

AUDIOPHILE AUDITION

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Maya Le Roux, guitar

Maya Le Roux is a Swiss guitarist of Serbian origin living in Geneva, Switzerland. Favoring a decidedly melodic and tonal syntax, her music communicates something of Villa-Lobos, especially in the opening *Ghostly Eyes*, a soprano aria accompanied by guitar and orchestra, with words by Gerard Le Roux that seek out a father the young woman of the poem has never known. The ambiance is one of richly sensuous salon music, Vivaldi with a

sultry South American flair, reminiscent of Rodrigo cross-fertilized by the French and Alsatian school.

Ballade of the Magic Valley is Le Roux's *Guitar Concerto No. 1*, rather lush in scoring although a bit slickly reminiscent of Rodrigo. The guitar part plays legato and parlando, the folk element Serbian and partially gypsy. The *Adagio* features the oboe and guitar in a chromatic duet that invokes elements of chant. The guitar has a cadenza in a meditative style that rejoins the string orchestra in a manner that recalls the Vivaldi *Guitar Concerto in D*. The *Allegro*, fashioned like a concerto grosso, utilizes brisk rhythms in syncopation, a kind of ethnic hora cross-fertilized with a reel. Those who recall the *Azerbaijan Mugam* recorded by Stokowski years ago may find here a kindred spirit.

The *Concerto Latino* for guitar, string orchestra, and percussion pays homage to Astor Piazzola and the tango sensibility, and at several points the melodic line resembles the old standby, "Fernando's Hideaway." The guitar solo plays an introspective ballad and dance in canto jondo, deep song. The string line, chromatic and modally angular, casts a gypsy aura in tango rhythm in plucked and bowed colors. The percussion adds a perky erotic dimension in a Hollywood style. A cantus firmus provides the basis for the lyrical musings of guitar and string orchestra in the *Adagio*, another shapely tango that employs the cellos and percussion. The middle section brightens and intensifies the colors before pizzicato and strummed arpeggios in the cadenza take us back to village reveries. The da capo once more combines guitar and syncopated strings and percussion. A series of drum beats, taps, and bass fiddle riffs opens the last movement, another Serbian excursion in rhythm and color a la Piazzola. Knuckles on the fingerboard and playing close to the bridge add to the exotics of the bouncy music. Modal strings lines interconnect and diverge to leave the guitar in solo musings in the form of a nocturne with high string punctuations. The percussion, strings, and bass lines converge--a nice moment of audiophile sonic separation---courtesy of Taurus Studio.

The solo guitar *Petite suite pour un Prince* is a seven-movement homage to Antoine Saint-Exupery and *Le Petit Prince*, a tender piece that makes a close cousin to Ravel's *Ma Mere l'Oye*. A sweet *Prelude* leads to a short rhythmic dance, *Le Roi*. More, more, more. . . stars twangs briefly and then breaks into arpeggios and ostinati. *The Drunk's Planet* provides a bit of jazzy humor, strumming chords then rapping on the wood, only to hesitate and advance in a wobbly style, a poor man's *Alborada del gracioso*. The heart of the suite, *Tendre Renard*, celebrates the wise Fox who tells us that "those things most essential are invisible to the eye." *The Imperious Flower* resembles an etude by Villa-Lobos or Torroba, rather baroque in sound. *Adieu Petit Prince* says farewell in broken chords and single plucked tone, with passing dissonances that dissolve as a love song emerges, a hymn to the eternal child in us all.

--Gary Lemco