



Pas de deux

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[American Record Guide](#) (Harrington - 01.05.2013)

The Bard sisters are from Germany and new to me. Their perfect ensemble and terrific SACD recording make for a memorable introduction. Here we have French selections that all relate to dance. As the liner notes aptly put it, the lines between popular and serious music are not as clear in French repertoire as in German. Therefore we have lightweight pieces like Scaramouche and much more serious works like the Rhapsodie Espagnole. Several of the 12 pieces in Bizet's Jeux d'Enfants have dance subjects. Poulenc combines both styles in his Two-Piano Sonata: the austere, chorale-like opening movement is followed by a stylized dance movement. We have here a very well balanced program with a great theme.

The performances are as good as I have ever heard in this repertoire. It will only take you a few seconds of the opening Milhaud to know that this will be a very special recording. There is a joyous brilliance to their playing that jumps out of the speakers. From the ethereal opening of the Ravel in 'Prelude a la Nuit' to the glorious celebration of 'Feria', the rhythmic pulse conveys the essence of Spain. Bizet's wonderful set of piano duet pieces was written in 1871 and sets a precedent for several future French ones: Debussy's Petite Suite (1886-89) Faurés Dolly (1893-96), Ravel's Ma Mere l'Oye (1908-10). It is also very similar to Satie's piano solo suite Sports et Divertissements. Poulenc's sonata is a large, ambitious work that calls for the mature musicianship the Bards offer.

I predict a great future for this duo – they seem to have it all. I would compare them to the young Labeques and eagerly await their next release.