

American Record Guide Review
Music for Flute and Piano
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MARTINU, LIEBERMANN, TAKTAKISHVILI: Flute Sonatas; BARTOK: Suite Paysanne Hongroise

Jeannine Dennis, Philip Amalong

Eroica 3052 65 minutes

The Lowell Liebermann and Bohuslav Martinu sonatas are (deservedly) played and recorded so much these days that they've established themselves as classics in the modern flute-and-piano recital literature along with the works in the same genre by Poulenc, Dutilleux, Prokofieff, Hindemith, Piston, and perhaps two or three more. These are polished and sensitive performances but I doubt that many flute aficionados won't already have several recordings.

It's the less-often-heard items that will make this recital so appealing to most collectors. *Suite Paysanne Hongroise* is a 13-minute cycle of 14 short folk songs and dances originally set down by Bartok for solo piano and later arranged for flute and piano by Paul Arma, a Hungarian-born French composer who studied with Bartok in the 1920s. It's sometimes easy to forget, especially when listening to his astringent string quartets, how skillful and subtle Bartok's handling of more traditional material could be. As in all master composers the harmonies are endlessly inventive yet unforced and compelling in their logic. The songs are lovely and poignant, the dances sprightly and vivacious; a perfect blend of simplicity and sophistication. My guess is that it's only this suite's lack of virtuosic display that has kept flutists from programming it more often.

Also inspired by indigenous melodies, though neoclassic in spirit and form, is Otar Taktakishvili's 1968 Sonata. This delightful and melodious creation, very much in the tradition of such skillful Soviet-era craftsmen as Kabalevsky and Rakov, has rarely appeared on disc (the only other recording I know of is Jeanne Baxtresser on Cala 512) but merits more attention. Outer allegros are bright and playful, the enchanting central cantabile sweetly touching.

Flutist Jeannine Dennis and her accompanist Philip Amalong display an ideal partnership; they play with assurance, intelligence, and complete sympathy with the music. The recording is clear, strong, and immediate.

MARK LEHMAN