

Bassoon CD Reviews: Three New Ones

By Ronald Klimko
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Concertos: Dong-Yun Kwon, bassoon: Plovdiv (Bulgaria) Philharmonic Orchestra, Jooyong Ahn, Conductor: Sem Gramophone DE 0375 (order from webpage: www.bassoon.pe.kr email: bassoon@yahoo.com)

This is a very nice recording of three important works for bassoon and orchestra: *Concertpiece for Bassoon and Orchestra, op. 2* by Franz Berwald (1796-1868); *Andante and Hungarian Rondo for Bassoon and Orchestra, op. 35* by Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826); and the lovely *Suite-Concertino in Fa per fagotto solo, orchestra d'archi e 2 corni, op. 16* by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari (1876-1948).

Korean bassoonist **Dong-Yun Kwon** performs throughout with a full, robust tone and vibrato and fine technical command of the instrument. Despite an occasional cracked tone and a somewhat overly percussive staccato (to my taste anyway), her execution is generally well done throughout. The biggest problem with the disc is the orchestra accompanying her. The strings sound unblended and scratchy and the horns, particularly in the Wolf-Ferrari, are often disastrously out of tune. Also, the title *Concertos* of the disc is somewhat misleading, since none of the three works is a true bassoon "concerto".

Despite this, I can recommend this disc to you on the basis of Dong-Yun's solid playing. Both the Berwald and the the Wolf-Ferrari might be unfamiliar to you, although this is not their first recording. I particularly like the lyrical, tender *Suite-Concertino* of Wolf-Ferrari. Her performance of it here matches the lyricism of the work very well.

Rating: 2 1/2 Crows



The Music of Meyer Kupferman: A Faust Concerto (1997), Jane Zwerneman, horn; Orquesta de Baja California, conducted by Meyer Kupferman and Among the Windy Places (1994) for bassoon, violin, and viola, Bronx Arts Ensemble: Hector Falcon, violin; Masumi Per Rostad, viola; William Scribner, bassoon. Soundspells Productions (86 Livingston St., Rhinebeck, NY 12572, fax and phone (914) 876-6295. CD 127.)

The first work on this program, *A Faust Concerto*, is an interesting work combining elements of a tone poem for orchestra with a concerto for horn. Kupferman's musical style is that of highly extended tonality-often bordering on atonality, but with basically non-pointillistic melodic material. The work is very colorful, utilizing the complete timbral qualities of the orchestra. Sometimes highly contrapuntal, often over repeating ostinatos, the music maintains one's interest throughout. Ms. Zwerneman's horn playing is lovely and impressive.

Having heard the first work, the second is immensely disappointing. Written earlier than the previous work (in 1994), this one seems to lack any sense of form or structure, except for a kind of "... first one instrument plays, then two, then all three, another two, one, etc., etc.," in a 37+ minute long work that becomes very tedious to listen to. There are also real balance problems with this ensemble. The violin and viola sound very loud compared to the bassoon, which sounds distant throughout. **William Scribner's** playing is quite accurate on a technically very demanding bassoon part. However, I would have preferred more expression (vibrato, dynamics, etc.) in his playing.

I can't in all honesty strongly recommend this relatively new bassoon chamber work to you. It is simply too long and, with only three instruments at his disposal, Kupferman cannot "dazzle" one with the coloristic variety he displays in the first composition on this CD.

Rating: 2 Crows



Gems for Bassoon:

Kathleen Reynolds, bassoon; Michele Levin, piano; Mitchell Lurie, clarinet.
(EcoClassics, Inc., PO Box 6834, Holliston, MA 01746) ECO-CD-010.

North Texas University bassoon professor **Kathleen Reynolds** has given us a "Gem" of a bassoon CD in her first effort! Here she surrounds herself with the wonderful artists Levin and Lurie to provide us with a beautifully performed recording of very interesting bassoon solo and chamber music. Works for bassoon and piano on the CD include the *Impromptu and Humoresque* (Op. 35, Nos. 9 and 8) by Reinhold Gliere (1875-1956); *Pièce* by Gabriel Fauré (arr. by Fernand Oubradous); the interesting and rarely heard *Aria Op. 7 pour Fernand Mestres* for cello (or bassoon) and piano; and an **Ivan Kostain** transcription for bassoon of the first movement of an unfinished viola sonata by Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857). (According to the program notes, Ivan Kostain was a bassoonist in the Orchestra of the Bolshoi Theater and professor of bassoon at the Moscow Conservatory in Russia from 1939-1963.) Renowned clarinetist, Mitchell Lurie, also joins Kathleen and Michele for performances of the Poulenc *Trio* (1926) for clarinet, bassoon, and piano; as well as the Glinka *Trio in D Major* (1827) and his own transcription of *Sous les Tileuls (Under the Linden Trees)* from the orchestral work *Scenes Alsaciennes* by Jules Massenet (1842-1912).

One of the capstone works of the CD is another work new to me: *The Beauty of the Rose is in its Passing* for solo bassoon, 2 horns (William Scharnberg and Kathleen's brother Terence Reynolds) harp (Stacey Shames) and percussion (Dominic Donato). Commissioned by the Los

Angeles Philharmonic in 1976, the work was originally premiered by the orchestra's New Music Ensemble. It is a beautiful, lyrical work based on a poem by the 14th Century Japanese poet Seami Motokiyo. The entire ensemble performs it with lovely clarity and serenity.

Kathleen's bassooning is superb throughout. She has a gorgeous, dark bassoon sound enhanced by a very tasteful use of vibrato, dynamics and, when needed, rubato. Pianist Levin also provides excellent accompaniments, and the balance between the performers is beautifully recorded. If I have any complaints with the CD at all, it is that Mitchell Lurie's lighter, straight tone doesn't compare as well with Kathleen's dark, rich sound—a rather minor flaw, however.

I recommend this CD strongly to you for its superb bassooning, excellent musical interpretations and its very interesting music. If I can interject a personal note, I have known Kathleen Reynolds since she was in high school in Montana, and I had the privilege of working with her at the Red Lodge Music Festival in the early 1970's. She came from a very musical family as the daughter of the former chair of the School of Music at Montana State University, the late Creech Reynolds, to whom this CD is dedicated. She was a marvelous bassoonist way back then and this CD continues to give testimony to her artistry. A final footnote: this CD company, EcoClassics, donates 100% of their net profits to conservation and environmental organizations—another strong reason why you MUST have this wonderful CD in your recording library!

Rating: 3 Crows

