KROUSE: *Nocturnes; Invocation*

Naxos 559877 – 55 minutes

I recently became acquainted with the music of Ian Krouse after picking up his stunning, massive *Armenian Requiem* on the strength of David Reynold’s review (Naxos 559846, S/O 2019). This release is quite different in scope, though it continues to show off his wonderful vocal writing. The two works are song cycles: *Nocturnes* is written for baritone and string quintet and *Invocation* is for soprano and piano. *Nocturnes* sets poems by three Armenian poets of the early 20th Century. Their flowery inner depictions of yearning, but unattainable love giving way to sadness and despair call Schubert’s song texts to mind. In fact, there are many hidden connections to Schubert and Beethoven – not obvious, and they do not detract from the originality of the music. The strings conjure feelings of intense brooding and urgency, fully appropriate to the drama and lush color of the texts. Vladimir Chernov worked with Krouse on the *Armenian Requiem* and here brings strong feeling and technique to the music – more than once, he enters a high falsetto at the upper extreme of his voice to great effect. *Invocation* sets words of Shakespeare, Neruda, Michizo Tachihara, and Kim Sowol, collectively expressing themes of love and contemplating the unreachable. As the cycle unfolds, it moves from expressions of tangibility to fantasy, represented – ironically, as he says – by atonality and diatonicism. It works, giving the diatonic moments poignancy and weight. Jessica Rivera is exceptional. Texts and translations are supplied online, though it would be ideal to have them included in the booklet. The amount of transliteration supplied for the Armenian, Japanese, and Korean texts requires a lot of space, so I understand the decision.

Nathan Faro, AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, November/December 2020