

Erlkönig by Franz Schubert

This poem is part of a “Singspiel” Die Fischerin (the fisher’s wife) by J. W. Goethe. The indications to the scenery are the followings: Under high alder-trees (Erl in German), close to the river are a few fisher-huts. It is a calm night. On an open fire there are a few cooking pots. All around there are fisher nets and equipments. Dortchen, the fisher’s wife, is occupied repairing the nets and singing “Wer reitet so spät...etc.” For the first performance the actress composed an eight measures melody to this poem. Later a few composers put music to this text.

This poem was written to be performed by a woman. Berlioz’s orchestration of Schubert’s Erlkönig is for soprano voice.

Unfortunately we hear it mostly performed by male voices in a virile (macho) way imitating a machine gun run on the piano.

Anton Diabelli published a voice and guitar version in Schubert’s time. In my arrangement for the guitar I am closer to the piano version.

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