

Martinu – Ariane (2000)

Written by bluesever

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1 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Sinfonia, No. 1 4:13 2 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Scene I 12:19 3 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Sinfonia, No. 2 3:22 4 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Scene II 12:41 5 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Sinfonia, No. 3 1:10 6 Ariane. Opera in One Act, H. 370: Scene III 9:58 Celina Lindsley (Soprano) Norman Philips (Baritone) Vladimír Doležal (Tenor) Richard Novák (Bass) Miroslav Kopp (Tenor) Ludek Vele (Bass) Czech Philharmonic Orchestra Prague Philharmonic Chorus Václav Neumann - conductor

Martinu composed his brief, one-act Ariane (1958) in a neo-baroque style that ranges from melodically spare ruminations and interjections for the main scenes to brightly tuneful interludes (the introduction has an irresistibly lovely melody that stays in your head for days). The French libretto is based on Georges Neveux's play *Le Voyage de Thésée*, which dramatizes the story of Ariane, Theseus, and the Minotaur in a highly symbolist manner, with an inner drama that sheds light on the character's psychological states and unvoiced motivations.

Theseus has arrived at Knossos to kill the fearsome and murderous Minotaur. Upon meeting and falling in love with Ariane, he all but forgets his quest until one of his youths is slaughtered by the man-beast. Ariane's cryptic comment "he looks like you" gains significance as Theseus confronts an enemy that is indeed himself, or is he? Who then, was slain? His mission accomplished, Theseus departs, leaving Ariane to mourn the loss of her love in a magnificent, extended lament that closes the opera.

This 1986 recording features Celina Lindsley in the title role, and she is completely mesmerizing in Ariane's great, challenging aria. Norman Philips is at once blustery and tender as Theseus, finely spinning his rich baritone. Richard Novák uses his dark voice to great effect, portraying the Minotaur with an elegant menace, and the Five Youths are strongly sung by the Czech

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Philharmonic Chorus. At the helm is Václav Neumann, long a master interpreter of Martinu's music, and here he leads the ever-colorful Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in a bracing and highly idiomatic performance. The sound, though somewhat low-level, is clear and very well balanced. A delight from beginning to end.--Victor Carr Jr., ClassicsToday.com

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