
NEWS & INFORMATION

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For Release: October 1996

For: Cedille Records
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**SPARKLING SONG CYCLE CD
"A DELIGHTFUL SURPRISE"
SAYS COMPOSER**

**Generous Serving of Argento's Song Cycles,
Plus Songs and Vocalises by Vaughan Williams
Show Soprano's Vast Versatility**

Soprano Patrice Michaels Bedi, the uncommonly versatile soprano profiled in the current *Fanfare* (September/October 1996), relishes ambitious recording projects that demand an inordinate range of vocal and intellectual talent -- projects the average modern diva couldn't attempt. *The New Yorker* said her *Songs of the Romantic Age* CD (Cedille 90000 019), with works by 25 composers, pegged her as "a formidable interpretative talent." Based on her singing of secular cantatas and sacred motets on *A Vivaldi Concert* (Cedille CDR 9000 025), the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* found the completeness of her artistry "nothing short of spectacular."

Miss Michaels Bedi's newest CD, *To Be Sung Upon the Water: Song Cycles by Dominick Argento* (Cedille CDR 90000 029), continues in that vein, with performances ranging from dramatic characterizations in *Letters from Composers* (such as her sullen Schubert and petulant Puccini) to flat-out coloratura in Vaughan Williams's Three Vocalises for Soprano and Clarinet.

"What a delightful surprise," Argento says of the CD. "Not only does Miss Michaels Bedi sing these songs beautifully, but her various partners . . . are equally sensitive performers. Bravo to all."

The disc includes the world premiere recording of Argento's *Songs about Spring* for voice and piano, based on poems by e.e. cummings. "This first recording . . . should serve as a model for all future performances," the composer says. Argento composed this song cycle (his first) while still an undergraduate at Baltimore's Peabody Institute of Music. It demonstrates he's always had a way with words.

Here, too, is the only available CD recording of *Letters from Composers* for voice and guitar. Based on letters and fragments of letters written by Chopin, Mozart, Schubert, Bach, Debussy, Puccini, and Schumann, they illustrate a wide range of personal problems having almost no relevance to their compositional careers. The musical settings show Argento's understanding of each composer's expressive style.

To Be Sung Upon the Water (Wordsworth settings scored for high voice, clarinet, and piano) is available in only one other version -- a reissue from the 1970s. The cycle is noteworthy for the subtle and sensitive use of clarinet and bass clarinet (performed here by Chicago Symphony Orchestra principal clarinetist Larry Combs).

The clarinet reappears in Vaughan Williams's *Three Vocalises for Soprano and Clarinet*, one of the composer's last works. Vaughan Williams's love of early English folk music is evident in the song selections from *Along the Field*, his settings of A.E. Housman poems for the unusual combination of voice and violin. These are the only available CD versions of these songs and vocalises.

Miss Michaels Bedi studied composition with Argento at the University of Minnesota. They share a fondness for intimate vocal forms and a distinct literary sensibility. "Argento's works impress on the listeners a strong musical personality, a result of his being drawn perpetually to the human voice" (*New Grove Dictionary of American Music*). For her part, Miss Michaels Bedi told *Fanfare*, "I've always been attracted to the literary impulse behind music." Besides producing musical sounds, she wants to tell stories.

The audio-demonstration quality sound of the recording owes partly to the Lexicon 20-bit digital processor (analog-to-digital converter) used by engineers Mitchell G. Heller and Lawrence Rock, explains producer James Ginsburg. Besides omnidirectional B&K 4006 mics used for overall sound pickup, the engineers used a B&K 4011 cardioid mic to spotlight Miss Michaels Bedi without artificially "warming up" the sound of her top register. Other directional spot mics, used for clarity and immediacy, were Sennheiser MKH 40s for a bright clean piano sound and a BBC-Coles Ribbon Microphone to elicit a warmly focused sound from the other instruments (guitar, clarinet, and violin).

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TO BE SUNG UPON THE WATER
SONG CYCLES BY DOMINICK ARGENTO
Cedille CDR 90000 029

ARGENTO: Letters from Composers (26:24); Songs About Spring (10:45);
To Be Sung Upon the Water (27:22)
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Three Vocalises for Soprano and Clarinet (4:02);
Selections from "Along the Field" (10:36)

Patrice Michaels Bedi, soprano
Elizabeth Buccheri, piano
Larry Combs, clarinet
Jeffrey Kust, guitar
Elliott Golub, violin