Diana Damrau - Verdi Canzoni (2018)

1.Stornello (Damrau) 2.6 Romanze II : No. 4. Lo spazzacamino (Damrau) 3.Romanze II : No. 2. La zingara (Damrau) 4.Romanze I : (1838) No. 5. Perduta ho la pace (Damrau) 5.Romanze II : (1845) No. 6. Brindisi (Damrau) 6.Romanze I : No. 2. More, Elisa, lo stanco poeta (Edelmann) 7.Romanze I : No. 4. Nell'orror di notte oscura (Edelmann) 8.La seduzione (Edelmann) 9.Romanze I : (1838) No. 1. Non t'accostare all'urna (Edelmann) 10.L'esule (Edelmann) 11. Il poveretto (Edelmann) 12.Brindisi (1st version) (Gutiérrez) 13.6 Romanze I : No. 3. In solitaria stanza (Gutiérrez) 14.6 Romanze I : No. 6. Deh, pietoso, oh Addolorata (Gutiérrez) 15.6 Romanze II : No. 3. Ad una stella (Gutiérrez) 16.6 Romanze II : No. 1. Il tramonto (Gutiérrez) 17.6 Romanze II : No. 5. Il mistero (Gutiérrez) Diana Damrau - soprano Paul Armin Edelmann - baritone César Augusto Gutiérrez - tenor Friedrich Haider - piano

If we admire Verdi's operatic music for its humanity and dramatic power, his canzoni ("songs") reveal different lightness and spirit. These are graceful pieces, far from the most sorrowful situations of human condition and primarily directed to entertainment. Verdi composed most of them at the beginning of his career. Two volumes of Romanze date to 1838 and 1845, and later he add more songs to his catalogue only sporadically. He wrote only seven of them between the 1850s and 1894, the year of his last song, Pietà Signor. The total number of Verdi's songs is therefore small: less than thirty works. Furthermore, as almost all of them date to the years when the young composer moved his first steps in the musical world, they irremediably appear as preliminary sketches, as test-beds of the future musical genius and nothing more than this.

Even though the present recording brings together seventeen songs, it is not inappropriate to state that it presents a wide collection of them – more than half of the total. ---themusicgala.com

Diana Damrau is arguably one of the finest artists in the opera world in the early 21st century, with exquisite phrasing, drama, and heartfelt emotion. One need only hear her interpretations of German lieder, the Queen of the Night, or even Bernstein. Yet these Verdi canzoni are rather a disappointment, given Damrau's prodigious talent, though César Augusto Gutiérrez and Paul Armin Edelmann seem to be better suited to this repertoire. Damrau's Stornello begins this album, and there is too much scooping and added drama in the voice. The legato lines are lost, and Damrau interprets them in a more spoken fashion. Lo spazzacamino comes across as too bright and shrill; the drama seems to be coming more from the artist putting something into the song, rather than organically coming from the song itself. Sometimes the pitch variation in Damrau's vibrato creates a bit too much distortion, such as when she sings "Perduto ho la pace" in the song of the same name. However, here, one can hear Damrau's beautiful lower voice, and perhaps this song succeeds more because there is more restraint in her interpretation. Brindisi (2nd version) in particular demonstrates the general problem with all of these songs: it needs more darkness and heft in the voice, and these are generally not qualities for which Damrau is renowned. This is not to say that brighter, lighter voices should not sing Verdi, for Gilda is not a spinto role; rather, Damrau's voice is not suited to these particular Verdi canzoni. Regarding the other artists, Edelmann's baritone is tender and lyrical, as in La seduzione and in Nell'orror di notte oscura, for he evokes sympathy in the listener, he has the ability to touch you. His legato and lyricism are like that of a tenor. But sometimes, one feels that the fire and passion needed for Verdi are a bit lacking; Non t'accostar is turned into a lied. The most successful match is Gutiérrez with the Verdi songs. He has more brightness and power, such as in the Brindisi and Il mistero (which is executed flawlessly), solid technique, and a consistent sound that never breaks. Sometimes his phrasing tends to run all the same, as does Edelmann's on occasion. Overall, this is not the most ideal choice of artists for Verdi, but this in no way disregards the great abilities of these opera singers. ---V. Vasan, AllMusic Review

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