

All Music Guide

Heart's Desire **Niamh Parsons**

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Heart's Desire finds singer Niamh Parsons in a more exposed situation than on her earlier albums, with only the sparest of accompaniment and, in several cases, no accompaniment at all. For some singers this would be a big mistake, but those familiar with Parsons' previous work will know what a treat to expect. She has one of those singing voices that manages to draw you in completely with no apparent effort and without the slightest showiness or affectation. Heart's Desire offers a nicely varied program of songs that will be familiar to most lovers of Irish music (including "My Lagan Love" and "Brokenhearted I'll Wander") as well as some lovely obscurities, among them "Done With Bonaparte" (which features lyrics by Dire Straits frontman Mark Knopfler set to the traditional "Valentia Island") and a gentle anti-war ballad called "Bramblethorn," on which Parsons sings in duet with her sister Anne. This being Irish vocal music, the mood is pretty uniformly quiet and often heartbroken, though never in a less-than-lovely way, and Parsons' voice is a consistently uplifting contrast to the downcast lyrics. Highly recommended, along with all of her previous work. — **Rick Anderson**