

## CD REVIEW 101

### THE SONGS OF MATHILDE DE ROTHSCHILD

Charlotte de Rothschild (soprano), Adrian Farmer (piano)

2 CD set (140. 57)

Nimbus NI5903/4

Sechs Lieder (1876)  
Mazurka, Op. 26  
Auf den Bergen  
Das flotte Herz  
O sage nicht!  
Der Komet  
So war die Sonne scheintet  
Die Gletscher leuchten  
Komm! Geh' mit mir in's Waldesgrün  
Am See  
Seitdem du mich verlassen  
Nocturne, Op. 2  
Sechs Lieder (1897)  
Souvenir, Op. 2  
Zwölf Lieder  
Romance, parle moi  
Bluette  
Appelle-moi ton âme  
Près du lilas  
Coquetterie  
C'était en Avril  
Quand vous me montrez  
Romance Magyare  
Mazurka  
Vous avez beau faire et beau dire  
Les papillons  
Le rossignol  
La voix qui dit je t'aime  
Si mes vers avaient des ailes  
Charmeuse  
Danziam, valse chanté  
Waltz  
Souvenir  
Si j'étais rayon  
Je n'ose pas  
Puisque vous êtes revenue  
Enfant, rêve encore  
Feuillets d'Album, Op. 2  
Chanson du pêcheur  
Tristesse  
Le vallon natal



Having reviewed with great pleasure Charlotte de Rothschild's CD of Faery Songs, I was delighted when Nimbus asked me to review this two set disc.

She studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg and at the Royal College of Music in London. She is a very

fine and reliable singer although, sadly, not as well known as she should be. She also has the advantage of being a very likeable person and, as a connoisseur of singers, I have never found anything lacking in her performances.

As to the composer, Hannah Mathilde von Rothschild, she was born in Frankfurt on 5 March 1832 and was a very talented pianist even as a child. She had an intelligent admiration for art and literature. Obviously she was a member of the family of the Rothschild banking empire and, because of this, their social standing was elevated. It is said that they supported musicians such as Mendelssohn, Herz, Spohr, Meyerbeer, Rossini, Liszt and Chopin and that the Rothschild ladies had lessons with Chopin.

Mathilde married her cousin Wilhelm when she was 17. She had three daughters and had a happy life surviving her husband for some 23 years. They had set up the Naples branch of the family business and so shared their homes between Frankfurt and Naples. She died on 8 March 1924.

As well as German Lieder and French songs she wrote some music for the piano.

The singer Adelina Patti admired her songs and Sir Charles Halle spoke well of her.

The sleeve notes refers to the poor respect that women composers had in the nineteenth century and quotes, as examples, Clara Schumann, Fanny Mendelssohn, Pauline Viardot, Amy Beach but it cannot be said that any of these were great composers. Far from it. Chaminade was not a great composer either. However, great women composers do exist such as Elisabeth Lutyens, Elisabeth Maconchy, Ruth Gipps and Vitezslava Kapralova.

The first six songs on CD 1 of German lieder are exceptionally beautiful and well written without banality or Schubertian vamping on the piano. The melodies in the vocal line are very effective and never trite; the piano parts are integral, not just an accompaniment and sensitively played. I have to repeat that the singing is impeccable and the diction quite superb. The clarity of her voice is faultless; there are no gimmicks and no ostentation, just singing of the highest order and so mercurial and natural.

There follows a mazurka the sixth item from Op 2 Feuilletts d'Album, a group of piano pieces. It is slight and inconsequential.

Nine more German songs come next. They are gems among them *Das flotte Herz* and the very touching *O sage nicht* and *Der Komet* and a welcome setting of Ruckert's *So war die Sonne scheinend*.

Listening to all these songs in one hearing may not be advantageous because they all inhabit the same world musically, although they all have beauty and a sincere form of expression. The overwhelming feature is Charlotte's singing with her pure unaffected voice. These songs must be taken up by others.

There are over 50 songs here on these two discs and Charlotte must be heartily congratulated on learning them and giving them to us. This is no mean achievement.

Back to the solo piano with the first item from Opus 2, a Nocturne played by Adrian Farmer with great sensitivity but it suffers from being Chopinesque.

The second CD is of French songs which are, perhaps, more mercurial than the German songs. They are more songs about love, young love and their trial and tribulations. There is no new style as such since the songs all come from the same stable. To deal with all the items would be repetitious.

The sound quality is very good and whatever one thinks of the songs, the singing is sensationally good and Charlotte must be thanked again for bringing to us rare music.

For lovers of song, rarities and especially magnificent voices this double CD must not go unnoticed.

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