

FEATURE REVIEW by Robert Schulslaper

FLUTE SKETCHES • Samantha Chang (fl); Khai Nguyen (vn); Amy Laing (vc); Ellen Meyer (pn) • SAMANTHA CHANG 326118 (62:29)

TAN *A Caged Partridge's Longing*. **WOODALL** Serenade. **TAFFANEL** *Fantasy on Mignon*. **SCHULHOFF** Sonata. **PIAZZOLLA** *Oblivi3n*. **REINECKE** Ballade. **DOROZIO** *Exodus Partita*. **GOOSSENS** *4 Sketches: Romance; Humoreske*

SENTIMENTALE • Samantha Chang (fl); ¹Mark Camilleri (pn); ¹John Maharaj (db); ¹Mark Inneo (drums); ^{2,7}Conrad Chow (vn); ^{2,7}Ellen Meyer (pn); ³Christopher Lee (fl); ^{3,4,6}Dona Jean Clary (pn); ⁵Chen Liu (pn) • SAMANTHA CHANG 270222 (67:08)

¹**BOLLING** Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano Trio: *Sentimentale; Irlandaise; Fugace*. ²**DOPPLER** Andante and Rondo. ³**DOROZIO** *Pescara Pastorale*. ³**HUGUES** *Grand Concerto Fantasy on Themes from Verdi's Un Ballo in Maschera*. ⁴**TAN** *2 Lyrics of Yi People*. ⁵**BIZET** Intermezzo from *Carmen*. ⁶**BORNE** *Fantaisie Brillante on Themes from Bizet's Carmen*. ⁷**IBERT** *2 Interludes*

The subtitle of Samantha Chang's *Flute Sketches* is *Mosaic of Flute Favorites* and she follows the same freewheeling approach in *Sentimentale*. In other words, she's not attempting to forge abstruse connections but merely to delight, to entertain, and to introduce a few contemporary composers into the bargain. Mizi Tan was Chang's first teacher. His *A Caged Partridge's Longing* is for solo flute, while *Two Lyrics of Yi People* adds a piano. While the latter piece would be even more successful if scored for the ch'in or guzheng (Chinese zither-like instruments), nonetheless the piano, played sensitively as it is, is an acceptable substitute, adding a delicate harplike texture. (I'm guessing that Tan chose the piano for practical reasons, as ch'in or guzheng masters are probably few on the ground, at least outside of China.) *Partridge* mingles sporadic Chinese influences, most detectable in the slow, introspective moments, with more rapid figures that suggest both bird flight and song. Woodall's serenade is sweetly lyrical, an appealing salon *morceau* with hints of Irish folk song that lend it a direct, unforced sentimentality. The Taffanel, Borne, and Hugues are three of a kind: operatic paraphrases of the sort that were once profusely in vogue. They're charming potpourris featuring some of the most popular tunes from the chosen operas. In a sense, they function as a musical *Reader's Digest*, allowing the audience to imbibe the melodic highlights in condensed form. In her interview, Chang admits that she loves to wallow in Taffanel's "cheesy" ambiance. I can smell the cheese in the bravura introduction, dramatic tremolos, and hammy piano, which taken together sound like stereotypical silent-screen music. The Hugues dazzles with swirling, intertwining flutes and revels in a slam-bang accelerated finale. As for the Borne, well, you can't go wrong with *Carmen*. While perhaps not as scintillating as Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy*, Busoni's *Sonatina Supra Carmen*, or Horowitz's *Carmen Variations* (to name a few among many), it gives flutists a chance to get in on the fun. And speaking of Bizet, the Intermezzo is as lovely as ever.

Tod Dorozio's *Exodus Partita* for solo flute is, not surprisingly, often markedly Hebraic, especially in its cantorial flourishes and the exuberant concluding dance. The music is alternately energetic or

meditative. His *Pescara Pastorale*, again for solo flute, sounds vaguely Italian or Mediterranean. Other notable highlights include the Goossens, a luscious example of English Impressionism; the hypnotically melancholy Piazzolla in a fine trio arrangement; the excerpted movements of the always fresh Bolling Suite, which veer from syncopated effervescence to heart-on-sleeve sentiment; and the Schulhoff, which is a major discovery for me: exotic in an Eastern European way, Impressionistic at times, with ingenious piano figures throughout, a jazz-influenced scherzo, and a last movement that leans toward Bartók (or if Schulhoff wasn't acquainted with him, Rumanian or Hungarian folk music).

Chang has mastered a lovely, warm tone, particularly in the lower register, phrases beautifully, and has agility to spare. Her colleagues are uniformly excellent musicians who deliver idiomatically impeccable performances. Taken together or singly, these discs should charm listeners eager to share Samantha Chang's enthusiasm for a pleasing diversity of flute-oriented music. **Robert Schulslaper**

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