

Arnold Schoenberg - Verklärte Nacht, Pelleas und Melisande (1998)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Verklärte Nacht, Op.4 - Arr. String Orch. (second vers. 1943) - 1. Grave 6:38*
2. *Verklärte Nacht, Op.4 - Arr. String Orch. (second vers. 1943) - 2. Molto rallentando 5:51*
3. *Verklärte Nacht, Op.4 - Arr. String Orch. (second vers. 1943) - 3. Pesante - Grave 2:24*
4. *Verklärte Nacht, Op.4 - Arr. String Orch. (second vers. 1943) - 4. Adagio 10:25*
5. *Verklärte Nacht, Op.4 - Arr. String Orch. (second vers. 1943) - 5. Adagio 4:37*
6. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Die Achtel ein wenig bewegt - zögernd 4:30*
7. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Heftig 3:07*
8. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 9: Lebhaft 4:00*
9. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 16: Sehr rasch 7:13*
10. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 33: Ein wenig bewegt 1:21*
11. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 36: Langsam 3:23*
12. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 43: Ein wenig bewegter 4:09*
13. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 50: Sehr langsam 4:44*
14. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 55: Etwas bewegt 2:22*
15. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 59: In gehender Bewegung 2:28*
16. *Pelleas und Melisande op.5 - Ciff. 62: Breit 6:14*

Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
Herbert von Karajan – conductor

Two completely approachable early pieces by music's bogeyman. *Verklärte Nacht* is certainly gorgeous in Karajan's hands, with the Berlin strings unanimously piling layer upon layer of velvet sound. The resonant recording makes it sound as if the Philharmonie were crammed to bursting point with players, but, if you prefer the string orchestra version to the original sextet, why not go the whole hog? The sound is also rich in *Pelleas und Melisande*, though the performance itself is slightly cautious. ---Martin Cotton, BBC Music Magazine

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This is probably the definitive interpretation of these two early Schoenberg works, which along with his Gurrelieder, form a sort of triumvirate of pre-atonal and pre-serialist Schoenberg. As far as Verklärte Nacht, it has never seemed (to me) to be Schoenberg at his best. It has undeniable power, but I've never thought it measured up to the next work on the disc. Pelleas und Melisande--now this is an amazing work. Composer Jonathan Harvey summed it up perfectly: "tonal music at the peak of its expressive intensity." This, along with Webern's Passacaglia has always seemed to be a sort of "last will and testament" of romanticism and expressionism. After this what more is there to say about or in that great tonal tradition? Evidently very little according to Schoenberg--his first total break with tonality, Erwartung, came just six years later. Pelleas is quite breathtaking, even harrowing, and the finale is wonderfully serene and undeniably quite haunting. Karajan brings an appropriate restraint to the drama--which can go too far if left unchecked and there are some wonderful details I hadn't heard in other performances of this work. This is definitely a virtuoso work, but Karajan and Berlin handle it marvelously. Verklärte Nacht, originally written for string sextet and revised for string orchestra in 1943 is handled well throughout, although I can't help feeling as though everything gets a bit mushy at times. I had the opportunity to listen to the LP from 1974 and was able to compare it side by side with this CD transfer. The results are good and the CD suffers little or no loss in quality. Great recording of a superb work. ---James Stevenson, amazon.com

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