

## Beauty of the Baroque

*Danielle de Niese*, soprano; *The English Concert*; *Harry Bicket*, conductor (Decca)

The sense of drama that makes Danielle de Niese's performances so engaging is both an asset and — occasionally — a shortcoming on her latest release.

She's a wonderfully spirited singer, but that can mean feeling over all else, some stylistic curiosities and wrought, gasping breaths.

The gushing sentiment she brings to Dowland's simple "Come again: sweet love doth now invite," combined with her bright timbre, is cloying. Her incisive soprano and Andreas Scholl's mellow countertenor don't blend particularly well in Monteverdi's "Pur ti miro," but they work well together elsewhere.

Led by Harry Bicket with fine support from the English Concert, de Niese gives a poignant performance of Purcell's "Dido's Lament," with lyrical phrasing and plangent tone. She also shines in the beseeching "Guardian angels, oh protect me" by Handel.

Her enthusiasm charms in Bach's "Sich üben im Lieben" and suits Handel's "Let the Bright Seraphim," in which she displays impressive coloratura and stamina. She also gives a seductive rendition of his, "What if I never speed."

— *Ranni Reich*

