

PAULINE INSPIRED - REAFFIRMING THE TALENT OF A ROMANTIC COMPOSER

Text by Katia Meylan, L'Agenda, www.l-agenda.ch

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Who today does not know Saint-Saëns, Fauré or Chopin? But who can name their contemporary and friend, a composer of no less admirable talent, Pauline Viardot? The mezzo-soprano Laure de Marcellus and the pianist Alberto Urroz participate, with their album entitled *Pauline Inspired - Melodies by and for Pauline Viardot* recorded in 2021, to restore to this accomplished artist the attention she deserves.

The history of classical music has not paid much attention to 19th century women composers, few of whose names are as familiar to us as those of their male romantic colleagues.

In a concert last Saturday at the Palais de l'Athénée in Geneva, Laure de Marcellus and Alberto Urroz presented a program of melodies written or inspired by Pauline Viardot. Indeed, the composer and performer "inspired everyone. Either one was in love with her, or one wrote pieces for her, or one painted her portrait...", smiled Laure de Marcellus, who weighed her words and took advantage of several short interludes to take the time to provide the audience with some fascinating biographical elements.

Accented by the presence of Pauline Viardot's great-great-granddaughter in the front row of the hall, it is adrenalin that seems to prevail in the first two Spanish melodies composed by Pauline. The performers show a proud enthusiasm, putting the composer in the spotlight, and the audience shows a feverishness to discover her.

Pauline Inspired

The following airs will reveal more fully the voice of Laure de Marcellus, warm and determined. We discover two mazurkas by Chopin set to words, then two unpublished melodies by Chapí, recorded for the first time and which, with their theatrical aspect, superbly highlight the mezzo-soprano. At the last note of *La canzone contadina*, a melody from a cycle of five compositions inspired by Tuscan folk songs, the applause and exclamations are overwhelming. At the end, Laure de Marcellus carried us away in *Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix* from the opera *Samson et Dalila*, composed by Saint-Saëns for Pauline. On this same aria, Alberto Urroz revealed delicate cascades of caresses, his piano having nothing to envy to the winds of the initial score.

Before leaving us, Laure de Marcellus shares one more piece of information, carefully crafting its effect as a final twist: Almost everyone has heard the *Habanera* from the opera *Carmen*. But few know that Pauline Viardot helped Bizet in the composition of the famous aria. "No?!" whispers a voice in the audience. And it is on this encore, which takes the hue of all that preceded it, that the concert ends. Love is a rebel bird...

Pauline Inspired - Melodies by and for Pauline Viardot
CD to be released in March 2022

