



Alex Lubet sets Amy Levy to music – Dulcimer meets Neo-Classical





Artist: Alex Lubet

Album: Amy Levy: Songs of Love and Loss

Label: Neuma Records

Release: September 19, 2025

Alex Lubet transforms Amy Levy's poetry into an intimate, powerful neo-classical album for dulcimer and mezzo-soprano.





With Amy Levy: *Songs of Love and Loss*, Alex Lubet attempts an unusual experiment: He replaces the classical piano in the song cycle with the mountain zither, better known as the mountain dulcimer. At first, this sounds like living-room folklore, but quickly reveals itself to be a bold artistic move. Lubet, a longtime crossover artist between folk, contemporary classical, and the avant-garde, coaxes sounds from the simple instrument that sometimes shimmer gently like a lute, sometimes howl rawly like a blues guitar.

The poetic model is provided by Amy Levy – a pioneer forgotten far too soon during her lifetime, whose lyrics speak of love, loneliness, and identity. Victoria Vargas brings these verses to life with a powerful yet vulnerable mezzo-soprano voice, cutting every word as sharp as glass. The full drama unfolds particularly in the 17-minute centerpiece, "Magdalen": Vargas's voice and Lubet's dulcimer merge into a duet that is both operatic and modern.

Sonically, the whole thing is also of the highest quality. The production by Steve Barnett and Preston Smith brings out every nuance—from the singer's breath to the metallic reverberation of the strings. This gives the record an unvarnished directness that immediately captivates you.

Of course, not every passage immediately resonates, and the somber mood makes listening more of a contemplative experience than a lighthearted pleasure. But that's precisely the strength of this album – it forces you to pause, to listen, to empathize. The end result is a work that rethinks the intimacy of the song cycle and transports Amy Levy's words into the here and now.

Conclusion: A bold, fascinating album that, despite its shorter stretches, impresses with its originality and emotionality. Rating: 7.5/10



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