

Plus Album review

# The first album by soprano Katharine Dain and pianist Sam Armstrong: exceptionally successful

**Erik Voermans** 27 November 2020 , 9:49 AM



At the beginning of this year, soprano Katharine Dain and pianist Sam Armstrong were hard at work on Olivier Messiaen's song cycle *Poèmes pour Mi* with a view to concerts later this year. Corona threw a spanner in the works.

That was annoying to say the least, but they also saw a bright side. Now they could work in peace and without a deadline on their first CD, which not only features *Poèmes pour Mi* but also songs by Saariaho, Dutilleux, Debussy and Claire Delbos, Messiaen's first wife, whom he affectionately called Mi. The program of the CD, which they called *Regards sur l'infini*, is exceptionally successful and the performances are also beautiful.

The sequence of the pieces gains much coherence because the composers and their styles come to the listener like a palindrome. This makes it extra clear to hear how stylistically this music is related. The nine-part *Poèmes pour Mi* is the longest and central piece. Delbos' *Dors* (on a text by Cécile Sauvage, Messiaen's mother) is the shortest by less than two minutes. Also intriguing are Debussy's four songs, the only ones for which he wrote the lyrics himself.

Dain honors the French perfume with her beautiful, clear voice and Armstrong accompanies her empathically. What a beautiful CD.

## Classic

Katharine Dain, Sam Armstrong *Regards sur l'infini* (Mountain Records)









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