

Danaë Vlasse

Poème



I have to admit that on first listen I thought **Poème**, the latest release by classical pianist **Danaë Vlasse**, to be serious and somber, but then the fervent poetry of the music eventually seeped into my mind and the beauty of it all shined through. The music is deeply romantic like an old world vignette, but with glorious sound. Largely classical with vocals sung in French, this nine track album is a refreshing break from the modern day cacophony of everyday life.

Danaë Vlasse is an award winning pianist, composer, lyricist, and record producer. Her awards are just too numerous to mention as are her collaborations with other composers from around the world. *Poème* is her tenth studio album to date. Joining Ms. Vlasse on the recording are some familiar names to me. Soprano Sangeeta Kaur (*Illuminance*), Grammy Award winning soprano singer Hila Plitmann (*Ms. Inez Sez*), Robert Thies (*Blue Landscapes III: Frontiers*) on piano, and John Walz (*A Tribute to Pierre Fournier*) on cello.

The album opens with the song **Le Basier**, The Kiss. This is not a quick peck. This is a deep, soul stirring kiss. Plitmann's flowing voice caresses the tune and transforms the simple act of a sweet touch of the lips into a world of immortal love. That immortality is evidenced is Rodin's The Kiss, a marble sculpture of rapturous lovers. Stone may be cold, but Danaë's air is warm and sublime.

The poem "A Lullaby" by American poet Eugene Field becomes the delicately textured **Piano Nocturne No.4 "Pour Nelson"**. Vlasse's solo piano offering is quiet and dignified with a light fairy tale leitmotif. Field expressive words calls the baby a birdling, a tiny thing safe in the nest. Danaë's tender melody assures us that all will be safe for this darkest hour dreamer.

Can an enigmatic woman's smile change the dismal into the hopeful? On Danaë's song **Barbara** the miracle is in the making. A post WWII encounter by French poet Jacques Prévert is the subject and what happens after. The music is elegiac at times, but softens perceptively after the happenstance. Plitmann's vocals are mournful as we imagine the devastation of a war that decimated a continent. Vlasse's original poem is poignant as well as sorrowful with one line telling us:

*"Oh, Barbara,
I am living in hell!
All the loves lost in war,
Are souls that have perished in their flesh!"*

The power and pain of the vast ocean is released in the longest tune of the album, **La Mer**. The music and lyrics suggest that the sea is something to be conquered and tamed, but it is not for the

weak of heart. Vlasse's melody is masterfully simple as well as sad as the journey from one corner of the earth to another is sung in somber tones.

Piano Fantaisie No. 2 "Schwanengesang" is another piano work by Vlasse and it is as mesmerizing as it is stunning. The Swan is brilliant as a canvas for this impromptu musical abstract. A work of vivid colors juxtaposed on a blank medium of stark white plumage against a gold setting sun is a tragic legend of fleeting beauty. This is my favorite piece on Poème.

There is poetry backed by music. That is quite common. And then there is music that has poetry deftly cached within. Poème, the classically styled music of Danaë Xanthe Vlasse is highly emotional given the context of the subject. It is stark, black and white illustrations in an all too colorful world. But there is no lack of color when it comes to passion. Highly listenable.

La quantité d'émotion sur cet enregistrement est incommensurable.

- R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews