

Barbara Bonney - Diamonds in the Snow, Nordics Songs (2000)

Written by bluesever

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- 01 - Grieg - Varen Op. 33 No 2 (4:42)
- 02 - Grieg - Jeg Elsker Dig Op. 5 No 3 (1:44)
- 03 - Grieg - Solveigs Sang (Peer Gynt Op. 23) (5:10)
- 04 - Grieg - Med En Vandlilje Op. 25 No 4 (2:21)
- 05 - Grieg - Prinsessen (3:22)
- 06 - Grieg - En Svane Op. 25 No 2 (2:31)
- 07 - Grieg - Fra Monte Pincio Op. 39 No1 (4:59)
- 08 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Grub (1:07)
- 09 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Dereinst Gedanke Mein (3:08)
- 10 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Lauf Der Welt (1:32)
- 11 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Die Verschwiegene Nachtigall (3:20)
- 12 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Zur Rosenzeit (2:57)
- 13 - Grieg - Sechs Lieder Op. 48 - Ein Traum (2:07)
- 14 - Sibelius - Diamanten Pa Marssnon Op. 36 No 6 (2:21)
- 15 - Sibelius - Vilse Op. 17 No 4 (0:53)
- 16 - Sibelius - Sav Sav Susa Op. 36 No 4 (2:28)
- 17 - Sibelius - Var Det En Drom Op. 37 No 4 (1:52)
- 18 - Sibelius - Flickan Kom Ifran Sin Alsklings Mote Op. 37 No 5 (2:47)
- 19 - Stenhammar - Flickan Kom Ifran Sin Alsklings Mote Op. 4b No 1 (4:49)
- 20 - Stenhammar - Adagio Op. 20 No 5 (3:12)
- 21 - Stenhammar - Sverige Op. 22 No 2 (2:31)
- 22 - Stenhammar - Fylgia Op. 16 No 4 (1:40)
- 23 - Stenhammar - I Skogen (2:22)
- 24 - Alfven - Sa Tag Mit Hjerte (3:08)
- 25 - Alfven - Skogen Sover Op. 28 No 6 (2:38)
- 26 - Sjoberg - Tonerna (2:28)

Barbara Bonney – soprano

Antonio Pappano – piano

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A nice program to introduce Scandanavian art songs to an audience by a premier American soprano is a welcome relief from the stream of German lieder recordings. To my mind Scandanavian music is a relatively unmined motherlode waiting for an adventurous listener to discover. Ms Bonney's intelligent singing made this recording a feast of song. The vivid vocal characterization in such pieces as Grieg's "Princess" or the 2 settings of "Girl comes home after seeing her lover" by Sibelius and Stenhammar was as real as it was heartbreaking. Her tone of pure youthful innocence is known to this writer, and has impressed me in the past. I only wish she had chosen another pianist instead of opera conductor Pappano. Comparing this recording to Anne Sofie Von Otter's recordings of the same songs of Sibelius and Grieg did not fare well for the accompanist on the Decca recording. Bengt Forsberg plays with more intensity, and is matched step for step with Otter. The Grieg songs are delightful, with "Last Spring" containing some tempo freshness that reminded this listener of the warming qualities of Spring's return. I wished for more depth in the swirling eddies in "with a water lily", but was touched by the glowing intensity of "A Swan", and fell in love with a colorful "From Monte Pincio", Grieg's musical travel-portrait of a Roman hill. The "Quiet Nightingale" was discrete, and needed to be with Ms. Bonney's sex appeal made manifest in her retelling of the sound of the bird in the poem. The Sibelius set is wonderful, with a fantastic jaunt through the forest to a romantic rendezvous in "Lost in the Forest" made exciting with descending swirls of chromaticism suggesting swaths of birds upset by the protagonists happening upon them. The heartbreak in the quasi-operatic "Sigh, rushes, sigh" was palpable and dramatic, as was the rising feeling of abandonment and the rush of emotion not quite reaching it's climax (isnt that so Finnish?) of "Was it a dream?". As if to continue the heartbreak, the betrayal of the daughter in "Girl came home from meeting her lover" was made manifest in an outraged tone at the conclusion. The quality of Stenhammar's setting of the "Girl coming home" is less lustrous than the high melodrama of Sibelius', but is rich in inspiration. His refined elegance created a quieter mood, as though the daughter were more fragile and less sure of herself than the Sibelius protagonist, and Ms Bonney matches the pale daughter with a pale, hollow tone that is unforgettable. The lulling "Adagio" is like a hot summer's day that goes on a bit long and unrelenting, and "Sweden" is a patriotic paeon to the country that never seems to go anywhere musically. Luckily we return to more inspirational territory in "Guiding Spirit" and "In the Forest" with more longing and mystery, the latter containing some lovely piano writing. Hugo Alfven's orchestral music sounds like Strauss, and the 2 songs here sound like early Strauss songs, although not quite as daring and rich. In "Take My Heart", Bonney's fragility is disarming. Stars twinkle in the gentle "Forest Sleeps", with Bonney's voice glowing in a reassuring warmth. Sjoberg's "Music" is the Swedish "An die Musik", a paeon to the mysery of the soothing power of music. Again, Bonney's intelligent phrasing yields much pleasure. This disc is a lovely collection for fans of art songs, and is a feather in the cap of Ms. Bonney. I only wish Pappano would match her refinement with more personality. --- Dan and Laura Mortenson (Minneapolis, MN)

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