

## Mp3 Jane Sharp - The Maiden And The Nightingale



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An intimate listening experience of ravishing piano music by Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Brahms, and Spanish composers Albiz and Granados. 14 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Traditional, CLASSICAL: New Age

Details: Notes on the Music of this CD Spanish music is like chocolate. It's rich, dark, complex, and luscious. It's meant to be savored, by the pianist and the listener. For full enjoyment, all the senses should be open to the experience: You can feel the warmth of the sun, or the velvety evening air. There is the elusive and intoxicating aroma of flowers. The strum of the guitar, the twilight song of a bird. The swirl of brightly colored skirts, the sparkle and clatter of tambourines, the flash of heels in emphatic rhythms. The palette of colors runs the full range, from deepest, darkest black, to crystalline. There are no pastels here all the colors are vivid, gorgeous, saturated. The mood can be contemplative, fervent, passionate, brooding, or poignant. In short, this music is a feast in every way. And very much a challenge for a pianist. "Evocation" and "Triana" are part of a suite of pieces entitled "Iberia" by Albiz. It was his masterwork. Each piece is meant to evoke Spain. Triana is the gypsy quarter of Seville. Apparently, Albiz came to feel that Iberia was unplayable, since it is orchestral rather than pianistic in sound and conception. But the piano, as an instrument, is capable of a universe of sound, color, complexity, and effect. That is why it is such a glorious instrument, and so compelling for a lifetime of adventure and study. "Laments, or the Maiden and the Nightingale" is part of a suite of pieces, called "Goyescas" by Granados. This CD is named after this magical piece. The last several moments of the piece is the nightingale's song. I know intimately what birdsong sounds like. We had a beloved canary named "Summer" for 11 years. He ruled us with an iron claw. We (my husband Ed and I) were his flock, and he was definitely highest in the pecking order. One night, I heard something from the room where his cage dominated the corner. His cage was covered, and the lights were off. He was supposed to be asleep. As I

listened closely, I realized he was singing in his sleep! It was very soft and unworldly in its sweetness. It was one of the most exquisite things I've ever heard. I felt that the nightingale's song should have that same quality. So, there is a little of Summer in the nightingale. Also, our recording company is named after our little but feisty bird. It seemed fitting. (At this point, I would like to insert a disclaimer. I am not a scholar. These notes are in no way meant to be knowledgeable or impressive or informative in the usual way of classical writings. I am just airing a personal point of view. "Music appreciation" for me means voicing my passionate enjoyment of my own musical experience, for what it's worth. So don't quote me or check my facts.) Chopin. I feel that I know Chopin as a very close and dear friend. I understand that as a person, he was reserved and not terribly approachable. He was always very ill with tuberculosis as an adult, and it did kill him in the end. He was one of those who, undoubtedly, made TB a fashionable illness and posture. Not because he was trying to set fashion, but because of his genius. Other would-be artists probably hoped that if they "caught" his illness, they would also "catch" his genius. Chopin had such a huge, potent, fierce personality trapped in a weak, ill body. In his music, I hear him so alone, always confronting his mortality and dealing with physical limitations no young man (or woman) should have to deal with. How it must have frustrated him! But he was able to turn it all into spun gold, into his unique outpouring of the deepest voice of the human soul. Such beauty! It's strange how suffering and isolation can result in an exquisite sensitivity and inwardness. When he explored and expressed this hard-won introspection, Chopin achieved a rapture of sound and color that must have made his sufferings fade, at least for a time. Perhaps his music was the flight of his soul, to escape his body. The Chopin Etudes are a masterpiece of the repertoire. Each one tackles one principle technical problem: octaves, left-hand extension, broken chords, thirds, sixths with other, less obvious, problems thrown in. In order for a pianist to be able to master them, study must be begun as early as possible, in order to train and shape the hand just as ballet dancers must train their bodies, early and consistently, before they can even attempt to dance. The trouble is, when you work on these pieces all your life, they sound it! They sound like the most grueling and unpleasant exercises imaginable. Some pianists manage to master the etudes enough to inject a good dose of musicality to make the pill go down more easily. But being able to capably play the notes (even with some musicality thrown in) is only the beginning with these pieces. The trick is to utterly forget the technical problems (presumably, you as the pianist have such mastery, you no longer have to pay all your attention to getting through by the seat of your pants) and hear the works as the

