

CHANSON ET DANSES • Oslo Kammerakademi • LAWO 1225 (72:14)
GOUNOD *Petite Symphonie*, op. 216. **KOECHLIN** Septet for Winds, op. 165. **SCHMITT** *Lied et Scherzo*, op. 54. **GOUVY** *Petite suite gauloise*, op. 90. **D'INDY** *Chanson et Danses*, op. 50



The Oslo Kammerakademi is comprised of 11 woodwind and horn players plus a double bassist, though not all of them play on every work here. Oboist David Friedmann Strunck is their artistic director. Together they deliver a program of delightful wind chamber music from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The CD begins with the amiable Gounod nonet that he called *Petite Symphonie*, composed in 1885. This four-movement piece (19:56) is a harmonious and gentile romp with an up-tempo third movement scherzo that begins with blatting natural horns leading to some bouncy themes led by clarinets. It is delightful ear candy for lovers of wind playing. The thematic material is not always memorable, but it is always pleasant and diatonic. Koechlin's Septet is from 1937 and is the only piece here that includes a saxophone. This six-movement work (15:27) opens with a movement for solo clarinet. This is followed by a Pastorale where more of the ensemble gets engaged—first flute, then natural horn, then clarinet join the fray. The music is flowing and more chromatic with some tangy harmonies. At 4:35 it is by far the longest movement here. The third movement is airy and light and is followed by a fugal fourth movement, where the oboe establishes the theme right from the start and the other players join in the slow-moving fugue. Some of the harmonies are joyously piquant here. The fifth movement is marked *Sérénité* and, as the marking suggests, it is calm and serene music with some gorgeous chromatic harmonies. The Finale returns to fugal form with a boisterous theme from the horns. The tempo is bright and lively, bringing the piece to a satisfying end. Florent Schmitt's single-movement *Lied et Scherzo* from 1910 (10:23) is more challenging harmonically. Natural horn carries the thematic material over a double wind quintet backing. I found this a less appealing work (as I do for much of Schmitt's output). Gouvy's *Petite suite gauloise* (1888) returns us to a more consonant harmonic framework. Its four movements (11:11) are for a wind septet, including the double bass. As I am an admirer of Gouvy's symphonic and chamber music, this did not disappoint. The up-tempo Finale was much fun. D'Indy's *Chansons et Danses* (from 1898 and whence this collection gets its title) closes the CD. Its two movements make up a substantial work at 15:15, with a singing first movement followed by a tarantella-like closing movement that begins with energy and ends softly. The performances from the Oslo Kammerakademi are exquisite throughout the program. The recorded sound is immediate and dynamic, with an ideal balance of direct and hall sound. If you love wind chamber music, this is certainly a terrific offering.

Mark Novak, Fanfare Magazine, March/April 2022

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