

Idyll

James Dutton

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This CD is a collection of forgotten British flute pieces from the 20th century, researched and recorded by James Dutton and Oliver Davies. Each of the composers featured here has a connection with the Royal

College of Music, as do both of the performers.

Richard Walthew's "Idyll" opens the recording; this is a charming Romantic-style work with simple lyrical melodic lines and perhaps a hint of a French influence. Already, one gets a sense of the quality of this repertoire and its potential for a revival of interest; at five minutes in duration, this would be a suitable recital piece. It deserves to be better known.

Cryril Bradley Rootham's *Suite in Three Movements* has folk-influenced language with sparse writing capturing the attention as melodic lines are passed between the flute and piano at the end of the first movement. The second movement retains its simplicity, but soaring and flowing flute lines provide a sense of space and freedom. The final movement is rhythmically more energetic and has a bright feel.

Sir George Henschel's *Theme and Variations* has an enjoyable sense of charm and poise. After a simple but effective opening, a dotted-rhythm variation gives the music a cheerful feeling that makes me think a little of an English gentleman going for a stroll on a Sunday afternoon. The recording is well paced and the tempos are well judged, allowing the music to speak for itself without force or oversentimentality. Each of the variations has a distinct character that comes across well in this recording.

The Sonata in C by Robin Milford has three contrasting movements, with a playful opening giving way to a song-like central movement, while Cecil Armstrong Gibbs, perhaps one of the best known composers on this CD, is represented through his op. 144 *Suite in A*, a collection of five dance movements. The minuet has

an influence from popular music, while the sarabande provides a sombre, folk-inspired moment of reflection.

Norman Demuth's *Three Pastorales after Ronsard* is for solo flute. It begins with a wonderfully expressive *tranquillo*; the second movement is almost comically brief and provides a sparkle of energy; and the final movement has evocative weaving, twisting lines hinting at exotic harmonies. Written for Gareth Morris, each of the three movements is inspired by a quote from 16th-century poet Ronsard. A second unaccompanied flute work, Carlos Salzedo's *Cantigua Morisca*, is a short work at under two minutes' duration with Spanish influences and a song-like feel.

The opening of Stanley Bate's Sonata immediately brings to mind the style of Hindemith, both in the shape of the lines and in the harmony. In fact, Hindemith's flute sonata was written the previous year. The expressive second movement is beautifully played here, and the music maintains stylistic links with European modernism while providing a platform for the flute to demonstrate its range of lyrical expression. The angular and dancing final movement is rhythmically strong.

The CD ends with John White's *Duetтино*, a short work with a contemporary feel and a distinctive personality.

This CD is recorded with clarity and a warm tone quality; the instruments are always well balanced, and both performers play with impressive accuracy and conviction. I particularly enjoyed the sense of simplicity that comes across in this recording; that's not to say that the music is particularly easy, but one has the sense when listening that the music, and its interpretation, has been carefully considered and is presented in a clear, logical way, with appropriate expressivity, without giving in to overindulgence.

These are two instinctive musicians who judge the pacing and expression of the music with sensitivity and intelligence. There are some real gems amongst the repertoire here. They deserve to be better known with contemporary audiences and are well worth exploring.

—Carla Rees

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Epigrams

Danilo Mezzadri

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Danilo Mezzadri's CD, *Epigrams*, explores the world of music for solo flute by Brazilian composers, ranging from well-known names like Camargo Guarnieri to those less known to an American audience, such

as Liduino Pitombeira and Osvaldo Lacerda. The compositions range in age from those written in the early 1940s to Pitombeira's Seresta No. 2, written in 2001. Despite that wide range of time, despite differences in tonality, tempo, and texture, there is a similarity to the included compositions, a thread of belonging that ties the recording together thematically and expressively.

Mezzadri's playing is gorgeous. His tone is crystal clear and flexible, with a luscious darkness in the low register that gives way to a sparkling, lively color in the higher registers. His articulation is clean and precise, and throughout, he displays an admirable amount of control over his instrument, incorporating extended techniques, complex articulation, and beautifully phrased lyrical lines into the whole of a performance designed to honor the composer and please the listener.

One of the more interesting aspects of this CD is the exploration of compositions called "Improviso." There are three examples by Guarnieri and two by Lacerda, and the five Improvisos, while sharing a certain abstractness in form, differ greatly in other ways. In the liner notes, Mezzadri reveals that Lacerda was influenced by folk music and dances in his Improvisos, and that makes itself apparent in the rhythmic and harmonic structure of those works, which are a little more accessibly dance-like and narrative. The Guarnieri Improvisos are a product of their

era; written in the 1940s, they all three contain a more abstract approach to form and phrasing. They're effective, acrobatic, and impressive, but not as openly evocative.

