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El Dorado

Caroline Léonardelli, harp

Ottawa-based harpist Caroline Léonardelli's fourth album to date offers an enticing mix of old and new: a program of beloved French standards by Debussy, Tournier and Damase book-ended by compositions by Canada's leading composer for the harp.

Devising convincing music for the so-called "naked piano" involves technical and conceptual challenges exasperating enough to discourage many a composer. Marjan Mozetich, however, composes in a style ideally suited for the instrument and has contributed greatly to its repertoire. His *El Dorado* was commissioned in 1981 for harpist Erica Goodman by Toronto's New Music Concerts and was followed by several further works for the instrument. There is a pronounced minimalist influence detectable in the evocative oscillations of Mozetich's early works which have since given way to a more supple and idyllic approach. Originally scored with string orchestra and formerly available on a now deleted CBC recording of the premiere performance, *El Dorado* is admirably revived here in a budget-conscious arrangement featuring the Penderecki String Quartet and double bassist Joel Quarrington. The album also features the third (!) recording of Mozetich's 1988 cycle of four solo pieces, *Song of Nymphs*, in an exceptionally scintillating performance. Among the French solo pieces placed between these Canadian works Marcel Tournier's *Féerie* stands out for its rhapsodic and dramatic sweep, a welcome antidote to the comparative bucolic placidity of its neighbours. The recording boasts outstanding sound engineered by celebrity tonmeister Anton Kwiatkowski.