

## International Record Review April 2005 Issue

Some of the most satisfying music on this CD was written not by a 'trained composer' but -- gasp -- by a reviewer of classical recordings! Mark Lehman writes for *The American Record Guide*, and although he is trained in English literature, he is at least a modestly skilful composer. His *Three Souvenirs* are tributes to Fauré, Prokofiev, and Puccini -- intentionally imperfect in that memory is faulty and selective. No philosophical edifices are erected here, but the American Congress has not outlawed charm and good taste -- yet.

This is a disc of twentieth-century American works for flute (or piccolo) and piano (or clarinet). All of the composers are alive, except for Vincent Persichetti, who died in 1987. Schocker's and Lehman's works were written in 2001-02; the remaining works come from 1944-45 (Lukas Foss's *Three American Pieces*) and 1981 (Katherine Hoover's *Medieval Suite*). (The Persichetti date is not given.) Apparently only the Foss and Hoover have been recorded previously; I have not heard earlier recordings.

All these works are in a tonal language that will be accessible to most listeners. The most challenging, oddly enough, is Hoover's *Medieval Suite*, which is some 22 minutes long. It was inspired by a book about fourteenth-century France, and there are allusions to Guillaume de Machaut and *Sumer is icumen in*, among other things. Foss's work comes from his first decade in the United States, when he was actively interested in American folk culture. Indeed, this work would not be out of place in Copland's *oeuvre*. Persichetti's *Parable* is based on a hymn tune, and the composer takes that single idea and works it, with bird-like twitterings, over the course of three minutes. *A Fond Farewell -- Meditations on September 11* is just that, and I was pleased that Gary Schocker eschewed a Big Statement in favour of intimacy, comfort and durability. *Airheads* is more outgoing. It is not about absent-minded wind players, although they do 'blow air through their heads'.

Jeannine Dennis is next in the line of great American flute virtuosos, right up there with Julius Baker, Paula Robison, and Ransom Wilson. Philip Amalong, who accompanied her on an earlier disc, is solid, as is Dawn Henry, in the humorous *Airheads*. The sound on the latter piece and on the Persichetti is close; the flute and piano pieces are warmer. Lehman's booklet notes tell you everything you need to know.

***Raymond S. Tuttle***