

ELLEN HARGIS

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Performance and Recording Reviews for the Hargis – O’Dette Duo

Recital in Rochester, NY

“Friday evening’s entertainment, a recital by well-known soprano Ellen Hargis and lute virtuoso Paul O’Dette was voted by many the most stimulating concert...Hargis’s resplendent voice, which she wields with consummate authority, ran the expressive gamut from the desperation of Alessandro Scarlatti’s Orfeo and Barbara Strozzi’s haunting ground-bass lament *L’amante segreto*, to the impassioned and coquettish episodes in Cesti’s cantata. The exceptional acoustics of Kilbourn Hall meant that not a note was lost in O’Dette’s exquisitely paced renditions of music by Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger and Alessandro Piccinini... the duo left us with a beguiling rendition of Tarquinio Merula’s *Folle e ben che si crede*.”

17th-Century Music – Fall 2009

“Concert brings the Elizabethan to Life: Vancouver Early Music Festival performance reconstructs historic with impressive results”

“It would be hard to imagine the queen in possession of better musicians than the ones we heard, especially O’Dette, who was faultlessly fluent on his lute. Hargis’s soprano rang clearly and eloquently. There were two songs in particular that were shattering: *Flow My Tears* and *In Darkness Let Me Dwell*. Hargis in her singing was moving beyond words. The house was deservedly full.”

Vancouver Sun - August 7, 2007

“Laissez la verte couleur had an unaffected directness, with a compelling clarity of diction and phrasing. For *Hélas faut-il que je lamente*, Hargis underline the drama.”

Boston Globe - June 14, 2007

“Soprano Ellen Hargis and the lutenist Paul O’Dette have unimpeachable Boston credentials. Ms. Hargis, who sings with a clear tone and minimal vibrato, brought a hint of introspective drama to Monteverdi’s *Ohimè ch’io cado* and *Quel sguardo sdegnosetto*. Between them she gave a palpably forlorn account of *Si dolce è’l tormento*. Much of Ms. Hargis’s expressive charm is in her flexibility, a quality heard to best effect in three songs by Barbara Strozzi. Her thoughtful pacing and the ease with which she moved through the gentle chromaticism of *Respira, mio core* and the increasingly florid writing in *L’amante segreto* gave these songs a monumental quality, as if they were operatic fragments. And a vigorous reading by both Ms. Hargis and Mr. O’Dette gave *Questa è la nuova* a folkish, almost rustic quality. Mr. O’Dette accompanied Ms. Hargis on the chitarrone, a deferential instrument by nature, made to provide support. That was mostly how Mr. O’Dette used it. But he also played solo works by Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger and Bellerofonte Castaldi that ask for more, and Mr. O’Dette responded with the kind of virtuosic detail and interpretive fluidity he has always brought to his lute performances.”

New York Times - May 18, 2007

The Power of Love

“Against a background of civil and religious war pitting the Cavaliers, partisans of King Charles I, against the Puritans, enemies of music and entertainments, this album is dedicated to the power of love, which remains ever indifferent to the vagaries of the world at large. The first golden age of song to develop in England was imported, like so many other things, from Italy. Nicolas Lanier, John Wilson and Henry Lawes championed a repertoire that focused on emotions and combined poetry, refinement and grace.

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Monteverdi's influence – and in particular, that of his *Lamento d'Arianna* – is obvious in Lanier's *Love's Constancy* and the surprising *Nor com'st thou yet*. Lawes' *Farewell, despairing hopes*, with its affects and piercing declamation, is by contrast an important milestone on the way to the great laments of Purcell.

Above and beyond these elements are Ellen Hargis' and Paul O'Dette's magical performances – or rather incarnation – of melancholy, regret, and love's urgency, which confirms that the twenty-five-year partnership between the soprano (who is by turns charming, afflicted and hedonistic) and the lutenist/theorbist has resulted in such a close rapport that each has become the 'double' of the other. The entire recording deserves the highest praise, including the unexpected and humorous "dessert", Richard Rodgers' *My Funny Valentine*." (Five stars)

Roger Tellart, Goldberg Magazine, 2005

"The names of Ellen Hargis and Paul O'Dette carry with them a virtual guarantee of music-making of the very highest order, a promise irresistibly fulfilled by this release...Buy it and prepare to be bewitched."

Fanfare - Oct./Nov. 2005

"...no one even slightly familiar with the early music scene needs and introduction to either Miss Hargis or Mr O'Dette; I expected an excellent production, and it is."

American Record Guide - Sept/Oct. 2005

The Christmas Album

"Soprano Ellen Hargis unleashes a performance that is breathtaking in its intensity..."

Early Music America - Winter 2005

"If you want to give yourself or someone else the perfect holiday moment, I would suggest combining a mug of mulled wine, a crackling fire, your favorite comfy chair, and Ellen Hargis and Paul O'Dette's new CD "The Christmas Album," a well-chosen and brilliantly performed collection of hauntingly beautiful carols, tunes, and songs for the holiday season."

Angela Mariani, (NPR) – December 2005