

GRAMOPHONE

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Vagues et ombres

collectif9

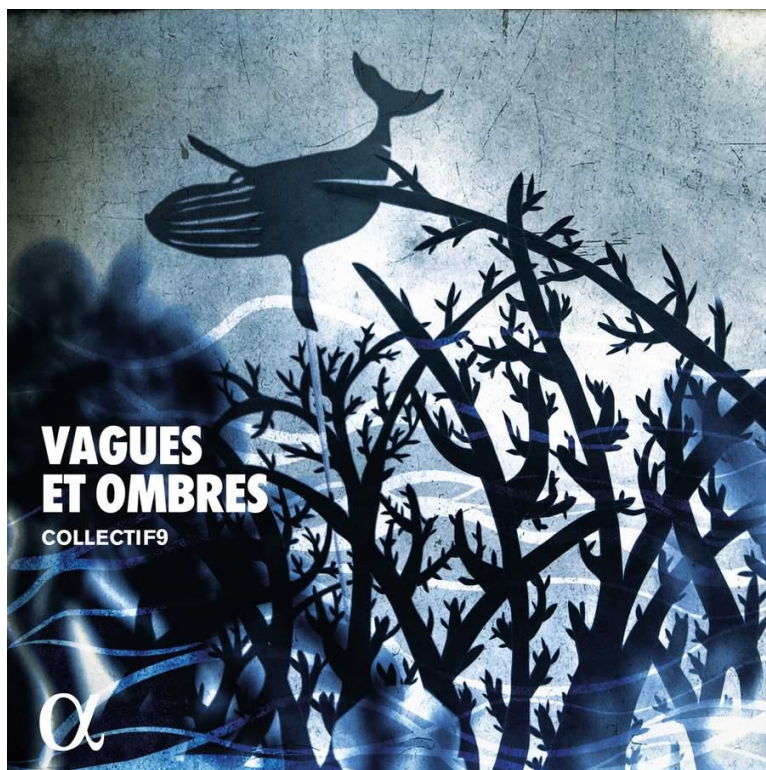
CD: ALPHA858

Author: Guy Rickards

Debussy's music has proved particularly attractive to arrangers, perhaps unsurprisingly since so many of his orchestral works were collective collaborations with the likes of Büsser, Caplet, Koechlin and others. Thibault Bertin-Maghit, double-bass player for **collectif9**, has an undeniable talent for recasting old works into new forms and all the Debussy works here are arranged by him, opening with a clutch of four smaller pieces from larger sets. The fourth *Étude* sounds so natural for string nonet that for a moment one believes this was how it was conceived; so, too, with 'Des pas sur la neige' from the first book of *Préludes*, a miniature tone poem in this quasi-string-orchestral guise. I am slightly (but only slightly) less convinced by the two movements from *Suite bergamasque*, though 'Clair de lune' is prettily done, a homage to Isao Tomita, whose transcription for Moog synthesiser achieved global renown.

La mer, Debussy's three symphonic sketches (the late, great John McCabe regarded *La mer* as a symphony on two notes), concludes the programme and works extraordinarily well. Sally Beamish made a fine transcription for piano trio (Orchid, 12/14), but Bertin-Maghit's is different again, recreating Debussy's magical score afresh. Yes, there is a certain loss of power and depth of sound at times, offset by gains in clarity. It does not replace the original, of course, but is a fascinating examination of it.

Set between the two Debussy sets is *Contact* (2020-21), an original work for string nonet by Luna Pearl Woolf, a regular collaborator with Collectif9. *Contact* is a quietly compelling fantasia, based – as the subtitle confirms – 'on the research of Dr Valeria Vergara on Beluga whale mother-calf contact calls and underwater Anthropocene noise, written for Collectif9'. The booklet note does not expand on this latter aspect, but the result is enthralling. Alpha's sound is excellent.



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Record and Artist Details

Genre: Chamber

Label: Alpha

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Mastering: DDD

Catalogue Number: ALPHA858

Tracks:

Claude Debussy:

(12) Etudes, Movement: Pour les sixtes

(24) Préludes, Movement: Des pas sur la neige

Suite bergamasque, Movement: Passepiéd

Suite bergamasque, Movement: Clair de lune

Luna Pearl Woolf:

Contact

Claude Debussy:

(La) Mer