

## Mondonville - Les Fêtes de Paphos (1997)

Written by bluesever

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Disk 1 1. Ouverture 04:54 29 Kč 2. Marche 00:55 15 Kč 3. Vous qu'a mes pas enchaîne la victoire 02:33 4. Prélude, fanfare - Ce bruit annonce sa présence 04:05 5. Deux Menuets 02:50 6. Qu'il est doux après la victoire 01:21 7. Tambourin 01:51 8. Délivrons les forêts de ce monstre odieux 01:18 9. Adonis, se peut-il que malgré ma tendresse 01:25 10. Tout doit céder à ma valeur 00:28 11. Adonis...Adonis...vainement je l'appelle! 02:36 12. Fuyons ce monstre! échappons à sa rage! 01:25 13. Cher objet de ma flamme 02:23 14. Laissons de mon amour 01:27 15. Mars près de vous s'avance 02:32 16. Tonnerre - Contre une injuste violence 01:31 17. O Ciel! en croirai-je mes yeux 02:02 18. Que je plains les mortels! 04:36 19. Air pour la Suite de Vénus 01:54 20. O vous qui de Vénus accompagnez les pas 02:57 21. Deux Menuets 02:26 22. Lorsque Vénus vint à paraître 01:39 23. Deux Gavottes 01:56 24. Pour rendre hommage 00:56 25. Air pour les Plaisirs 01:41 26. Règne à jamais sur nos cœurs 02:33 27. Contre danse 00:54 15 Kč 28. Entr'acte:Tambourin 02:01

Disk 2 1. Dieu des Amans recoi les vœux 03:36 2. Belle Nymphe, espérez le sort le plus heureux 03:05 3. Air pour les Sylvains 01:48 15 Kč 4. Air pour les Corybantes, ou Prestres de Bacchus 01:59 5. Cher Bacchus, c'est assez répandre les allarmes 02:01 6. Air pour les Bacchantes et les Sylvains 01:21 7. La victoire vole à ta voix 03:00 8. Tout conspire à combler vos vœux 02:04 9. Cette languer étrange 01:48 10. L'Amour suit cet objet charmant 01:49 11. Dieux! quel charme inconnu me ravit et m'enflamme? 01:01 12. De la gloire terrible suspendez les travaux 00:45 13. Quel trouble votre aspect m'inspire 05:52 14. Amour lance tes traits, épuise ton carquois 03:12 15. Chantez dans vos fêtes charmantes 02:43 16. Loure 01:27 17. Gigue 01:09 18. Muzette - Dieu des cœurs, c'est par tes faveurs 01:42 19. Rondeau en chaconne 02:24 20. Cessez, guerriers, cessez de lacer le tonnerre 05:32 21. Tambourin 01:09 22. Entr'acte: Rondeau en chaconne 02:32

Disk 3

1. Ritournelle 00:40 2. O Vénus, n'as-tu pas épuisé ta vengeance? 03:11 3. Prélude 01:57 15 Kč 4. De tes attraits, l'Amour va perdre la mémoire 03:09 5. Gavotte 02:08 6. Mais l'Amour va paraître, il faut suivre mes pas 00:40 7. Crains sans cesse, crains un affreux trépas 01:42 8. Crains sans cesse, crains un affreux trépas 02:24 9. Tempeste - Justes Dieux, prenez ma deffence 01:41 10. Vents furieux, rentrez dans le silence 01:40 11. Non! Non! Non! n'espère pas que ton tourment finisse 04:10 12. Air pour les Demons 00:53 13. Amour, c'est toi seul que j'implore 01:43 14. J'ai perdu mes attraits, et l'Amour va paraître 02:17 15. Je viens enfin terminer vos allarmes 04:11 16. Quel changement! quel palais enchanté 05:38 17. Air pour les Zéphirs 02:16 18. Air pour les Graces... Mon

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*bonheur est extreme* 01:35    19. *Deux Menuets* 02:36    20. *Pour vous l'aimable Aurore fait éclore* 04:02    21. *Pas de trois* 06:52

