

# Ingrid Carbone

## CD-review

### Opus Klassiek

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#### **Liszt - Les Harmonies de L'esprit - Sacred Piano Works**

**Liszt:** Après une lecture du Dante S 161 nr. 7

6 Consolations S 172

Liebestraum nr. 3 S 541

Légende nr. 2 (St. François de Paule marchant sur les flots) S 175

Ingrid Carbone (piano)

Da Vinci Classics C00144 • 55' •

Recording: 2018, San Fili (I)

After her very successful Schubert CD (discussed here), the Italian pianist Ingrid Carbone has once again established herself with this new Liszt album as a musician who does not slavishly follow what others have done before her so often, but thanks to her imaginative playing she has managed to put her own imprint on these nine pieces. That is, it cannot be said often enough, not a matter of 'overacting' or playing on the superficial effect, but through often miniscule dynamic accents, the highlighting of a chord or sometimes even just a single note, a phrasing that, with the eye and ear focused on plastic expressiveness, thereby is just a little further and allows the balance between left and right hand to weigh in that same force field. While eye and ear must also be focused on the architecture of the whole!

Carbone chose a number of works that were composed within a span of about thirteen years: the Dante sonata, the six Consolations and the third Liebestraum from 1849/50 and the second Légende from 1862/63.

The six Consolations resemble in form and content the typical nocturnal style of those of Field and Chopin (who wrote no fewer than 21, the last in 1846). Whether or not Liszt

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was inspired by it? It was he who had Field's nocturnes published for a special edition that he guaranteed. Moreover, there are the dates of creation that support it, but there does not seem to be any influence: Liszt's idiom was too original for that. However, it is certain that they knew each other's work: after all, they were contemporaries, while Liszt as a pianist (and not only of his own work) traveled crisscrossing Europe and, like Chopin, certainly had a foothold in the Parisian artistic beau monde. The Richault publishing house located there published the first part (Suisse) of the cycle 'Années de pèlerinage' there in 1841.

But just like the nocturnes already mentioned, it also applies to the Consolations that each piece, no longer than a maximum of four minutes, evokes a completely separate world, while the chosen key remains limited to E (four times) and D-flat (two times). Not without reason, by the way: Liszt had "something" with these keys when he wanted to create a solemn, if not sacred "environment" for his musical reflections.

Liszt composed three 'Liebesträume'. Contrary to what might have been thought, they were not originally piano pieces, but songs on texts by Ludwig Uhland and Ferdinand Freiligrath. In 1850 both the songs and the piano pieces were published. The best known is the third in the piano version, a downright evergreen in which, even without knowing the lyrics, it is clear what it's all about: love, 'O Lieb, so lang du lieben kannst'.

The Dante sonata from 1849 is part of the second (Italian) book of the "Années de pèlerinage". Although designed as a fantasy (as the title also reads: "Fantasia quasi sonata après une lecture du Dante") Liszt has cast the piece in a clearly recognizable form, although the classical main form is not involved, supplemented by the great degree of interpretative freedom that this 'fantasia' is offered to the pianist, as shown for example by the (many) tempo indications: andante maestoso - presto agitato assai - andante quasi improvisato - andante ben marcato il canto - più tosto ritenuto e rubati quasi improvisato - allegro moderato - tempo rubato e molto ritenuto - andante - presto - andante tempo primo. Liszt drew his inspiration mainly from the "Divina Commedia", although no directly recognizable elements can be identified in the sonata because of its universal character. Which, incidentally, does not detract from its great significance in Liszt's piano oeuvre: the fantasy is without a doubt one of his best works.

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The "Deux Légendes" date from 1862-1863. Liszt was around fifty at the time and already had a brilliant career as a composer and pianist behind him. The first Légende is dedicated to Francis of Assisi who preaches to the birds: "a prédication aux oiseaux". We cannot tell from Liszt's world of sound exactly which birds are involved - unlike Messiaen later on, but it is a fine example of musical painting. This also applies to the second Légende, dedicated to Brother Francis of Paola, the founder of the Minims order. The story says that in 1464 he was made impossible to pass through the Strait of Messina and that he then draped his wide cloak over the water in such a way that it could function as a sail to be able to cross the Strait with it. As a composer you can certainly do something with that, let alone Liszt! If there was a composer in the nineteenth century who could symbolize wind and water in a piano work, it was he ...

The enthusiasm at the beginning of this review is somewhat tempered by the recording that does not do justice to both the playing of Ingrid Carbone and Bechstein A-228. For reasons that remain unclear to me, insufficient acoustic "space" has been created around the instrument, which becomes clear from the very first notes of the Dante sonata. This undeniably detracts from the qualities of this CD. Unfortunately, who was responsible for it is not mentioned in the booklet, but it is certainly not the fault of the piano tuner (whose name, strangely enough, is mentioned: Luigi Fuseo). With a playing time of about 55 minutes, the first Légende could easily have been added.