think so, and he died much too young in 1942.)

The singer here, whom I had never heard of, belongs in that category. Like them, he never sounds Italian, even when singing Italian songs. He has a very nice voice and is recorded beautifully. He is not Joseph