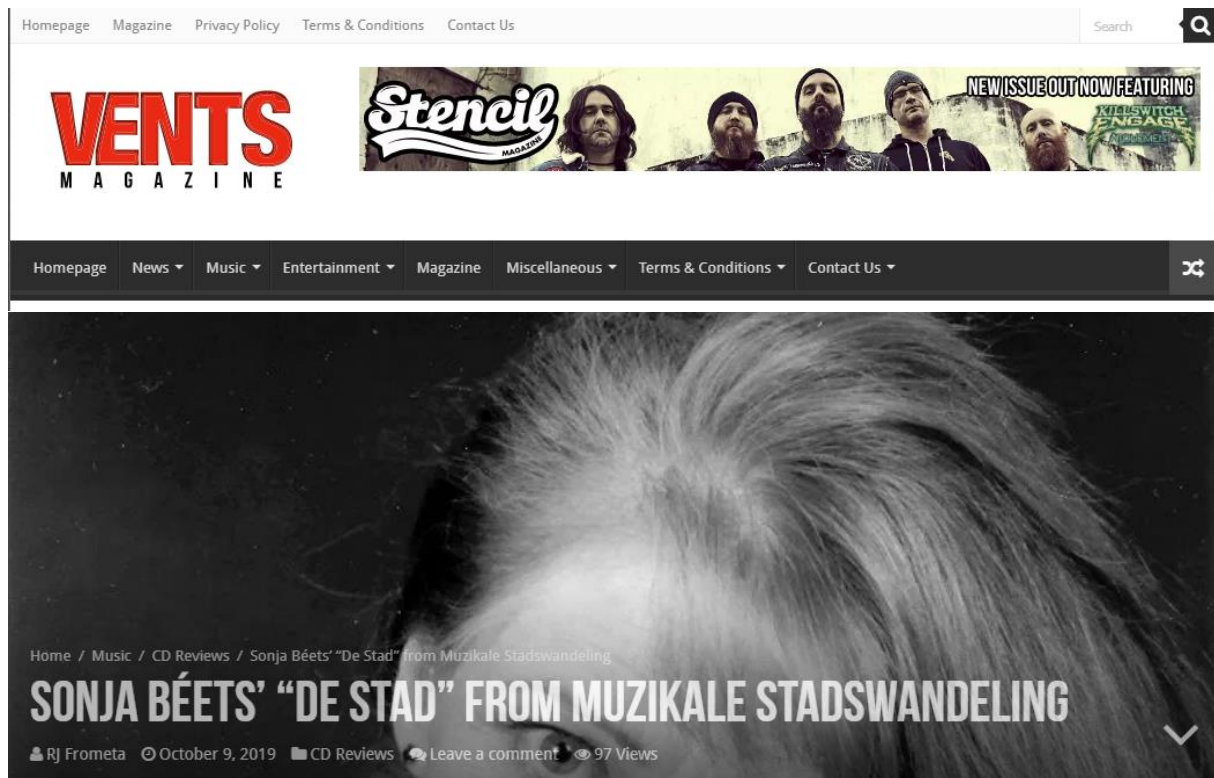




Of all the ways that we convey our deepest feelings to one another, you'd be hard-pressed to find any outlet quite as powerful as music incontrovertibly is, and it isn't often that this statement is as personified in a single track as it is in Sonja Béets' "De Stad" from Muzikale Stadswandeling. In "De Stad," Béets teams with opera singer Joke de Vin, a gifted mezzo soprano, to form a patchwork of piano and vocal melodies that both harmonize and conflict within a supple, enduring composition lasting no longer than two-minutes and fifty-three seconds in total. There are no percussive elements, no additional vocal facets, nor any of the cosmetic varnishes that so many of us have come to associate with music both western and eastern alike (at least, in recent memory). There is only de Vin's voice married with a melodic piano part that aches with compassion for the words that it is cushioning. The great thing about a song like "De Stad" isn't that it's a complicated ballad that brings out the best in its players, but more so that it's a simple piece of music that draws not so simple emotions from all who come within earshot of its regal tonality.

PRIMARY URL: <https://www.sonjabeets.eu/>

This arrangement is barebones, unrestrictedly muted in parts and occasionally a bit spindly, but it makes perfect sense for the song that it's so artfully supporting. If Béets had weighed down the composition playing before us this October with any of the unnecessary bells and whistles that scores of her peers – and even a few of her predecessors on the European

side of the Atlantic – have embraced wholeheartedly, I do not believe that it would be even half as engagingly captivating as it is in this specific form. In conceiving its framework, there was a lot of time, love, attention and unabashed worship of the notes that comprise “De Stad” at its most elemental and vulnerable, but I like the fact that Béets and de Vin were clearly far from overwhelmed by the ambitious task they created for themselves in making this track special. They’re bringing an ease to contemporary classical that was painfully absent from the music we heard in 2018, and with any luck, their brethren in the genre will follow this astute lead.

SOUNDCLOUD: <https://soundcloud.com/sonja-beets>

I only just recently became acquainted with the collective works of Sonja Béets, but I really can’t wait to hear more of her music if this is what I can expect to find in all of the material that she attaches her name to. For many listeners, classical can be a really difficult genre to get into, but songs like “De Stad” can change that narrative for even the most ignorant of audiophiles among us (willful or otherwise). There’s never been a better time to explore the sounds that laid the groundwork for all of music as we know it, and because of artists like Sonja Béets, fans on both sets of Atlantic shores can count on being spellbound by the magic that is operatic vocal music whenever they decide to listen closely to the intricacies of “De Stad” and *Muzikale Stadswandeling*.

by Bethany Page