



DELICATE AND EXOTIC:
Sharon Bezaly graces
Zhou Long's seascape



SEASCAPES

Debussy: La mer; Bridge: The Sea;
plus works by Glazunov & Zhou Long
Sharon Bezaly (flute); Singapore SO/
Lan Shui

BIS SACD-1447 (hybrid CD/SACD)
79:50 mins

BBC Music Direct £12.99

As pure sound, this is the best *La mer* that I have encountered on record. On the SACD 5.0 multichannel layer especially, the results of BIS's engineering are spectacular: Debussy's 1905 sea portrait is painted on an unprecedentedly broad canvas, with imaging of almost holographic realism and depth of perspective.

Sound without substance, of course, is nothing. Fortunately these are also revelatory performances. Lan Shui and his orchestra will

be known to very few collectors (they weren't to me), but here they turn in an unequivocally world-class performance of Debussy's masterpiece. Shui's tempos are consistently a touch more measured than average, but he has deep affinity for this music, highlighting many details I never knew existed, without compromising the structural cohesion of his interpretation, which is strongly featured and potently atmospheric. The almighty crash of waves which concludes 'De l'aube à midi' and the spine-tinglingly hushed violin harmonics preceding the final peroration of 'Dialogue' are two poles of Shui's formidably well managed expressive spectrum. This is undoubtedly the version of *La mer* that I will now turn to for personal enjoyment and edification.

Three further, less familiar 'seascapes' fill out this enterprising concert. Revelatory is again the only way of describing Shui's thrilling espousal of Frank Bridge's *The Sea*, composed 1910-11, here sounding every inch an unheralded masterpiece. Glazunov's *The Sea*, composed 1889, isn't quite in that category, though its rich slabs of Wagnerism are easily relished. Beijing-born Zhou Long's *The Deep, Deep Sea*, by contrast, is an altogether more delicate, exotic creation graced by Sharon Bezaly's flute playing. An outstandingly successful issue. *Terry Blain*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★