

JEAN-EFFLAM BAVOUZET

Debussy: Complete Works for Solo Piano, Vol. 1

Préludes, Books 1 & 2; Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon. Chan 10421

- **International Record Review**

July/August, 2007; Charles Timbrell

*Few pianists renowned for their unbridled virtuosity in Liszt and Prokofiev have been successful in the subtle sound-world of Debussy but **Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, like Sviatoslav Richter, is an exception.***

He brings a rare combination of colourism, textural definition and rhythmic alacrity to Debussy's 24 Préludes, conveying the character of each of them with a disarming ease that serves the music in an ideal way.

In short, this is one of the finest accounts of the 24 Préludes that I know, surpassing in many ways the classic accounts of Giesecking, Paul Jacobs and, more recently, Jean-Yves Thibaudet.

- **International Piano**

July/August, 2007; John Kersey

*Jean-Efflam Bavouzet has already won praise for his complete Ravel set (on MDG) and is now embarking on a complete survey of Debussy's piano music of which this is the first disc. Bavouzet is not yet as widely known as some, yet **the quality of this disc suggests the discovery of a major talent in the impressionist repertoire. Indeed there is a conviction and authority to his playing that genuinely merits comparison with Giesecking and Michelangeli** and that impresses with its natural rightness – a quality of integrity and humanity and the strong feeling that the music is the outcome of spontaneous improvisation.*

It is not often that one hears the Préludes played this well.

Bavouzet is excellently recorded and has set a very high standard for the remainder of his Debussy survey.

- **The Sunday Times: Classical CD of the week**

29 July 2007; Hugh Canning

*For a pianist plucked from obscurity – by the late Georg Solti – in 1995, Bavouzet has taken his time before committing his interpretations to disc...**here he announces himself as a peerless Debussyiste in the oft-recorded Préludes (Books 1 and 2)** and, as an encore, a piece discovered as recently as 2001, *Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon*, composed in 1916-17 as a thank-you to Debussy's coal merchant, who kept him well supplied during a hard winter. Amusingly, it quotes from *Feux d'artifice* (Fireworks), No XII from Book 2.*

*Bavouzet's command of touch, colour and rhythmic vitality are all that one could ask for in the Préludes, and he has a native feeling for the evocative atmosphere of these widely contrasting yet strangely unified pieces. His *Cathédrale engloutie* is an awesome account of the largest span of music in the two sets, "profoundly calm", as the composer*

directs, but increasing in grandeur towards the climax of the piece, while never robbing the music of its mystery. Bavouzet glitters in the more extrovert numbers. **This is essential Debussy, immaculately realised.**

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- **Gramophone**

July 2007; Jed Distler

“ a recital that fully justifies the anticipation ”

*'If asked to encapsulate Jean-Efflam Bavouzet's highly anticipated Debussy Préludes in two words or less, I'd say 'con amore'. Given the stunning excellence of his Ravel and Liszt releases (not on Chandos), it's no surprise that **Bavouzet commands all the shading, nuance and timbral sensitivity one expects in Debussy, together with virtuoso flair and characterful spontaneity** that adds welcome backbone to the composer's 'hammerless' aesthetic... Chandos provides excellent sound and scholarly, informative notes by Roger Nichols.'*

- **Daily Telegraph**

30 June 2007 ; Matthew Rye

*The French pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet has already won plaudits for his Ravel on disc (MDG) and **here he launches a new complete cycle of Debussy's piano works with an exceptionally fine recording of the two books of Préludes (plus a recently discovered, Baudelaire-inspired envoi written for his coalman).***

*There is a clarity about much of Bavouzet's playing that both illuminates Debussy's often complex textures and delineates the composer's typical splashes of melody. But there is no shortage of hazy atmosphere when required and his *Des Pas sur la neige* is shot through with aching melancholy.*

*At the same time his rhythmic acuteness gives pieces like *La Sérénade interrompue* and *La Puerto del vino* a crisp momentum of their own, while the more Lisztian pieces - *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* and *Feux d'artifice*, for example - are played with panache. **With such absorbing playing and excellent sound, this disc augurs well for the rest of the cycle.***

- **BBC Music Magazine**

'This generous first instalment of a projected complete cycle not only squeezes both books of Préludes onto a single disc, but also includes the recently discovered 'Les soire illumines par l'ardeur du charbon' as a welcome pendant. Jean-Efflam Bavouzet has a wonderfully light touch, imbuing 'Les collines d'Ancapri' with a skittish exuberance, or creating delicate wisps of mist in 'Brouillards' evoking Debussy's advice to forget that the piano has hammers.'

- **Classic FM Magazine**

July 2007; Julian Haylock

There is an emotional directness about Bavouzet's Debussy that is reminiscent of the great Samson François, tempered by a palette of glowing autumnal colours ...

Contact:

Kenneth Wentworth

Jonathan Wentworth Associates, Ltd.

914-667-0707

Kenneth@Jwentworth.com