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HOMEMUSICIANS CD REVIEWS

Sonja Béets' "De Stad"

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The piano gently chimes, and with its ensuing melody, it emits the very essence of emotion inside of the few seconds that exist between the start of Sonja Béets' "De Stad" and the first appearance of mezzo soprano Joke de Vin, whose voice somehow fills the air with just as much texture and tone as the keys do. There's a hesitance to the dispensing of every note in the backdrop, but in the front of the mix we find de Vin very confident and ready to apply an acrylic paint to this otherwise stoic sonic canvas. Whether you're a longtime follower of classical music or only have an ear for the occasional aria, "De Stad" is a beautiful, transcendent listening experience that

grips its audience from the moment that it commences to the very second in which it disappears into the ethers from which it first arose only three minutes prior. Sonja Béets proves herself to be one of the finer composers currently operating out of her corner of the world in this ballad, and moreover, the Muzikale Stadswandeling, for which she is the principle creator.

Béets' background as a painter and poet translates particularly well in "De Stad," and one could even argue that her approach to free tonality is all the more unique because of it. Every strand of melody here bears a strikingly colorful hue, and when they're brought together in a singular sweeping verse, they're all the easier for us to appreciate. Despite the relatively conservative stylization of the first half of this composition, there's a cathartic release in the second that seems to unite all of the tension into one neatly-arranged eruption of emotion (which is no easy feat, particularly when we examine just how stripped-down a song this really is).

There will always be critics who prefer something a bit more forceful, and fanciful for that matter, but for what I look for in a piece of neo-romantic music, this is about as good as it gets. Joke de Vin's contribution to this track cannot be discounted by any means, but make no mistakes about it – "De Stad" is a showcase for the one and only Sonja Béets and the majestic depth of compositional wit she seeks to share with the world through her work.

Fans of neo-romantic classical music truly can't go wrong with the impeccable soundtrack that is "De Stad," and I would actually say that novice listeners with virtually no previous knowledge of the genre would likely find this to be as stimulating a piece as longtime aficionados most definitely will. There's a timelessness about this style of music that will never change, and yet there's as much to be said about the modernity of this piece as there is its classical construction. I highly doubt that I'm the only critic praising its originality (not to mention its sprawling use of melody in the most stinging of ways), but if there were any questions as to whether or not Ms. Sonja Béets was ready to ascend the hierarchy of her storied genre, this song should serve as proof of her eminence in the year 2019.

Clay Burton