

Alban Berg - Lulu Suite □ 3 Pieces for Orchestra, Op.6 [2008]

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Środa, 27 Lipiec 2011 08:47 - Zmieniony Sobota, 24 Sierpień 2013 11:35

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3 Pieces for Orchestra (Drei Orchesterstücke), Op.6 1. 1. *Praeludium (Prelude)* 2. 2. *Reigen (Round Dance)* 3. 3. *Marsch (March)*

Lulu Suite

4. 1. *Rondo* 5. 2. *Ostinato* 6. 3. *Lulu's Song* 7. 4. *Variations* 8. 5. *Adagio* 9. *Applause*

Anat Efraty - soprano Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra Daniele Gatti - conductor

Although most listeners would agree Alban Berg's music surpasses Arnold Schoenberg and Anton Webern's music in terms of beauty, his music, like their music, is still nearly universally disdained. This disc with Daniele Gatti leading the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Berg's *Drei Orchesterstücke* and *Symphonic Suite* from his opera *Lulu* may not completely change that situation. The bone-crushing march that closes the *Drei Orchesterstücke* is still bone-crushing and the soul-killing dissonant chord at the climax of the *Lulu Suite* is still soul-killing. But like the great recordings of these pieces from the past -- Abbado's and Levine's come immediately to mind, though its hard to forget Dorati and Kleiber's -- Gatti and the Dutch musicians' approach emphasizes the music's deep lyricism and profound humanity. Here, themes in the opening *Praeludium* and central *Reigen* of the *Drei Orchesterstücke* are both beautiful and memorable while those of the *Suite's* *Rondo* and "*Lied der Lulu*" touch the heart like few others in the early twentieth century repertoire. Naturally, the Concertgebouw plays with the combination of polish and passion that is the earmark of a great orchestra while the blend of brilliant soloists within a cogent ensemble is their own unique signature. Gatti's leadership is confident and commanding and his interpretation is powerfully dramatic without being unduly histrionic. Captured in earth-shaking super audio surround sound, this may not be the only Berg orchestral disc one should hear -- there are, after all, those by Abbado, Levine, Dorati, and Kleiber -- but it would make a compelling first Berg orchestral disc. ---James Leonard, Rovi

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