

Veronique Gens - Tragediennes 3 (2011)

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Środa, 03 Sierpień 2016 15:46 -

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1. *Ariodant (1799) - Acte II, Scène 6. Mélodrame, Récit et Air d'Ina. Quelle fureur barbare !...Mais, que dis-je?...Ô des amants le plus fidèle* 2. *Astyanax (1801) - Récit et Air d'Andromaque. Ah, ces perfides grecs...Dieux, à qui recourir* 3. *Les Danaïdes (1784). Ouverture* 4. *Iphigénie en Tauride - Acte IV, Scène 1. Récit & Air d'Iphigénie. Non, cet affreux devoir...Je t'implore et je tremble* 5. *Thésée - Acte IV, Scène 1. Récit et Air de Médée. Ah! faut-il me venger...Ma rivale triomphe* 6. *Le Prophète (1849) - Acte II, Scène 6. Air de Fidès . Ah, mon fils* 7. *Roland à Roncevaux. Acte I - Récit et Air d'Alde. Prête à te fuir...Le soir pensive* 8. *Les Troyens - Acte III. Entrée des constructeurs - Entrée des matelots - Entrée des laboureurs* 9. *Les Troyens. Acte V, 2e tableau - Monologue et Air de Didon. Ah! Ah ! Je vais mourir...Adieu, fière cité* 10. *Henry VIII. Acte IV, 2e tableau, scènes 1-2. Air de Catherine d'Aragon. Ô cruel souvenir!* 11. *Hérodiade. Acte I, scène 3 - Récit et Air d'Hérodiade. C'est Jean!...Ne me refuse pas* 12. *Don Carlos. Acte V, scène 1 - Air d'Élisabeth. Toi qui sus le néant des grandeurs de ce monde* Veronique Gens (Soprano) Les Talens Lyriques
Christophe Rousset (Conductor)

In her third `Tragédiennes' album for Virgin Classics, French soprano Véronique Gens continues her exploration of French operatic repertoire. *Tragédiennes Vol. 3* covers the late 18th and 19th centuries and with a prime focus on roles for the deeper, darker-toned female voice. Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques join Gens once again in this release. The main emphasis in this recital is on arias written for mezzo soprano. Gens pays tribute to a series of Parisian divas who would today probably be classified as mezzo sopranos: Marie-Thérèse Maillard, Cornélie Falcon, Rosina Stoltz and Pauline Viardot. It is evident that Gens can hold her own in such exalted historic company becomes clear from the BBC Music Magazine's assessment of her last `Tragédiennes' album: "Passion, ardor, rage, tenderness - the full gamut of human expression emerges in this selection of works created for French operatic femmes fatales ... Music director Christophe Rousset and soprano Véronique Gens' second disc of musical `Tragédiennes' is a thrilling mix of the familiar ... and the little known ... The whole makes a wonderful odyssey ... Gens's agile voice is the perfect vehicle to cope with these emotional extremes, from the enchanting to the chilling. She is never afraid to sacrifice pure beauty of sound in favor of rhetorical and dramatic effect, giving due weight to the plights,

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laments and plangent outpourings of these timeless, tragic heroines. Rousset coaxes some crack playing from Les Talens Lyriques, combining the immediacy and intimacy of chamber music with all the colors and intensity of a largescale symphony orchestra." ---Editorial Reviews, amazon.com

In a word, the talent of Véronique Gens is stellar. The French soprano (who arguably sounds like a mezzo-soprano on this album) belongs in the category of the great singers from the golden age of opera in the 1960s. The repertoire on this album might be new to some listeners, as it features some works that are seldom heard: this is another strength of Gens, to introduce opera lovers to a greater body of work. She has rock-solid technique, repertoire that is well suited to her voice, clear diction, and excellent emotional depth that she engagingly conveys. Whether it is "Quelle fureur barbare" with its singspiel and three different moods; the subdued, brief, and reverential "Ah, mon fils"; or the magnificence and power-singing of "Prête à te fuir... Le soir pensive," it seems there is nothing the soprano cannot do. Her "Ah, ces perfidies grecs ... Dieux, à qui recourir" shows a clean, cool voice with the sound of a mezzo-soprano as she delivers excellent recitative and puts a dynamic swell in the phrase where necessary. The listener really empathizes with her sense of urgency; it recalls Cherubino in "Non so più." Certainly, it does not hurt that she has an equally gifted orchestra accompanying her, conducted by Christophe Rousset. Les Talens Lyriques is a wonderfully dramatic orchestra that masters every dynamic contrast, feeling, and, presumably, every score marking with ease and non-stop energy. Apparently Gens respects her orchestra so much that it is given its own work on the album, a long yet fabulous overture by Salieri (which, admittedly, does have echoes of Mozart). One can hear Gens' low, chesty voice, where she still maintains her excellent technique in "Non, cet affreux devoir... Je t'implore," though it reveals a weakness of the artist: the occasional thinning of high notes. Gens creates her passion through her emphasis of the right words (such as in "Ah, faut-il me venger... Ma rivale triomphe") and through her connecting with the text as in "Prête à te fuir," where she is clearly telling a story. This piece in particular is exciting, for it is not like lighter Baroque opera, but rather a full orchestra that requires a full voice. There are moments of pure, throbbing feeling, for when she sings Berlioz's "Ah, je vais mourir," one truly feels her anguish, and that she will die. ---V. Vasan, Rovi

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