

Jacquet de la Guerre - Le Sommeil d'Ulisse (2004)

Written by bluesever

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Suite in A minor (from Pièces de Clavecin, 1687) 1. *Prelude pour clavecin en la mineur*
(1'38) Le Sommeil d'Ulisse, cantata for
voice & continuo (c.1715) 2.
Simphonie (1'04) 3. *Récit* (0'33) 4. *Gracieusement & un peu loure* (1'42) 5. *Récit* (0'12)
6. *Tempete, vivement* (2'12) 7. *Air* (2'23) 8. *Récitatif* (0'55) 9. *Sommeil* (7'52) 10.
Récitatif (0'33) 11. *2e Récit* (1'17) 12. *Air, gracieusement & loure* (4'22)
Suite in A minor (from Pièces de Clavecin, 1687)
13. *Chaconne pour clavecin en la mineur*
Sonate pour violon & basse continue en re mineur (1707)
14. *Adagio* (3'03) 15. *Presto* (1'42) 16. *Adagio* (0'58) 17. *Presto* (1'47) 18. *Presto*
(1'59) 19. *Aria* (3'29) 20. *Presto* (2'00)
Samson, for soprano, flute, violin & continuo (1711)
21. *Simphonie* (1'03) 22. *Récit* (0'27) 23. *Air* (3'24) 24. *Récit* (0'25) 25. *Mouvement*
marque (1'10) 26. *Air* (3'20) 27. *Récit* (0'38) 28. *Lentement* (2'15) 29. *Récit* (0'30) 30.
Air, gracieusement (4'19)
Isabelle Desrochers - Soprano Freddy Eichelberger – Clavecin Alice Pierot – Violin Les Voix
Humaines (Ensemble)

Having first made her name as a harpsichord player and a singer, Elisabeth Jacquet was a part of the court around Louis XIV from the time she was a child. She was groomed by his mistress and later married a Parisian organist but continued to appear at court and dedicate her compositions to the Sun King, who received them with unstinting praise. Jacquet continued the relationship until Louis' death and then sought new royal patrons for her works. In this lovely disc, a selection of the vocal and instrumental music of Jacquet is presented with graceful elegance and beguiling virtuosity by Le Voix Humaines. From the Prelude and Chaconne in A minor for harpsichord that opens the disc through the early cantata Le sommeil d'Ulisse to the central Sonata in D minor and the later cantata Samson that closes it, Jacquet proves herself a charmingly lyrical and decidedly lightweight talent. The musicians do everything in their power -- Isabelle Desrochers is a wonderfully expressive singer, Alice Piérot is a marvelously exciting violinist, and Freddy Eichelberger is a tremendously powerful harpsichordist -- and the music

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sounds lovely while it's playing, but fades from the memory like silk left too long in the light after it's over. Alpha's production values -- the warm reality of the sound, the lively intelligence of the notes, the beauty of the reproduction -- continue to define the upper end of recorded music.

---James Leonard, Rovi

Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre built her reputation on chamber composition, and while Samson certainly has its moments, Le Sommeil d'Ulisse is the more fascinating and musically varied of the two cantatas included here. The stormy sea scenes pictured on nearly every side of Alpha's triple-gatefold CD package refer to the cantata's most captivating segment--the sixth-movement *Tempete*, vivement where Neptune vents his rage by creating a storm that he hopes will destroy Ulysses. Though only a little more than two minutes long, it's a remarkably stunning scene depicted by waves of dotted ostinato rhythms and chromatic flurries carried by a relentlessly driving momentum. A similar though somewhat less ferocious scene near the conclusion of Samson (where he's demolishing the temple, burying himself and his enemies in its ruins) is equally captivating, and there are many other subtler yet equally inspired and enjoyable scenes throughout both cantatas.

A violin sonata and two harpsichord selections are included here as well. The violin sonata is an expertly crafted charmer with plenty of thematic and rhythmic variety, especially in the melodically rich final two Prestos. Harpsichordist Freddy Eichelberger's performances of the Prelude and Chaconne from Jacquet de la Guerre's Third suite are equally accomplished--his brazen rendering of the Chaconne (in a brisk 2:23) will be especially revelatory for those used to Verlet's (*Astrée*) darker, far more grandiose treatment (more than a minute longer), or to the understated delicacy of Cerasi (*Metronome*).

Alpha's sound is transparent, well-balanced, and remarkably realistic. Presentation is world-class, and the notes are informative and entertaining. While many performers have devoted recordings to Jacquet de la Guerre's chamber and solo harpsichord works over the years, it's hopeful that with recordings as accomplished as these Isabelle Desrochers and colleagues will continue to investigate her vocal oeuvre as well as inspire others to do the same. Very highly recommended. ---John Greene, ClassicsToday.com

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