

Isabel Bayrakdarian - Gomidas Songs (2008)

Written by bluesever

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1-Oror (Lullaby) 2-Gakavi yerke (Song of the Partridge) 3-Manoogneroo Hayr Mer (Children's Prayer) 4-Yerginkn amble / Antsrevn yegav (The Cloudy Sky / It's Raining) 5-Dzirani Dzar (Apricot Tree) 6-Karoon a (Spring) 7-Alakyaz / Khngi dzar (Mount Alakyaz / Incense Tree) 8-Unabi (Dance of Unabi) 9-Shooshigi (Dance of Shooshig) 10-Keler tsoler (Striding, Beaming) 11-Hoy Nazan / Shakhgr shookhgr (Oh Nazan / Jingle-Jangle) 12-Akh Maral jan (Ah, Dear Maral) 13-Kele kele (Strolling) 14-Chinar Es (Tall as the Poplar Tree) 15-Chem grna khagha (I Cannot Dance) 16-Ervoom em / Shogher jan (I'm Burning with Love / Dear Shogher) 17-Voh inch kaghtsr pan (Oh, What a Delight!) 18-Groong (The Crane) 19-Andooni (Without a Home) 20-Tsayn door ov dzovag (Call to the Sea) 21- Dsidsernag 22-Hayasdan Isabel Bayrakdarian, soprano The Chamber Players of the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra Eduard Topchjan, conductor Serouj Kradjian, piano + Gevorg Dabaghyan, duduk Gevorg Gharabekyan, violin Vyacheslav Manucharyan, clarinet Karen Kocharyan, cello Karen Khachatryan, double bass Serouj Kradjian, piano

Gomidas Vartabed was largely responsible for rescuing Armenian folk music from oblivion; the songs he collected and arranged are among the few surviving records of a musical culture that was decimated by the Armenian genocide that began in 1915. The composer escaped death, but was deported, and later returned to his homeland a broken man. The music Gomidas transcribed or composed (Vartabed was not his surname, but a designation of his status as a priest) is achingly poignant in itself, and an awareness of the composer's national and personal tragedy makes it even more heartbreaking. A few of the songs are presented in the composer's own arrangement for voice and piano, but most are arranged for chamber ensemble by Serouj Kradjian. The dudek, a native wind instrument with a plaintive sound somewhat reminiscent of an alto saxophone, features prominently in the arrangements. Armenian-Canadian soprano Isabel Bayrakdarian is best known for her singing on the soundtracks for the Lord of the Rings films, and she is a genuinely versatile performer, with experience in the classical and European folk music worlds. She brings a sweet, strong, distinctive voice to these songs. It's obvious the idiom of this tradition is in her bones, and she sings with piercing expressivity. Credit for the powerful impact of the songs also goes to the sensitive, atmospheric arrangements by Kradjian, who is also Bayrakdarian's husband. The sound on most of the tracks is clear, clean, and warm.

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The album should be of strong interest to anyone who loves Eastern European folk music.
---Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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