

Classical Music Web Review
Music for Flute and Piano
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From the first haunting moments of the first selection I knew that this was going to be an album that would hold my attention and speak with quiet intensity. I was unfamiliar with the work, composer and players, but even without any foreknowledge the quiet intensity grabbed and held me, demanding attention and rewarding the experience with a gripping musicality.

The album begins with Lowell Liebermann's Sonata for Flute and Piano, a brilliant work in two parts. The work is modern, colorful, and intense. Throughout, it harkens to *The Rite of Spring* with the churning piano laying the foundation for the soaring melodies of the flute. The first movement begins with an introspective melody that twice explodes dramatically into a rash of frenetic energy before recapitulating to the original theme at the end. The second movement is short and virtuosic - quickly becoming a staple of the flute literature. That status is certainly deserved, as it is simply a marvelous work, and skillfully executed here.

The next fourteen tracks are selections from Bela Bartók's "Suite Paysanne Hongroise", which was a result of his study of Hungarian folk music. It was originally written for solo piano. Paul Arma later reset these works for flute and piano, and Dennis and Arma along beautifully and skilfully execute his arrangement here. I readily admit my love for Bartók's music, but that can cause me to be very critical of poor renditions of his work. Here the five folk songs and nine dances presented are tastefully and credibly executed.

Lowell Lieberman is again explored with his "Soliloquy" for solo flute. Jeannine Dennis explores this poignant piece in appropriate solitude. It is exquisitely lyrical, and after repeated listening ranks at the very top of my personal list for solo flute. I admit to not having heard it performed extensively, but even so it would be hard to believe that it could be better executed.

Next is Otar Taktakishvili's Sonata for Flute and Piano. The Russian work is in three contrasting movements, and is certainly a wonderful discovery. I was again unfamiliar with both the composer and the work, but the performance here presented has made me want to find more of his work; surely one of the greatest compliments. The second movement is pensive nestled between two relatively energetic selections that allow both musicians to extend themselves. Ms. Dennis and Mr. Amalong carry this off with flair.

Martinů's First Sonata for Flute and Piano is also a work that I was not intimately familiar with, although I had been exposed to it previously in live performances. Here it is fabulously executed, again with the syncopated, serpentine melodies presented with clear, open lyricism. I cannot speak highly enough of the performance. The two musicians are perfectly synchronized and present the composer in the best light humanly possible.

In short, this album has been a wonderful voyage of discovery for me. The works I was familiar with were wrapped in new trappings with the flute taking the lead. However, the majority of the pieces were new to me, and this imposed discovery is one that I am particularly grateful for. The musicianship of the performers is

unquestionable, and the selections made are impeccable. The money spent on this album is well worth it as any lover of chamber music will quickly find it to be one of their favorites. I cannot recommend this album more highly.

Patrick Gary

http://www.musicweb.uk.net/classrev/2004/Jan04/Flute_Piano_Among.htm