

Gustave Charpentier – Louise (1935)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 04 June 2010 22:23 - Last Updated Monday, 30 September 2013 21:42

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1. Act 1, "O Coeur Ami! O Coeur Promis!" 8:56 2. Act 1, "Moi, Je Vous Avais Remarqué" 4:02 3. Act 1, "Bonsoir! La Soupe Est Prête?" 4:41 4. Act 2 - Tableau 1, "Elle Va Paraître, Ma Joie!" / "Laissez-moi De Grâce!" 8:52 5. Act 2 - Tableau 2, "L'Atelier" 4:04 6. Act 2 - Tableau 2, "Dans La Cité Lointaine" 4:25 7. Louise: Act 3, "Le Couronnement De La Muse" 4:13 8. Louise: Act 3, "Depuis Le Jour" 8:06 9. Louise: Act 3, Duo: "Louise Est Heureuse?" 3:41 10. Louise: Act 4, "Tu As Peut-Être Eu Tort De Travailler Aujourd'hui" 4:31 11. Louise: Act 4, "Louise, Louise, Regarde-Moi" 4:30 12. Louise: Act 4, "Tout Être A Le Droit D'être Libre" 9:03
Louise - Ninon Vallin
Julien - Georges Thill
Le Père - André Pernet
La Mère - Aimée Lecouvreur
Irma - Christiane Gaudel

Les Chœurs Raugel and Orchestra, Paris
Conducted by Eugène Bigot

This 68 minutes of highlights from Louise was recorded in 1935 by French Columbia under Gustave Charpentier's supervision—or at least with him present and approving. Georges Thill and Ninon Vallin arguably were the greatest Louise and Julien of their day, and indeed they are both magnificent here, with Thill's voice ringing true and elegant at all volumes and registers and Vallin's exquisitely pure tone used intelligently and ideally matched to the character. We get the duets from the first and third acts, and it's amazing how involved they are considering the manner in which the 16 sides were recorded, and the fact that it was all out of context.

André Pernet's rolling bass voice conveys the Father's love as well as his rage, and Aimée Lecouvreur is good as the Mother. There are even bits of crowd scenes, although most of the music here involves the opera's intimate moments. As a bonus, Naxos has included an aria from Charpentier's failed sequel to Louise—Julien. Maurice Dutreix sings it well and it's a nice oddity. However, listeners who want to hear a superb performance of Louise should find the "complete" Naxos Met broadcast with Grace Moore (type Q2390 in Search Reviews)—or, despite the fact that they were slightly past their primes, the EMI recording with Sills and Gedda.

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---Robert Levine, classicstoday.com

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