



## SCHMITT, F.: Piano Music (Larderet) - La Tragedie de Salome / Ombres / Mirages

Naxos 8.572194

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Student of Massenet and Fauré, contemporary of Ravel, it can hardly come as a surprise that Florent Schmitt's music is heady with Impressionism. The booklet writer, Gérald Hugon, points out that *Ombres* ("Shadows", 1912-17) has distinct parallels with Ravel's *Gaspard*, and it is easy to hear how. The first part ("J'entends dans le lointain") certainly seems of equivalent technical difficulty. The full form of the movement's title translates as "I hear in the distance drawn-out cries of the most poignant grief", and reflects the piece as response to the events of World War I. The movement spread out over nearly a quarter of an hour; its varied terrain is sensitively negotiated by the young Larderet. Just as the Mediterranean infuses the Impressionists, so it did "Mauresque", the work's slow, reflective central panel. The final part, "Cette ombre, mon image" (That shadow, my likeness) was inspired by a line by Walt Whitman and with it Schmitt's writing begins to enjoy a timelessness hitherto absent. Larderet, Paris and Lübeck trained (in the latter venue with Bruno-Leonardo Gelber), seems perfectly attuned to Schmitt's fragrant and fascinating, Ravel-yet-not-quite soundworld.

The *Mirages*, op. 70, only comprises two movements. The capricious element of the first (inspired by Pan) is superbly projected by Larderet; the second, "La Tragique Chevauchée" (The Tragic Gallop, dedicated to Cortot) is marked "Emporté et violent", and Larderet takes the "violent" element to heart, contrasting it with some delightful staccato passages.. Finally, the composer's own version of the second, shorter, version of *Tragédie de Salomé*, a ballet originally for orchestra. Naxos here presents a World Premiere recording. This is a multifaceted work, anticipating Stravinsky's *Rite* here while luxuriating in Debussian haze there. Hearing Impressionist orchestral scores on the piano is no cul-de-sac, as Jean-Efflam Bavouzet conclusively proved on his Chandos disc of works that included the magnificent *Jeux...* Larderet continues the tradition in fine fashion. His performance is gripping and multi-timbred. Perhaps the ecstasy of the central "Danse des perles" could have risen further. No such gripes to the final movement, however, with its Stravinskian dances expertly, and excitingly, realized.

This is definitely one of Naxos' better releases.

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