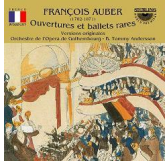


Daniel-Francois-Esprit Auber □ – Rare Overtures And Ballet Music (2000)

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Jenny Bell 1.1 *Ouverture* 7:35 L'Enfant Prodigue 2.1 *Ouverture* 7:35 La Sirène 3.1
La Sirène 8:41
Vendôme En Espagne
4.1 *Bolero* 3:56 4.2 *Air Pour Le Second Ballet* 6:34
Le Dieu Et La Bayadère
5.1 *Ouverture* 7:38 5.2 *No.5 Ballet* 9:58
La Muette De Portici Ballet
6.1 *No. 1* 1:53 6.2 *No. 2* 0:47 6.3 *No. 3* 0:50 6.4 *No. 4* 1:01 6.5 *No. 5* 2:15
Le Premier Jour De Bonheur
7.1 *Ouverture* 5:47
Gothenburg Opera Orchestra Andersson, B. Tommy - conductor

Composer François Auber was a major figure in nineteenth century French music, as well known as Richard Wagner and Franz Liszt. Auber's immense popularity in his own time has not helped his case since his death, as conventional wisdom dictates that the reason for Auber's neglect is the slight nature of his music's substance. This collection, Auber: Overtures et ballets rares, has arrived to set the record straight, and helps to establish that Auber may be the missing link in the main musical development of the Romantic era.

One can hear in the "Bolero" and "Air" from the 1823 opera Vendôme en Espagne that Auber had already learned the lessons of Beethoven. By the time of La Sirène in 1844, he approaches a style strongly reminiscent of Tchaikovsky, which is striking as the Russian composer was only a year old at the time this work was composed! From the slow opening of the same work, one can easily deduce what Richard Wagner may have gleaned from the work of Auber, although Wagner openly detested the composer. The specter of Rossini never seems very far from Auber's music, and it's hard to say who influenced whom. But more so than in Rossini you hear glimpses of music in Auber that belong in the future, particularly resembling that of later Russian composers.

This is the most satisfying-sounding disc from Sterling, and though it's still a little distant, every detail of the orchestration is heard. Conductor B. Tommy Andersson does a fine job of interpreting this mega-obscure music. In sum, if you lament that you've already exhausted the main literature of the Romantic era, this disc of Auber's orchestral music will cause you to think again. ---Uncle Dave Lewis, AllMusic Review

Auber's overtures, unlike many outwardly similar works of his contemporaries, utilize themes that later appear in the stage drama, in effect planting a seed in the listener's mind that will sprout dramatically at a critical point in the action. Examples of this can be found in the four "grand opera" overtures (L'Enfant prodigue, Jenny Bell, La Sirene, and Le Premier jour de bonheur) featured here. As advanced as this might have been for its time, to our modern ears it all just sounds like some well written, festive, tuneful opera music—which can take on a wearying sameness if you play this entire disc at one sitting (I was reminded more than once of the ballet music from Gounod's Faust). The disc also includes Vendome en Espagne and Le Dien et la bayadere, as well as the ballet music from La Muette de Portici. Even in light of the enthusiastic championing of Auber by the album's producer, I still found corresponding works by the apposite Berlioz to be far more imaginative and exciting, and Meyerbeer's to be more melodically distinctive. None to worry, fans of this prolific composer will be pleased with B. Tommy Anderson's bracing and enthusiastic performances with the fully committed Gothenberg Opera Orchestra. The recorded sound is rather anemic, but decently balanced. ---Victor Carr Jr, classicstoday.com

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