incredible poetry that they are. Then they become the towering works of art that Chopin created. That is his achievement: Within the strict parameters that define "etude", he managed to create sheer musical poetry. That is how I define my lifelong striving to master the Chopin etudes. I do not presume to say that I am anywhere near my goal. Chopin has a very complete palette of colors. Some of his music is very starkvery black and white. Some of his music has all the color and beauty and perfume of a lovely summer day. I often feel that I'm transported to some unimaginably beautiful, serene, garden full of wonders (colors, sounds, scents) never before seen or experienced by any being. I feel that Chopin, because of his constant awareness of the proximity of his own death, was never able to take anything for grantednot a beautiful summer day, or a perfect moment with a lover, or the sound of rain and ocean. And some of his music is definitely a precursor of Impressionism, with shimmering colors and washes of almost pastel shades. His mood can range from the deepest most honest introspection, to rapture, to melancholy, to shivering horror. He can unleash titanic forces from the keyboard, never before heard or imagined. His musical "voice" has all the immense power and vitality that his physical body lacked. Chopin is one of the greatest gifts to pianists and to the piano repertoire. Brahms. When Brahms is the composer, the music is virtually guaranteed to be gorgeous. He wrote masterpieces in so many formschamber music, orchestral, choral, instrumental, concerto. And when I say "masterpiece", I don't mean some old, stuffy, boring thing that goes on forever. It's liquid gold, burnished and warm and meltingly beautiful. When it's Brahms, just sit back and prepare to be ravished (in a good way). There are a few things that he wrote that, for my taste, are too blocky and massive. I think there are maybe two pieces that hit me like that. It's got to be my fault. Or perhaps it's the common and uninspired performances of those pieces. (Classical music is utterly at the mercy of the interpreter/artist. I'll get into that at another time.) The pieces on this CD are Brahms at his most intimate and poetic. These are works that a pianist can live with for a lifetime, and never tire ofand always find a deeper layer as one grows, as a person and as an artist. Brahms has been called "autumnal" in character and sound and color. I agree with that, but only as a starting point, in characterizing these pieces. Autumnal can imply passive and old and musty. But this music is alive with the sounds of naturethe whispering sigh of the wind, the shivering leaves, the tree boughs swaying, the silvery voice of water. There is the deepest wisdom of nature in the incandescent melodies, and there are breathtaking effects of sound and color. This is poetry in music. There is sadness and resignation in how ephemeral life is, and that the end of life is inevitable;

but there is comfort and acceptance in the cycles of nature, and the beauty of being part of the whole. There is a phenomenon of the night that I was struck by a long time ago, and always am aware of when it occurs: It happens on nights in the spring, summer and fall. The moon appears in some unusually exquisite guiseglowing golden, or wisped with tendrils of clouds, or haloed. The wind whispers and dances and gleams. The night is rife with magic. When all these elements come together, it's a Witching Night. I have no doubt at all that Brahms knew what a Witching Night is. He captured it in his music. Rachmaninoff. I came to Rachmaninoff relatively late in life (in my life as a pianist). I didn't begin to play his music until my late twenties. That was long after any formal lessons I took as a student. So I've never been taught the "proper" way to play Rachmaninoff, if there is such a thing. That I discovered his music so late was my own fault. During my conservatory days, I was such a prig. I felt that the only "real" composers worth studying were Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, possibly Haydn you get the idea. I was highly suspicious of Chopin, if you can believe it. I regarded Spanish music with contempt not that I knew a thing about it; but ignorance has never stopped me from being opinionated, and vocal about it too. My opinion of Rachmaninoff's music was that it was pretty movie soundtrack music, at best. (Real music is never pretty, because it must be truth). In my own defense, his music is often played that way. At any rate, once I discovered Rachmaninoff, there was no holding me back. It's just so fun to play! It's shaped for a pianist's hand. The sound is primal piano sound. The sonority that you build up with all the massive chords in his big pieces (Ed and I refer to them as "blasters") is an indescribable high. Blasters capture a quality of elemental passion that is uniquely Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff himself was, at least in public, a relentlessly dour person who never smiled. But in his music there is such warmth, such sensitivity and thought. He paints in sound. The colors run the full gamut, from black, white and grays, to glowing shades, to delicate pastels. The mood can be typically Russian dark, brooding, joyously melancholy while you can feel the icy wind whipping over vast distances. Or he can capture a moment in time, a feeling, that is indelibly etched in poetic sound and silence, coming from deep within and emerging like a gem held cupped in a child's hands. I'm glad now that I came so late to Rachmaninoff. You have to be an adult as a person, as a pianist, and as an artist to begin to understand his music and to be worthy of the attempt to express it. But you also have to retain the child inside, to fully enter into his profoundly compelling universe. Jane Sharp

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