Jennifer Larmore – Call Me Mister (1996)

1 - Orfeo ed Euridice: 'Che faro senza Euridice' 2 - Le nozze di Figaro: 'Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio...' 3 - Tancredi: 'Oh patria!...Di tanti palpiti' 4 - La Donna Del Lago: 'Mura felici' 5 - I Capuleti e i Montecchi: 'Lieto del dolce incarco...La tremenda' 6 - Lucrezia Borgia: 'Il segreto' 7 - Anna Bolena: 'E sgombro il loco...Ah! parea' 8 - Les Hugenots: 'Nobles seigneurs' 9 - Faust: 'Faites-lui mes aveux 10 - Romeo et Juliette: 'Depuis hier...Que fais-tu' 11 - La pucelle d'Orleans: 'Oui, Dieu le veut!...Adieu, forets' 12 - Die Fledermaus: 'Ich lade gern mir Gaste ein' 13 - Die Fledermaus: 'From Time To Time I Entertain' Jennifer Larmore - Mezzo-soprano Welsh National Orchestra Carlo Rizzi - Conductor

Atlanta-born Larmore has a most individual and sumptuous mezzo-soprano sound. The dramatic and vocal potential of such a voice should be endless but in this rather gimmicky ‘concept’ disc of Hosenrollen or trouser-roles – those where a female mezzo plays male characters (usually callow youths) – Larmore’s glorious sound does not enthrall over the 70 minutes and her interpretations are rather bland. The Thirties-style sepia print cover of Larmore – complete with pinstripe suit, slicked back hair and cheroot in hand – is actually slightly misleading as the chosen repertoire is of a heavy and melodramatic nature and only the Mozart and Johann Strauss can possibly reflect any semblance of the character promised by the packaging. Larmore alters the warmth of her deep velvet tone on certain vowels when most of these arias need a thorough consistency of sound, strong interpretative flair and expressive shading in phrasing and delivery. Larmore’s roulades in the Rossini Donna del lago scena are not precise – more like roulette – and although she shows coloratura flexibility in the Donizetti Anna Bolena aria and in Meyerbeer’s ‘Nobles seigneurs’, most of the time we are merely assailed by her stunning sound rather than captivated by any musical substance. The WNO Orchestra and Rizzi are unusually perfunctory, with only the occasional flash of their fine ensemble artistry. Altogether a lacklustre affair. ---Elise McDougall, classical-music.com

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