

Guest Music and CD Reviews

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[The following reviews appeared in the *Double Reed News* (No. 54, Spring, 2001, p. 40)]

SONATE POUR BASSON ET PIANO

by Adrian Williams Published by Max Eschig

This is a serious sonata in four movements, first performed in 1996 by **Catherine Marchesse** - for whom it was written - and the composer. The piano plays far more than merely an accompanying role and the whole piece would need two very accomplished players. Apart from the slow second movement, the other three are very rhythmical.

The first, marked *energico*, is very powerful and resolute, interspersed with slower, more melodic moments. It ends with one of these slower moments which then moves on into the second movement marked *grave*. This is very slow and lugubrious, gradually building up speed and dynamics into a climax using material from the first movement. It then dies away *segue* into the third. This *vivace* is very *staccato* and skittish in nature and, like the second movement, builds into a powerful climax before dying away and leading straight into the fourth movement. This is probably the most complicated movement with many time changes and different moods. It uses material from other movements, but with another new rhythmic theme in triplets marked *Allegro vivace*. This theme gradually takes over and the piece ends with a unison rendering of the theme.

On the whole, I was most impressed by this sonata which is well written, exciting and musically satisfying. Certainly not to be taken lightly by either performer, it needs considerable time spent becoming familiar with the music plus the time needed to practise it and rehearse it. A mature student might well benefit from taking up this challenge and it would certainly be a new and welcome addition to the bassoon recital repertoire.

John Orford

AUTUMN LEAVES THREE DIVERSIONS FOR BASSOON & PIANO by Richard Kershaw
 Published by Spartan Press SP5 10

This is a pleasant suite of movements of grades 5-7 standard, consisting of *Spring into Action (Alla Marcia)*; *A Winter's Tale (intermezzo)*; and *Hi, Summer! (Scherzo)*. There are no extreme technical challenges to overcome leaving the player time and room to concentrate on tone and rhythm, etc. This is especially true in the second movement where both players will need to rehearse carefully together to balance the required lilt with rhythmic integrity. The piano part is fairly demanding but not overly so - perhaps an opportunity for two able GCSE pupils to fulfil their performance requirements?

'HELICON'

Poulenc:

Barbar the Elephant for narrator & piano
Trio for oboe, bassoon & piano

Lalliet:

Terzetto for oboe, bassoon & piano

Grovez:

Sarabande & Allegro for oboe and piano
Sarabande & Allegro Giocoso for bassoon & piano

Margaret Scott - piano, Brian Stokes - narrator,
Paul Arden Taylor - oboe,
Keith Rubank - bassoon

Dinmore Records - DRD 009

I very much enjoyed this CD with the possible exception of *Barbar* which, whilst beautifully read and accompanied, seemed out of place in this company. However, the rest of the tracks more than make up for this with consistently fine playing. The Lalliet (1837-1892) *Terzetto* was new to me, but I would recommend buying the disc just to hear this piece alone. Unashamedly dramatic, it stretches both double-reed instruments to the extremes of their ranges (especially the bassoon), with myriad opportunities to tug at the Victorian

heartstrings: needless to say all three players are equal to the task. Likewise, the Grovlez *Sarabandes* are approached with similar flair, but I found the Poulenc *Trio* less convincing.

The recording is well balanced and beautifully clear which unfortunately works against **Keith Rubank** whose 'keywork percussion' was far too intrusive. Otherwise, I would recommend this CD - especially for the Lalliet!

Nick Ingamells

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International Double Reed Society- 25th
Anniversary
Crystal Records CD 870, copyright 1997

Trio for Hautbois, Basson et Piano (1994) - Jean
François (born 1912)

John Mack, oboe
David McGill, bassoon
Elizabeth DeMio, piano

Six Arias from The Barber of Seville (1816)
Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) arranged for
two bassoons by François René Gebauer
(1777-1823)

Stefano Canuti and **Sergio Azzolini**, bassoons

Duo pour Hautbois et Basson (1957)
Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959)
Alex Klein, oboe
George Sakakeeny, bassoon

Trio for Piano, Oboe and Basson (1994)
André Previn (born 1930)

Cynthia Koledo DeAlmeida, oboe
Nancy Goeres, bassoon
André Previn, piano

Reviewing a recording of this caliber is a sheer delight. This CD was produced by the International Double Reed Society in celebration of its 25th anniversary. It is a collection of virtuosic showpieces performed by some of the greatest double reed players of today. This recording certainly dispels the all too frequent notion that oboes and bassoons cannot execute technical passages. Perhaps this CD's only flaws are that, with the exception of the two bassoonists performing the Rossini, all of the artists

are currently performing in the United States and again, with the exception of the Rossini, all of the works are from the second half of the twentieth century. The recording quality is excellent and consistent throughout.

