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Dallapiccola: *Complete Songs*

CD Piccinini, Caiello, Pallucchi; Abbondanza; Farinelli (piano). Texts online only. Brilliant Classics 95202 (2)



THE TITLE OF THIS DISC is misleading. It's listed as the complete songs of Italian modernist composer Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975), but more than three-quarters of the tracks are his arrangements of Italian songs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, composed by the likes of Monteverdi, Scarlatti, Caccini, Caldara, Frescobaldi and several others. Many of these Baroque-era songs will be familiar to anyone who has ever studied voice, as they can also be found in the ubiquitous anthology *24 Italian Art Songs and Arias*. The arrangements in that anthology were created at the end of the nineteenth century by Alessandro Parisotti, and the liner

notes to the Dallapiccola disc pointedly include Parisotti's work in the category of "various collections that distorted the music by tending more toward Romanticism." Dallapiccola's realizations of these songs are indeed more classically austere, with less ornamentation in the vocal lines, and spare, precise piano accompaniments. True to this spirit, soprano Monica Piccinini, mezzo Elisabetta Pallucchi, and baritone Roberto Abbondanza give respectful, sensitive, but non-flashy readings of these pleasant pieces, although Abbondanza brings some welcome fire to the jaunty "Danza, danza fanciulla." Filippo Farinelli is the elegant, meticulous pianist.

Of much greater interest to non-musicologists are the two original cycles Dallapiccola wrote for voice and piano: *Rencesvals, trois fragments de "La chanson de Roland"* (1946) and *Quattro liriche di Antonio Machado* (1948). Dallapiccola's own songs show the same dedication to stripped-down, transparent textures and directness of expression as his arrangements do. He admired and often employed Schoenberg's twelve-tone system, but these songs are very accessible, as well as powerful, intriguing, even haunting. Abbondanza is authoritative and dramatically convincing in *Rencesvals*, which Dallapiccola wrote for Pierre Bernac. Soprano Alda Caiello does an impressive job with the elusive, ghostly *Machado* songs, sliding deftly along the dissonant but expressive melodic lines. But she doesn't demonstrate quite the same intimacy with this cycle as Abbondanza does with his. Still, persuasive cases are made for both of these worthy, intriguing sets. The booklet says that the song texts are available online, but I couldn't find them on the Brilliant Classics website. —Joshua Rosenblum

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