



WONDERLAND

2009

Performance: ★

Arrangements: ★

Creativity: ★

Tracklisting: ★

Overall: ★
(?)

Classical < < < > > > Pop

Highlights: Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (Somewhere Far Away), Adiemus, In Dulce Jubilo, O Holy Night

The young mezzo-soprano [Faryl Smith](#) is back with her sophomore album *Wonderland* just eight months after her debut release (which sold more than 150,000 copies in two months).

Although both albums were catered for the classical crossover seasons (Mother's Day and Christmas) and Smith has nothing to do with the album making process (

and

she came from

Britain's Got Talent

), she offers more than the usual manufactured commercial tripe that you get from other ex-reality contestants. This is largely due to her choice of record company (and she did have a choice) - Decca had complete control over this album, yet they treat her with consideration; serving her some unusual covers ('Adiemus'), creative adaptations ('Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (Somewhere Far Away)') and original songs ('Night of Silence') along with the good old safe tracks ('The Prayer', 'Barcarolle').

The balance of the track list is almost just right. The album is not sure whether it's a Christmas album or not - a half-hearted attempt at grabbing the Christmas shoppers, but at the same time,

not quite committed enough for fear of sales dropping after the holidays (which happens either way). Most, if not all, crossover artists face this same dilemma - the solution is to add the Christmas songs as bonus tracks, not scattering them throughout. The most bizarre selection is 'How Can I Keep From Singing'; a completely unaltered recording from her debut album; wonderful, perhaps, for those that do not have her first debut album but a bit mind-boggling to those that do.

Perhaps the narrow gap between the first and second album is too small to judge how much her voice has grown, but every week counts for a thirteen/fourteen year old. A careful listen of her awe-inspiring performance of 'O Holy Night' suggests not only a leap in ability but of a much older singer than she actually is. Her voice is not even close to the crystal clarity and sharp accuracy of singers like [Hayley Westenra](#), and in one so young, that's what some may come to expect, but Smith's unique selling point is the rich texture in her voice that carries connotations of maturity and emotion. This is best demonstrated in

Karl Jenkins

's instantly recognisable 'Adiemus' where she steps into the renowned shoes of

Miriam Stockley

with shocking ease. Tackling Dvorak's famous aria 'Song to the Moon' (known here as 'Hymn to the Moon') is no easy feat either. She's no

Anna Netrebko

(who is?) but it's a strong pop interpretation that showcases her ever-growing power.

As to be expected with most UCJ/Decca releases, effort has been put into the arrangements, with a full orchestra (the **Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** no less) creating a sound that is true to Smith's voice. It is consistent throughout the album, keeping the many layers of instrumental sound that complement Smith. There are a few moments when they can get a little sugary ('In Dulce Jubilo') and perhaps too "poppy" for some listeners but it does sound unique and especially works on the leading track 'Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (Somewhere Far Away)'.

Sales for this album doesn't reflect it (it peaked at #56 in the UK album chart whilst her debut reached #4), but this is a more valiant effort than her first album, containing a more varied track list and challenging pieces for the young teen. Her vocals are only getting stronger and her voice is an utter delight. Although it's a shame she has no artistic input, she is probably still too young. Surprisingly for a major record label, Decca, for now at least, seem to be doing a good enough job at serving up something a little different for an audience that are starting to hear too much of the same repertoire.

Track List

1. Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence (Somewhere Far Away)
2. O Holy Night
3. Wonderland
4. The Prayer
5. Adiemus

Faryl Smith - Wonderland

Written by Administrator

Monday, 30 November 2009 19:51 -

6. Barcarolle
7. In Dulce Jubilo
8. Night of Silence
9. Evening Prayer
10. Blow the Wind Southerly
11. Hymn to the Moon
12. Close To You
13. How Can I Keep From Singing?

{qtube vid:=abrQTHNVucY}