

Xavier de
Maistre: robust
and delicate



No dreamy transcriptions here – this harpist gives us delightful Debussy

Debussy

'Nuit d'étoiles'

Danse sacrée et Danse profane^b. Deux Arabesques.

Préludes – Danseuses de Delphes; Voiles; La fille aux cheveux de lin.

Rêverie. Suite bergamasque. Valse romantique. Mélodies^a – Apparition; Beau soir; Clair de lune; Fleur des blés; Mandoline; Nuit d'étoiles; Le lilas

Xavier de Maistre *hp* with ^aDiana Damrau *sop*

^bMembers of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

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In many ways, Debussy's piano music finds its rightful home on the harp. Apart from the distinctive textural and colouristic elements in the writing itself, we have contemporary accounts of Debussy's piano-playing that refer to his ability to make you forget a piano even had hammers. Of course, this doesn't allow for dreamy, "impressionistic" interpretations; rather, it makes clarity and precision absolute imperatives – which qualities we find in abundance in this recital by Xavier de Maistre and friends.

Perhaps realising that you can have too much of a good thing, de Maistre has chosen to include among the many solo works here a selection of *mélodies* and the two *Danses* for harp and strings. All, with the exception of the *Danses* and the *Deux Arabesques*, were transcribed by de Maistre himself.

De Maistre's playing throughout is both robust and delicate; his ability to recall the percussiveness of the piano when necessary, especially noticeable in the Prélude of the *Suite bergamasque*, the *Valse romantique* and the second *Arabesque*, is most impressive. Elsewhere, finely cascading scales and glassy, rippling figurations are offset by sensitively brushed chords.

Soprano Diana Damrau is broadly expressive in the *mélodies*, if occasionally

strident in tone; her "Mandoline" is suffused with a playful urgency that contrasts nicely with the earnestness of "Le lilas". Some of de Maistre's colleagues from the Vienna Philharmonic join him in the two dances; the playing is bold and carefree, the well judged *crescendo* in the *Danse profane* a delightful way to end this magical disc. **William Yeoman**

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