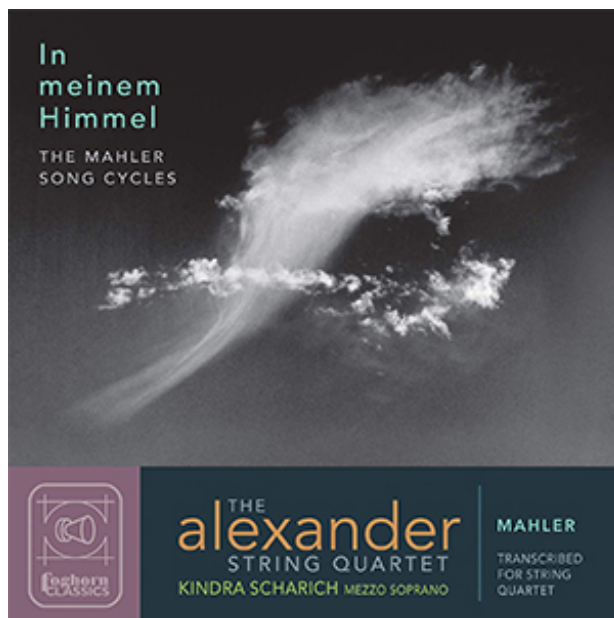


# OPERA NEWS

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## Kindra Scharich: *In Meinem Himmel:* *The Mahler Song Cycles*

**CD** Alexander String Quartet. Foghorn Classics 2018



**V** IOLINIST  
ZAKARIAS GRAFILO  
has transformed

Mahler's three song cycles through sensitive, inventive, and masterful transcriptions for mezzo-soprano and string quartet. The jewel of this album is mezzo-soprano Kindra Scharich, whose burnished, smoky instrument is perfectly suited to the mood and range of each of the fifteen songs, and whose timbre blends seamlessly into the soundscape of Grafilo's transcriptions, which are

faithful to the originals. They maintain the intimacy and directness of the versions for piano and voice as well as the broad emotional and musical palate of Mahler's orchestrations. But they're also distinct interpretations on their own.

The compact texture of the string quartet imbues these songs with an earthy sincerity that heightens and condenses the longing of *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, the gossamer beauty of the *Rückert-Lieder* and the anguish and serenity of *Kindertotenlieder*. While Mahler's orchestrations brought the deep emotional content of his songs to a peak, Grafilo's transcriptions show the complexity and duality of human emotion. The intersections of sadness and joy that run through *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, especially "Wenn mein Schatz Hochzeit macht" and "Die Zwei blauen Augen," and in the first, third, and fifth songs of *Kindertotenlieder*, are made prominent by the closely knitted texture of the string quartet. Grafilo also concocts intelligent and effective ways to recreate iconic musical moments from Mahler's orchestrations, such as giving the ethereal English horn solo to the viola in "Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen," which transforms the song's original mood of mystical detachment into one of earthbound tranquility.

Kindra Scharich is an outstanding soloist who makes these songs and transcriptions seem tailor-made for her artistry. There are bewitching moments throughout the album when the lush viola tones of her voice melt into the timbre of the quartet, such as in the sensuous lines of "Liebst du um Schönheit" and the taut dissonances of "Wenn denn Mutterlein." There is an effortlessness to her singing that amplifies Mahler's most beautiful melodies and yet lends tension and drama to the outbursts and climaxes of "Ich hab' ein glühend Messer" and "In diesem Wetter." Along with the impassioned, elegant and exquisitely nuanced playing of the members of the Alexander String Quartet (Paul Yarbrough, viola; Sandy Wilson, cello; Frederick Lifszitz and Zakarias Grafilo, violin), Scharich makes this album an extraordinary and complete musical and poetic accomplishment, something that should be savored for both its new perspectives on Mahler's well-known songs and for the exemplary artistry of these musicians.

—Steven Jude Tietjen