



## LE DOUX APPEL: MÉLODIES OF CHARLES-MARIE WIDOR

AMY PFRIMMER, soprano

KRISTIN DITLOW, piano

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### RELEASE INFO:

Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937), one of the most influential French organists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, jokingly referred to himself as the *substitute organist* of the church of St. Sulpice, Paris, despite his 64-year tenure there. While best known for his ten organ symphonies, Widor composed in a wide variety of sacred and secular genres: chamber music, orchestral works, ballet, operatic music, works for piano, and most importantly for this recording, *mélodies*. In his day, Widor won respect as a composer, organist, professor, and cultural ambassador of France. In 1890 he became César Franck's immediate successor as Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire, and, in 1896, he succeeded Théodore Dubois as Conservatoire Professor of Composition. Widor's students in organ and composition included such distinguished names as Marcel Dupré, Louis Vierne, Charles Tournemire, Darius Milhaud, Albert Schweitzer, and Edgard Varèse. Widor composed over 100 songs which have been overshadowed by his immensely popular organ works. His genius with melody, comprehensive piano writing, and discerning poetic text settings distinguish him as a gifted song composer unusually sensitive to the capabilities of the voice. Throughout his extensive career, Widor was concerned with achieving the best possible musical result in his compositions and continually developed, revised, and republished his works. A publishing custom of the time was to group sets of six songs in a single opus number; however, the songs of each of Widor's sets are not necessarily related by poet or theme. The songs were not intended to be presented as a cohesive cycle. With that in mind, the songs in this recording are not presented by chronological opus numbers. Widor's *mélodies* exhibit a wide variety of musical influences, from the works of the German lieder composers to French vocal genres, such as the *bergerette* and *opéra lyrique*. His songs range from straight-forward strophic settings to intricate through-composed forms. Widor's harmonic language can find beauty in purely diatonic sonorities while others take advantage of the more remote modulations. Elements of Orientalism, popular in his day, color the exotic musical language and mood of several songs. Widor's songs represent his quest for a perfect marriage of music and text. His *mélodies* feature the poetry of such beloved and respected literary figures as Victor Hugo, Théodore de Banville, René-François Sully-Prudhomme, Paul Bourget, and Pierre-Jules Théophile Gautier. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Widor – thrillingly – was inspired to include poems by women whose work he admired among his song settings. Some of them are contained in this album's offerings. To quote Widor biographer John Near, "We experience very great charm when happy fortune permits us to hear a page of Mr. Widor, harmoniously vying with Victor Hugo, Sully Prudhomme, or Paul Bourget."

### TRACK LISTING:

1. **À toi! (Yours!)** 3:44  
Opus 28, #1 - 1876, Text by Victor Hugo
2. **Le vase brisé (The Broken Vase)** 3:08  
Opus 43, #2 - 1878, Text by René-François Sully-Prudhomme
3. **Albaïdé (\*the name Albaïdé)** 2:39  
Opus 47, #5 - 1879, Text by Victor Hugo
4. **Chanson Indienne (Indian Song)** 3:29  
Opus 14, #3 - 1872, Text by François Joseph Pierre André Méry
5. **La captive (The Captive)** 2:12  
Opus 47, #1 - 1879, Text by Victor Hugo
6. **L'aurore (The Dawn)** 3:15  
Opus 22A, #2; also Opus 22, #3 - 1875, Text by Victor Hugo
7. **Aimons toujours (Let Us Love Always)** 2:12  
Opus 37, #4 - 1877, Text by Victor Hugo
8. **N'avez-vous point su les comprendre (Did You Not Know How to Understand)** 2:47  
Opus 43, #5 - 1878, Text by A. Sautter de Beauregard
9. **Mon âme a son secret (My Soul Has Its Secret)** 2:48  
Opus 22, #2; also Opus 22A, #4 - 1875  
Original title: Sonnet d'Arvers, Text by Félix d'Arvers
10. **Je pense à toi (I Think of You)** 3:12  
Opus 47, #4 - 1879, Text by A. Sautter de Beauregard
11. **Ne jamais la voir, ni l'entendre (Never See or Hear Her)** 2:26  
Opus 53, #5 - 1881, Text by René-François Sully-Prudhomme
12. **Dans la plaine blonde (In the Bright Meadow)** 2:18  
Opus 22, #5 - 1875, Text by François Coppée
13. **Le doux appel (The Sweet Call)** 4:45  
Opus 14, #6 - 1872, Text by Madame la Barre