Sandrine Piau (Soprano) Véronique Gens (Soprano) Agnès Mellon (Soprano) Jean-Paul Fouchécourt (Tenor) Olivier Lallouette (Baritone) Peter Harvey (Baritone) James Oxley (Tenor) Accentus Chamber Choir Les Talens Lyriques Christophe Rousset (Conductor)

It was said of Mondonville's operas that "though nothing may astound, everything pleases". Certainly, with his seemingly inexhaustible graceful melodic gift (even the recitatives, metrically more regular than in the usual flexible tradition, approximate more to ariosos) and his combination of coloratura ariettes, simple Lully-style arias, Italian influences and brilliant orchestral colouring, Mondonville aimed at, and succeeded in, pleasing the diverse tastes of his time; and to us today the results, as exemplified in this 1758 work, are altogether delightful. *Les fetes de Paphos*, it is true, has little of the depth of his older contemporary Rameau (whom he rivalled, if not surpassed, in popularity); but then, this is not a *tragedie en musique* but an opera-ballet in three dramatically independent acts. The first two – "Venus et Adonis" and "Bacchus et Erigone" – had begun life in the previous decade as entertainments for Madame de Pompadour, who herself took the leading role in each: their success led Mondonville to add a third action, "Amour et Psyche", and to make some modifications to the existing entrees. In accordance with French tastes, the work is liberally interspersed, and concluded, with dance movements, many of which possess great inventiveness and charm; and prominent features of the score are the colourful instrumentation and the independence of the orchestra from the vocal line. Yet, if nothing 'astounds', there is no lack of telling harmonies, striking virtuosity, or, especially in Act 3, of descriptive dramatic writing. Even from the outset the high-spirited overture – in a single movement, departing from the Lullian pattern – holds out a promise of vitality, which is amply fulfilled in later vigorous *Tambourins* and in the agitated introductory *ritournelle* to Act 3; and *Amour et Psyche* is notable for a tempest sequence (already a century-old tradition in French opera) and a remarkable scene in Hades, where the implacable cries of demons seem to foreshadow Gluck's *Orfeo* (written only four years later in Vienna, where French plays and light operas were much in vogue). But there are also three very touching slow arias, one in each act: "Qu'en ce bois s'eleve une fleur", Venus's lament for Adonis, killed by a monster summoned up by jealous Mars (though he is later restored to life); Erigone's "Dieu des amans", a plea for divine aid in her love for Bacchus; and Psyche's "J'ai perdu mes attrait", her grief when her beauty is brutally destroyed by one of the Furies (though Cupid's continued devotion wins its restitution).

Christophe Rousset directs an extremely enjoyable performance, with well-judged pacing. He secures spirited, flawlessly neat playing from his orchestra and excellent singing from his chorus (whose Act 2 "La victoire vole a ta voix" is especially fine); and he has a team of stylistically experienced soloists. Chief honours among these go to Veronique Gens, radiant as Venus, whose florid Act 1 "Regne a jamais sur nos coeurs" is a high spot, and the outstanding

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Olivier Lallouette, a redoubtable Mars and, as Bacchus, given “Vous enchantez mon coeurs” with its seductive instrumental obbligatos. Sandrine Piau shines in the Act 3 coloratura ariette “Quand je vole” and in the work’s most famous number, the stunning Act 2 duet “Amour, lance tes traits” with Lallouette, but in her big “Cessez, guerriers” aria and elsewhere she becomes slightly shrill on higher notes. Agnes Mellon is an affecting Psyche, there is a vigorous “Cher Bacchus” from Peter Harvey as Comus (but he perhaps overdoes tonal harshness in portraying Tisiphone), and Jean-Paul Fouchecourt is stylish as Adonis and Mercury, though I find a somewhat disconcerting whining quality in his voice.

A welcome addition to the catalogue, and a decided success as a recording. The discs come with four distinct commentaries, of which that in German is the most comprehensive. -- Lionel Salter, Gramophone [7/1997], arkivmusic.com

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