



Ensemble Vivant: Audience Favourites (Opening Day Recordings)

July 01, 2008

JOHN TERAUDS

(★★★★ out of 4)

Although this chamber group has been merrily toiling away for two decades, it remains under the radar in its hometown.

Yet Riverdale pianist Catherine Wilson and her collaborators achieve that all-too-rare balance between intellectual satisfaction and pure entertainment. The generous 75 minutes on this new disc feature 16 tracks of salon treats new and old, packaged in what may be the least-alluring CD cover to see the light of day this year. From a medley of Charlie Chaplin movie melodies to Leroy Anderson's Sandpaper Ballet, this is a quality musical candybox.

Top track: "Ciel d'orage" (Stormy Sky) from Soirs d'Alsace by Charles-Marie Widor.



Ensemble Vivant: Fête française (Opening Day Recordings)

May 26, 2009

JOHN TERAUDS

(★★★★ out of 4)

Beautiful, poised performances of the *Trio in G* by Claude Debussy, as well as *Soirs d'Alsace* by Charles-Marie Widor and *Promenade sentimentale* by Camille Saint-Saëns (written for a septet), reveal the deep musicianship and light interpretive touch of these Toronto-based musicians led by pianist Catherine Wilson. I kept getting distracted, however, by the dryness of the overall sound. A livelier acoustic would probably have given these pieces a more expansive feel. The CD package looks dull and dated – unlike the wonderful music inside.