

Paul Spencer Adkins, tenor

Part of a Painting

With Jay Fluellen, pianist

Recorded in 2010

Twelve selections from Musical Theater, motion pictures and popular song including works from *Titanic*, *South Pacific*, *Edges*, *Great Day*, *Summer of 42*.

Many of the selections will be familiar to listeners – some of them true popular classics. One can hear in Adkins' warm, burnished tone, superb legato support, imaginative phrasing and serious communicative skills which separate them from many other renditions. Forays into the top register are done with ease and security while the lower register shows his original classical training as an operatic baritone.

But these are not your typical “crossover” renditions. Adkins knows the important classical tenets of singing but also the right popular framework to promote songs such as these. In this respect he is helped by the often imaginative, always colorful arrangements by Fluellen. Even such a hackneyed piece as “Younger than Springtime” from *South Pacific* is given a fresh, almost classical treatment with solid high notes and classical legato, emphasizing the fact that such works as *South Pacific* and *The Sound of Music* were originally written for singers who had classical training - not just an ability to “belt” their way through music. Such renditions as these makes one wonder what Adkins could do with some of the music from Weber's *Phantom of the Opera*.

The two selections from *Edges* are quite special and really are the bookends of this collection of songs. “EDGES is not a traditional musical; it is an exciting new show about four burgeoning adults asking these classic coming-of-age questions. Written by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (2007 Jonathan Larson Award Recipients) in their sophomore year at the University of Michigan, the contemporary song cycle carries an honest voice advocating introspection while maintaining wit and charm. Confronting emotions, escaping expectations, and deciphering complicated relationships--the songs cover such universal issues as love, commitment, identity, and meaning.” (From http://www.mtishows.com/show_detail.asp?showid=000312) “Part of a Painting,” the song of the CD title is a perfect example of Adkins' art: smooth legato, superb diction, sensitive phrasing and finishing with a perfectly placed pianissimo F at the top of the staff that floats with sweet warmth. The other song, “One reason,” is an intensely personal narrative and is delivered with poignant bitterness and believable sadness. Not to be missed.

Although all the selections are done with flair, possibly my two favorites are the Berlin classic, “What'll I do?” which is sung quietly and simply in Adkins' rich baritone register. Then there is the snappy “Lullaby of Birdland/Lullaby of the Leaves.” Jay Fluellen provides strong, sensitive accompaniment. Together, Adkins and Fluellen provide a nice program. It is perfect for a relaxing evening with a glass of fine wine - Adkins' voice wafting over one with a sweet freedom and the confident support of Fluellen.

Nicholas E. Limansky, Author of "Yuma Sumac: The Art Behind the Legend"