It is interesting to note that there are two trios for oboe, bassoon and piano included in this recording. It is not a common combination, but nonetheless not rare. Jean Françaix expressed his opinion of this instrumentation in notes provided for the premiere performance of his *Trio* at the 1995 International Double Reed Society Festival in Rotterdam. He said, "This instrument combination is better balanced than that with Violin-Cello-Piano. In fact, the two string instruments are often engulfed by the power of the Steinways, whereas the oboe and bassoon are able to make head against them without obliging them to play on velvet legs, what too many pianists hate."

The Françaix *Trio pour Hautbois Basson et Piano*, from 1994, was the result of a commission from the International Double Reed Society in cooperation with the British Double Reed Society, IDRS Deutschland e.v., the Japan Bassoon Society and the 24th International Double Reed Festival of Rotterdam. This is the premiere recording of the *Trio*, which had its world premiere at the Festival in Rotterdam in 1995. The *Trio pour Hautbois Basson et Piano* is very French and very Françaix. It demands technical facility and lyric expression from all three players. The first movement is marked "Adagio," but is only adagio for a short introduction. It then leaps into a spirited display. "Resolute," the second movement is another rhythmic romp. The third movement is pensive and introspective with beautiful melodic lines for the wind instruments. The Finale is another playful showcase for the trio. Mr. Mack, Mr. McGill and Mrs. DeMio, meet the challenges of this work while managing to make their work seem effortless. All three performers have held faculty positions at the Cleveland Institute of Music. **John Mack**, oboe, has been principal oboe of the Cleveland Orchestra since 1965. **David McGill** is currently principal bassoon of the Chicago Symphony and has held similar positions in the Cleveland Orchestra and the Toronto Symphony. Elizabeth DeMio is an active soloist and performs with the Plymouth Trio with Mr. Mack.

It is likely that François René Gebauer transcribed *Rossini's Six Arias from The Barber of Seville* for his students at the Paris Conservatoire. The familiarity of these arias and the lyric, yet technical nature of these

duets provide great contrast to the remaining works on the recording. The two Italian bassoonists, **Stefano Canuti** and **Sergio Azzolini** have divided the arias so that they each play the first bassoon on three of them. They demonstrate great expression, technical facility and panache. Mr. Canuti is primarily a solo and chamber music performer. In addition to a solo career, Mr. Azzolini teaches bassoon at the State College of Music in Stuttgart.

Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Duo pour Hautbois et Basson* was written late in his career. This work incorporates the contrapuntal and rhythmic complexities typical of the works of Villa-Lobos. The two performers show sensitivity and variety in their performances of the three movement work. The first movement, "Allegro," is almost a melodic competition between the two voices. The second movement, "Lento," is more of a collaboration of the two instruments. The third movement, "Allegro Vivace," combines the collaborative sense and the almost adversarial roles of the two voices. Some sections have the oboe and bassoon reacting to each others' lines while other sections require the two instruments to join forces. Because of this contrast of treatment of the two voices, the third movement is perhaps the most intriguing. **Alex Klein** is principal oboe of the Chicago Symphony, a position he acquired after establishing a distinguished career as a performer and teacher. **George Sakakeeny** is the bassoon professor at Oberlin College and principal bassoon of the Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra of Columbus. He has performed and recorded extensively worldwide.

André Previn is the pianist for his *Trio*

for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon. He is joined by two members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, **Cynthia Koledo DeAlmeida**, oboe and **Nancy Goeres**, bassoon. The Trio was commissioned in 1994 by the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. It was premiered in 1996 by the Orchestra of St. Luke's. Mr. Previn has written a work that is very French in character, but also very definitely American. It is a jazzy, rhythmic and demanding work showcasing all three instruments. The first movement, "Lively," has a distinctly French flavor, with a vitality and freshness of rhythm and melody. The second movement is very pensive and fairly stark in comparison to the outer movements. The program notes indicate that the initial oboe entrance is marked "lonely" and that this is fitting for the entire movement. It is somber, yet transparent-terrific contrast to the fast movements. The finale, "Jaunty," is a piece you are thankful never appeared on a musical dictation exam. It is very complex melodically and rhythmically, changing meter almost every measure. This movement has the most jazz influence, having contrasting sections of jazzy, rhythmic riffs and more subdued interludes that should leave the listener smiling.

In fact, this entire CID should leave the listener smiling. The quality of literature and the performances are top-notch. Any double reed player can be inspired by the performances on this recording and any musician should be impressed by the musicality and facility of the performers.

P. Bailey Sorton