

Debussy – Pelleas & Melisanda (Karajan) [2009]

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CD1 1. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Prélude* 2. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 1.: 'Je Ne Pourrai Plus De Cette Forêt'* 3. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 1.: 'Qu'Est-Ce Qui Brille Ainsi, Au Fond De L'Eau ?'* 4. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 1.: 'Interlude* 5. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 2.: Voici Ce Qu'Il Écrit À Son Frère Pelléas : 'Un Soir, Je L'Ai Trouvée'* 6. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 2.: 'Je N'En Dis Rien'* 7. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 2.: 'Grand-Père, J'Ai Reçu En Même Temp s Que La Lettre De Mon Frère'* 8. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 2.: Interlude* 9. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 3.: 'Il Fait Sombre Dan Les Jardins'* 10. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 1. Scene 3.: 'Hoé ! Hisse Hoé ! Hoé !'* 11. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 1.: 'Vous Ne Savez Pas Où Je Vous Ai Menée ?'* 12. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 1.: 'C'Est Au Bord D'Une Fontaine Aussi Qu'il Vous A Trouvée ?'* 13. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 1.: Interlude* 14. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 2.: 'Ah ! Ah ! Tout Va Bien, Cela Ne Sera Rien'* 15. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 2.: 'Je Suis...Je Suis Malade Ici'* 16. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 2.: 'Il Est Vrai Que Ce Château Est Très Vieux Et Très Sombre'* 17. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 2.: 'Tiens, Où Est L'Anneau Que Je T' Avais Donné ?'* 18. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 2.: Interlude* 19. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 2. Scene 3.: 'Oui, C'Est Ici, Nous Y Sommes'*
CD2
1. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 1.: 'Mes Longs Cheveux Descendent De La Tour !'* 2. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 1.: 'Oh ! Oh ! Mes Cheveux Descendent De La Tour !'* 3. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 1.: 'Je Les Noue, Je Les Noue Aux Branches Du Saule'* 4. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 1.: Interlude* 5. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 2.: 'Prenez Garde; Par Ici, Par Ici'* 6. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 2.: Interlude* 7. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 3.: 'Ah ! Je Respire Enfin !'* 8. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera*

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in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 3.: 'À Propos De Mélisande' 9. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 3.: Interlude* 10. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 3. Scene 4.: 'Ah ! Ah ! Petite Mère A Allumé Sa Lampe'* CD3 1. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 1.: 'Où Vas-Tu ? Il Faut Que Je Te Parle Ce Soir'* 2. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 2.: 'Maintenant Que Le Père De Pelléas Est Sauvé'* 3. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 2.: 'Pelléas Part Ce Soir'* 4. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 2.: 'Une Grande Innocence'* 5. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 2.: Interlude* 6. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 3.: 'Oh ! Cette Pierre Est Lourde'* 7. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 4.: 'C'Est Le Dernier Soir'* 8. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 4.: 'On Dirait Que Ta Voix A Passé Sur La Mer Au Printemps !'* 9. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 4. Scene 4.: 'Quel Est Ce Bruit ? On Ferme Les Portes'* 10. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Ce N'Est Pas De Cette Petite Blessure Qu'Elle Peut Mourir'* 11. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Attention: Je Crois Qu'Elle S'Éveille'* 12. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Êtes-Vous Seul Dans La Chambre, Grand-Père ?'* 13. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Mélisande, As-Tu Pitié De Moi Comme J'Ai Pitié De Toi ?'* 14. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'As-Tu Aimé Pelléas ?'* 15. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Qu'Avez-Vous Fait ? Vous Allez La Tuer'* 16. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Qu' y-a-t-il ? Qu'est-ce Que Toutes Ces Femmes Viennent Faire Ici ?'* 17. *Pelléas et Mélisande, opera in 5 acts, L. 88: Act 5.: 'Attention... Attention'* Frederica von Stade - soprano Richard Stilwell - baritone José van Dam - bass Ruggero Raimondi – bass-baritone Nadine Denize – mezzo-soprano Berlin German Opera Chorus Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Herbert von Karajan - conductor

The payoff to Herbert von Karajan's relentless pursuit of ensemble perfection and beauty of sound can be heard in the playing of the Berlin Philharmonic on this recording: by 1978, when it was made, they were indisputably the most polished and flexible orchestra in Europe, and one of the few orchestras anywhere (including France) that was capable of playing French music with real authority. Fittingly, the orchestra is very much at the center of this account of Claude Debussy's uniquely beautiful opera, magnificently projecting the mysterious, darkly translucent world of its fatally entangled characters. The cast, which is led by two Americans--Richard Stilwell as Pelléas and the incomparable Frederica von Stade as Mélisande --and features a Belgian (José van Dam) as Golaud and an Italian (Ruggero Raimondi) as Arkel, is a superb one, not least because those principals who are not French are nonetheless Francophones, and sing with excellent diction and an authentic delivery. Karajan's pacing of the drama, his skill at eliciting just the right intensity from the orchestra, his surpassing gentleness with the singers (balances are superb and every word comes through clearly), and the overall beauty of the orchestral playing make this not only the finest account of Pelléas et Mélisande yet recorded, but one of the most treasurable opera recordings ever, fully worthy of EMI's Great Recordings

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of the Century designation. --Ted Libbey

Herbert von Karajan's 1978 recording of *Pelléas et Mélisande* for EMI is one of the work's most conventionally operatic versions in that its passions are large and its theatricality is propulsive. That might seem to preclude its effectiveness and authenticity, since the mystery and understatement of *Pelléas* make it one of the least conventionally operatic operas. Karajan's reading, while certainly not a traditional approach, is startlingly persuasive, a reminder that Debussy's score has a profundity that leaves open the possibility of a variety of valid and convincing interpretations. While his conducting never feels rushed (in fact, the subtlety of his rhythmic flexibility is one of the outstanding attributes of the performance), Karajan's characters behave with a very human impetuosity that reveals the opera's surging emotional arc in a way that some more soft-hued performances miss. In his conception, even *Mélisande*, who can easily be portrayed with a watery passivity, comes across as charged character, the intensity of whose sadness, confusion, and suppressed desires is crucial in driving the drama. The fact that Karajan has such a superb cast of singing actors makes it possible for his vision to be fully successful.

Frederica von Stade's *Mélisande* is achingly poignant, her singing beautifully nuanced, and her tone pure and delicate but penetrating. Richard Stilwell's supple, clarion baritone is ideal for *Pelléas*, as is his youthful energy. José van Dam brings a believable tenderness and fierceness to the tortured character of Golaud, and he sings with an exceptionally rich and grounded tone. Given the heft and gravity of van Dam's voice, Ruggero Raimondi's Arkel doesn't offer quite enough of a contrast; in their scenes together in particular, the weights of their voices are too similar, but Raimondi does sing with great sensitivity and gives Arkel a moving tenderness. Nadine Denize is unexceptional as Geneviève, but Christine Barbaux is a convincing and touching Yniold. EMI's sound is clean and clear, with good balance. This is a version of *Pelléas* that should be of interest to anyone who loves the opera and could even make converts of those who have resisted it on the grounds of its reputation for lack of drama. ---Stephen Eddins, allmusic.com

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