



Armin Jordan conducts Debussy, Roussel & Chausson

aud 95.648

EAN: 4022143956484



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[American Record Guide](#) (01.01.2021)

The Epitaphes are Debussy piano pieces orchestrated by Ernest Ansermet, who also recorded them (I have that recording). They have not been recorded much as orchestral pieces. This is Ansermet's orchestra, but he died in 1969. Still, it sounds the way he made them sound—even in Lucerne at the festival in 1988 and 1994. Despite the generally beautiful sound, I don't find the Chausson an attractive recording. Maybe it's the way Felicity Lott is miked— or maybe she was just out of sorts that day. She has an irritating edge to her sound. It may be that I am used to a more subtle sound: my favorite recordings are by Victoria de los Angeles and Montserrat Caballé. Chausson was a student of Massenet and Franck, but he was also friends with—and influenced by— Debussy and Albeniz. It is not a mistake to give this song cycle a slight Spanish edge. And I cannot now like the Roussel—the 19- minute Suite 2 from the ballet. I say "now" because when I was a student in Chicago Jean Martinon made quite a convincing case for the composer. Here his music seems brash and dissonant. I saw Jordan conduct this orchestra, and I thought he was excellent. I expected to be disappointed, because I remember seeing Ansermet; but Jordan maintained the orchestra's tradition quite well.