Two other compositions, Cláudio Santoro's *Fantasia Sul America* and Lacerda's *Variações sobre Escravos de Jó*, were created to be competition pieces. They are both remarkable in that the requirements of such a work, things like technical fireworks, lyrical artistry, extended techniques, and contrasting sections, do not detract

from the openness with which these pieces engage the imagination and emotion of the listener. Another gem on this recording is Pitombeira's *Seresta No. 2*. Comprised of two movements, Noel Rosa and Pixinguinha, this composition provides both a melancholy, sentimental song and an exciting, rhythmic dance. When the theme from Noel Rosa returns at the very end, sighing sadly down a low scale, it perfectly completes this excellent recording. —Jessica Dunnivant



Flute Concertos by Khachaturian & Rautavaara Sharon Bezaly

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One of my favorite Sharon Bezaly recordings is Einojuhani Rautavaara's flute concerto, *Dances with the Winds* (which I premiered at the 1990 NFA

Convention). Bezaly's excellent technical and tonal control of the entire flute family is beautifully exemplified in this recording, which also features a concerto by Aram Khachaturian.

The first movement of Rautavaara's concerto begins with regular flute, switches to bass flute in the middle section, and then reverts to regular flute. The virtuosic writing for the piccolo for the entire *Vivace* second movement is brilliantly rendered by Bezaly. Then the caressing peacefulness of the *Andante* third movement gives the alto flute its usual opportunity for cantabile playing. But surprisingly, compared to most composers, Rautavaara also features extensively the alto flute's high register (reminding me of Stravinsky's unusually high tessitura bassoon solo in the opening of the *Rite of Spring*). The fourth movement begins with bass flute, switches to regular flute in the middle, and then reverts to bass flute for a very quiet and serene ending.

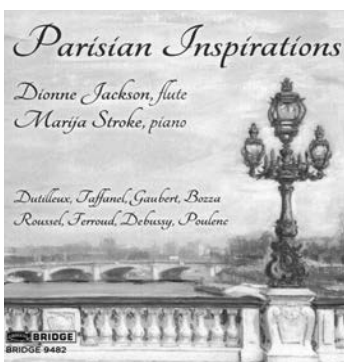
The orchestration has a special Sibelius-like dark quality, especially in the string writing. The only woodwinds are two bassoons and contrabassoon, and the brass are represented by three trumpets and three horns, mainly in their low registers.

There are actually two performances of this concerto on the Bezaly CD. The second one (which Rautavaara authorized) has Bezaly covering the bass flute part on the alto flute by rewriting the lower notes of the bass flute to fit the alto flute's range. (I much prefer the "original instrument recording.") The excellent orchestra for both versions is the Lahti Symphony conducted by Dima Slobodeniouk.

Rautavaara died in 2016 at age 87, and a very interesting *New York Times* obituary by Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim can be found online. I had not known, for instance, that "for Sibelius's 90th birthday in 1955, the Koussevitzky Music Foundation had established a scholarship in Sibelius's honor, and he used it to enable Mr. Rautavaara to attend the Juilliard School (taking composition lessons from Vincent Persichetti) and spend two summers at Tanglewood under the tutelage of Roger Sessions and Aaron Copland."

The other work on Bezaly's CD is the flute version of Khachaturian's *Violin Concerto*, transcribed and provided with a cadenza by Jean-Pierre Rampal. Bezaly plays this concerto brilliantly, and the first-rate accompaniment is by the Sao Paulo Symphony conducted by Enrique Diemecke.

—Walfrid Kujala



Parisian Inspirations Dionne Jackson

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Dionne Jackson, an American who has had a large amount of success abroad, was awarded First Prize in Flute from the Paris Conservatory and took part in the Kobe International Flute competition in 1993. Her

U.S. training took place at Indiana University and the Juilliard School, but her French connection is the one that most directly applies to the recording at hand.

In reflecting on the lineage of the French school of flute playing and how it applies to the music on *Parisian Impressions*, Dionne Jackson writes, "Because of my experience as an American in Paris, I feel strongly about preserving my performances of this music. I feel a direct lineage to every composer chosen for this CD; many of my professors at the Conservatoire had either known or studied with these composers or their pupils and

protégés." As a result, the colorful playing included on this CD is a distinct voice amongst standard interpretations and may serve as an inspirational counterpoint to what is often heard.

Parisian Impressions includes eight pieces for the flute, all of which are part of standard flute repertoire. From Dutilleux at the start to Poulenc in closing, Jackson presents artistic, interesting, and colorful interpretations. Her *Sonatine* by Henri Dutilleux sparkles with clarity; Taffanel's *Andante Pastoral et Scherezettino* is flexible and colorful. Throughout the recording, Jackson's playing includes beautiful vibrancy and excellent tapers, both aspects highlighted by the chosen repertoire.

The place from which Jackson started, hoping to preserve the interpretations of a set of pieces as she performed them in Paris, could mean this CD accurately portrays the desires of her teachers at that time. Even more likely is that these performances are the blend that is present in all of us: a mixture of what our teachers requested, the experience of the music in our own minds, and, in this case, 20-plus years of additional life with music. Either way, through Jackson's performances, we can all experience a little more of the late-20th-century French school of flute playing and pedagogy.

—Rebecca Johnson