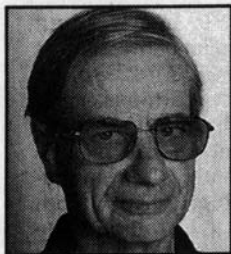


# A delightful taste of Spain – from Wellington

**CANCIONES ESPANOLAS;**  
Deborah Wai Kapohe (soprano), David Harper (piano)  
(Trust MMT2038)

THESE songs will charm their way into your subconscious. Even if the melody evaporates the guitar inspired accompaniments and their sometimes lazy, occasionally fiery rhythms remain. You can feel that contradictory Spanish mixture of sun and shadow, poise and abandon in every bar these five composers write; popular song, Moorish dance, folk music, serious art and even Sephardic chant are inextricably mixed.

Deborah Wai Kapohe sings these *Canciones Espanoles* as though she was Spanish, her faults have become virtues here. At times in opera or oratorio she can be too direct, too unaware of nuance, but in these *Canciones* her strongly



## The classics Rod Biss

individual voice, her simplicity of approach, her way of coming at a note slyly from the flat side, and the way she holds back on the vibrato until the end of a held note all contribute to an instinctive sympathy and understanding of the genre.

The disc starts with *Cinco Canciones Negras* by the Catalan composer Xavier Montsalvage. No Spanish

composer ever leaves home without taking his rhythms with him, it seems. These negro songs and one haunting (and divinely sung) lullaby are all from the West Indies, but musically Latin America has always had a rich Spanish heritage which in turn it returned to both Europe and pop music. Montsalvage sets the melodies with charming simplicity, but cannot resist the temptation of adding some very French sour-sweet harmonies.

There are *Four Sephardic Songs* by the blind composer Joaquin Rodrigo whose centenary was observed last year. They are simple, dignified and with many eastern sounding intervals. There are some rather more imposing songs by the less well-known Fernando Obradors and Jesus Guridú and the disc ends with the five songs you are most likely to

know from *Tonadilas* by Enrique Granados.

David Harper provides elegantly flexible accompaniments throughout. The CD is recorded superbly in the Ilott Concert Chamber in Wellington. The cutting edge to Kapohe's voice is perfectly captured, so too is the unusual glow on the piano sound.

The booklet tells us about Kapohe and Warner and has a page thanking everyone in Kapohe's life that reads like an Oscar acceptance speech. All the words and translations are provided but there is nothing about the music or the composers. This is, in fact, more important than Kapohe's thanks "to Mum and Nana – Michael, Alyssa and Portia".

Maybe the assumption was the delightful music needed no words of commendation or explanation.