

## RECORDINGS

# A jewel of a recording

**Panache** ★★★★★

Julie Nesrallah, mezzo-soprano;  
Caroline Leonardelli, harp (Centaur)

BY RICHARD TODD

**W**hat is the colour of Julie Nesrallah's voice? Honey and occasionally caramel come to mind, but most of all one thinks of dusky gold. And what colour corresponds to Caroline Leonardelli's harp playing? Pearl, without a doubt. If you can imagine the musical equivalent of a golden brooch studded with perfect pearls, you'll have an idea of how this CD sounds.

More specifically, it includes 21 songs by nine composers. In most cases the harp accompaniments are arrangements of keyboard or orchestral originals. This isn't as simple a process as it may seem. Even though the written music for harp looks similar to that of the piano and is played with two hands, the harp has neither the piano's dynamic range nor quite the same degree of chromatic flexibility. The arrangements work well, even if it's hard not to imagine the original piano setting hiding in the notes in Schumann's *Three Byron Songs*, op. 95. Monteverdi's *Lasciatemi morire* comes off especially well. It was conceived and written several generations before the piano was invented, and the composer would not have expected, or probably even imagined, the range and flexibility of the modern instrument.

There are also pieces specifically written for voice and harp by Marcel Tournier and Gabriel Fauré. Not surprisingly, these songs are among the most appealing. Three songs by Debussy and Ravel's *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques* are of similar appeal, despite being transcriptions.



Mezzo-soprano Julie Nesrallah, left, and harpist Caroline Leonardelli complement each other wonderfully on Panache.