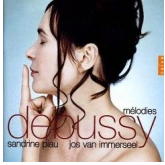


Sandrine Piau - Debussy: Mélodies (2003)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 19 July 2015 15:57 - Last Updated Sunday, 19 July 2015 16:50

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Mélodies de Jeunesse 1. *Mélodies de Jeunesse (Apparition 1884 - Poème De Stéphane Mallarmé)* 2. *Mélodies de Jeunesse (Romance 1883 - Poème De Paul Bourget)*
3. *Mélodies de Jeunesse (Les Papillons 1881 - Poème De Théophile Gautier)* 4. *Mélodies de Jeunesse (Calmes dans le Demi-Jour 1882 - Poème De Paul Verlaine)* 5. *Mélodies de Jeunesse (Regret 1884 - Poème De Paul Bourget)* Ariettes
Oubliées 1885-1888
6. *Ariettes Oubliées (C'est l'Extase)* 7. *Ariettes Oubliées (Il Pleure dans mon Coeur)*
8. *Ariettes Oubliées (L'Ombre des Arbres)* 9. *Ariettes Oubliées : Paysages Belges (Chevaux de bois)* 10. *Ariettes Oubliées : Aquarelles (Green)* 11. *Ariettes Oubliées : Aquarelles (Spleen)*
Proses Lyriques 1895-1893
12. *Proses Lyriques (De Rêve)* 13. *Proses Lyriques (De Grève)* 14. *Proses Lyriques (De Fleurs)* 15. *Proses Lyriques (De Soir)*
Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé 1913
16. *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (Soupir)* 17. *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (Placet Futile)* 18. *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé (Eventail)*
Sandrine Piau (Soprano) Jos van Immerseel (Piano)

Soprano Sandrine Piau seems to go from strength to strength with each new recording. Her first solo disc of Mozart arias was widely praised, and this recent release of Debussy songs proves to be just as delightful. Although she does not possess a big voice, Piau's astounding purity and evenness of tone, excellent diction, and thoughtful phrasing suits this intimate music perfectly. Her partner, Jos van Immerseel, cleverly chooses to play a vintage Erard piano from 1897, providing a lighter, crisper background and, in his expert use of this unique instrument's special mechanics, adding "authentic" stylistic/interpretive insight to the salon sound to which Debussy himself would have been accustomed. Together, they make a fantastic duo--seamless in their interpretation and often breathtaking in execution (the swirling "Papillons", for one)--and offer many compelling reasons to return again and again to this recital of songs that span Debussy's career.

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From the opening early song, "Apparition", we immediately hear that Piau loves this music, as she milks the intensely expressive line with vigor and nails the improbable high-C with ease. In "C'est l'extase", the first song of the Ariettes oubliées, note how she gently caresses the words, virtually giving each syllable meaning. And just listen to the exuberant abandon she lends to the "Paysages belges: Chevaux de bois", giving us the wide-eyed excitement of a merry-go-round as viewed through the eyes of a child.

Purists weary of vocal breathiness to convey breathlessness or longeurs (à la Renee Fleming) may find Piau to be guilty of this mannerism at times, but her intent seems so guileless that she deserves to be forgiven for indulging in some of these well-worn effects. For the most part, her "acting" is thoroughly convincing, and who wants to hear Debussy without at least some indication of mood? Either way, her way with these lovely mélodies infuses each one with the character and individuality necessary to convey their differences, something only a few of today's Debussy interpreters have achieved with success. --Michael Liebowitz, ClassicsToday.com, arkivmusic.com

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