

A sumptuous recording that get straight to the heart of the matter

Laurence Vittes - October 2009

Origin Classical proudly describes this seductive recital of the darker sides of 17th-century love as “a prismatic portrait of the chambers of the human heart”. Indeed, it could serve as a marketing portrait of the young listeners the enterprising Seattle-based label seems to be aiming at.

This is reflected in the honeyed voice of Linda Tsatsanis, one of that new breed of singers who have moved beyond stylistic accuracy for its own sake and expect their audiences to be as young and curious as they are. For example, in addition to performing, Canadian-born Tsatsanis has written a “stunning” arrangement for soprano, cello and orchestra of the Preludes of Bach’s Cello Suites. Sounds like a best-seller to me.

The sequencing of the programme, in which composers from the French, English and Italian schools vie in turn for the listener’s heart, culminates in Ariadne’s Lament from Monteverdi’s lost opera. The vocal tracks are interspersed with instrumental interludes including three galliards, a chaconne, a frogg and a dangerously intense piece by Bellerofonte Castaldi. In these, as in his musically intimate partnership with Tsatsanis, the nuanced beauty and character of John Lenti’s tone reflects a profound identification with the music and the mood. A student of Jacob Heringman, Elizabeth Kenny and Nigel North, Lenti uses a seven-course lute by Ray Nurse (Vancouver, 1991), and a theorbo by Klaus Jacobsen (London, 2001).

Al Swanson made the sumptuous recordings in Illsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya Hall, the home to the Seattle Symphony. The rough-and-ready booklet consists of highly engaging and informed liner-notes, one by each artist, written in a refreshingly informal style, which add to the musical experience.