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REVIEW: Cello Diva, Bed of Roses

by Liz Seymour

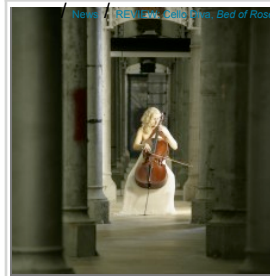
Arts Hub

Wednesday, March 19, 2008

An instrumental ABC Classics album bearing a Bon Jovi title track had me quaking in my sceptical stilettos, but by the opening bars of Bed of Roses' third track I had kicked them right through the walls of my glass house...

Unfathomable because the genre seam is really quite undetectable. Cello Diva's approach to this deftly and sensitively arranged repertoire is undeniably informed by fourteen years spent banging about within London's Royal Academy of Music...

Strangely, the upshot is a redistribution of emotional depth between the two genres. Or rather, it is evenly distributed across this newly fashioned one.



Cello Diva Sally Maer fuses pop and classical with impressive flair [photo courtesy tjc]

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The classical offerings have been divested of some of their complacent pomposity and have an almost subdued mien in contrast to their thoroughly modern neighbours, who in inheriting this casting-off are lent a new depth of genuine feeling not always possible when lyrics cloud the view.

Maer's lovely, deep tone and silkily elastic touch is evocative without allowing her material to lapse into melodrama or tawdriness.

Aside from evident mastery of the instrument and skilful work by a number of arrangers, it would seem that the skeleton key allowing Cello Diva to slip between the domains of pop and classical undetected is in fact the *raison d'être* of Sally Maer's moonlighting self. As she states in the liner notes, "The name Cello Diva describes exactly what I do, with the cello out there in the place where you would usually imagine a singer."

A hair trigger of cross-genre alarm bells in vocal-to-vocal adaptations is the smallest nuances in the singer's delivery – the pronunciation of a word or the formation of a note which, where it is associated with one style, is rarely admitted gracefully into another. Without these snags to contend with, the cello – or any other reasonably expressive instrument – is free to melt through the genre wall with what is simply lovely music in its wake.

Cello Diva has clothed naturally beautiful music in garb which only enhances its better qualities. The programme is well selected, well ordered, well timed – and very well delivered indeed.

As Maer herself declares: "It's just music that works well on the cello."

***Bed of Roses* (ABC Classics 476 6348) is available now from all ABC Shops, ABC Centres, music stores and ABC online: www.abcshop.com.au for SRP \$30.95.**