

## Cecilia Bartoli - Chant D'Amour (1996)

Written by bluesever

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1. Bizet: Chant d'amour 2. Bizet: Oeuvre ton coeur 3. Bizet: Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe 4. Bizet: Tarantelle 5. Bizet: La coccinelle 6. Delibes: Les Filles de Cadiz "Chanson Espagnole" 7. Viardot-Garcia: Hai luli 8. Viardot-Garcia: Havanaise 9. Viardot-Garcia: Les filles de Cadix 10. Berlioz: La mort d'Orphée 11. Berlioz: Zaïde, Op. 19 no 1 12. Ravel: Chants populaires: no 2, Chanson française 13. Ravel: Chants populaires: no 1, Chanson espagnole 14. Ravel: Chants populaires: no 3, Chanson italienne 15. Ravel: Chants populaires: no 4, Chanson hébraïque 16. Ravel: Vocalise en forme de Habañera 17. Ravel: Mélodies hébraïques (2): no 1, Kaddisch 18. Ravel: Mélodies hébraïques (2): no 2, L'énigme éternelle 19. Ravel: Tripatos  
Cecilia Bartoli – mezzo-soprano Myun-Whun Chung – piano

Cecilia Bartoli goes from strength to strength. Taking on the French repertory in this delightful disc, she also gives us some great rarities. The opening Bizet group includes two of his best-known songs, Ouvre ton coeur and Adieux de Photesse arabe. In the first, one perhaps might ask for more of a smile in the voice. Predictably, in the pessimistic Hugo poem about the Arab girl bidding farewell to the handsome traveller, Bartoli relishes the muezzin-like vocalise on "Helas, adieu, souviens-toi". This is one of the best performances of this mini-drama since Conchita Supervia's orchestral-accompanied version. In this, and the succeeding Tarantelle, "tra-la-la"s and froth, one is prompted to wonder if there will one day be a Bartoli Carmen.

The big surprise of the Bizet group, again a setting of Hugo, is a song totally unknown to me, La Coccinelle ("The ladybird"). A fable of a gentleman trying to kiss the insect, it is a little salon gem, with a fast waltz motif. Bartoli uses a croaky little voice to act out the Ladybird. This song alone is worth the price of the CD.

Delibes's Les lilies de Cadiz, all trills and sunshine, is contrasted with an equally demanding setting of the same poem by Pauline Viardot. Although there is a whole CD devoted to Viardot's

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songs (by Karin Ott on CPO, 12/90) which I haven't heard, I rather think that for most other people these three melodies will be their introduction to Viardot's songs. Hai lull! with words by Xavier de Maistre is a sad second-cousin to the Willow Song from Rossini's Otello (an opera central to the repertory of Viardot's sister, Maria Malibran). Havanaise is a real curiosity: the first and last stanzas, sung in Spanish, frame a middle section in French which breaks into a Rossinian flight of coloratura before returning to the swaying movements of the dance. Evenings chez Viardot must have been enlivened considerably by such songs.

One can imagine that Viardot might easily have sung both Berlioz songs. The narration of Ophelia's death, words by Ernest Legouvé, vaguely based on Shakespeare, ends with a wordless melody which Bartoli sings in a hushed, beautiful tone. In Zaide she plays the castanets with skill; if this song is less interesting than the evocations of Spain by Bizet, Delibes and Viardot, that's Berlioz's fault, not Bartoli's.

In the concluding Ravel group, an interesting contrast can be made between Viardot's Havanaise of the 1840s and Ravel's Habanera of 1907.... This is one of the most satisfying recitals by one of the great singers of our time. First-rate recording and sensitive accompaniment throughout. --- Gramophone [12/1996]

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