

too bleak and gloomy, despite the outrageously puckish flourish for the soloist that ends it.

Allardyce Mallon is actually Scottish but gets in the program on a technicality: he spends a lot of time in Switzerland. *Alba Song* is a moody, atmospheric piece that actually sounds Scottish—it could have almost dropped from the varied, inventive incidental music for the BBC's *Monarch of the Glen* TV series.

By the time we get to the thrice-popular Rachmaninoff piece, the album annotator is doing back-flips to maintain a connection to the "Swiss Symphonic Composers" title: Rachmaninoff enjoyed extended stays in Switzerland after his exile from Communist-controlled Russia. This transcription takes the *Vocalise* pretty far from its original setting or its purely orchestral guise, and it sounds a bit odd here.

Mr Tirabosco ends the program with his own solo work for pan flute, aptly named 'Solo'. Sounds like a very long (7+ minutes) cadenza that dropped out of the concerto.

In his contribution to the album notes, the soloist reports that the Russian orchestra players pretty much had to sight-read their parts, but you wouldn't know it from assuredness and confidence of their accompaniment under the Swiss Mr Seiffert. With such talents, most of those players could find stringer jobs playing with any major American orchestra in its summer festival season!

Recorded sound is crisp and spacious. The sonics seem to catch the unique sonorous tone of Mr Tirabosco's instrument, though I'm not sure how I'd expect a pan flute to sound in real life. The extensive album notes are a lifesaver with unfamiliar repertoire like this.

HANSEN

Flute, Viola, & Harp

BAX: *Elegiac Trio*; **DEBUSSY:** *Sonata*; **SWEENEY:** *Walk Don't Walk*; **TELEMANN:** *Trio Sonata in G minor*; **MARTIN:** *Fantasy*; **HARTY:** *Fantasy in Ireland*

Triocca

RTE Lyric 122—64 minutes

Years of reviewing will subtly condition a writer's expectations. When this arrived in the mail, I assumed that "Triocca" would turn out to be one of the compositions collected for this rare mix of instruments. Actually, it's the name of an ensemble founded in 2003 by Irish flutist Riona O Duinnin, who called up Irish harpist Geraldine O'Doherty and English violist Nancy Johnson to play with her at the annual Music for Galway series. We can deduce that the newborn trio, then incubated by Music Network Ireland's Young Musicwide Programme,

September/October 2009

played either the famed Debussy Sonata of 1915 or Arnold Bax's *Elegiac Trio* of 1916 at their birth, since both are included here.

The Bax elegy, written in response to the same Easter Rising that inspired Yeats's famous poem, would have been the more parochial choice. The viola part, after a long arpeggiated harp intro, has the heaviest Irish flavor in Bax's lament. Yet the flute writing is appropriately lachrymose, with a wee jig late in the piece. Nor does the harp entirely recede, getting a few glimmers of solo space, sounding like a piano sometimes—or conjuring the sea. A rewarding piece, then, with satisfying equilibrium among the players.

Debussy's sonata is, of course, the benchmark and wellspring of this repertoire, and the Triocca account has a notably sharper, more chamber-like acoustic than the others on my shelves, the Bennett-Shingles-Kanga (1987) on Chandos and the Bennett-Tapping-Jones (1994) on Cala—though all three were recorded in churches. The Triocca performance is about 1:20 slower than the Bennetts, both of which clock in in the 15:40s, and all the more effective for its pauses, silences, and overall disjointedness. A slightly Irish flavor carries over from the Bax on Johnson's viola, and O Duinnin noticeably picks up and steadies the tempo for the central Interlude movement, lingering only 20 seconds longer than the swifter Bennett recording.

Together with the Bax and Debussy, Eric Sweeney's *Walk Don't Walk* would come close to filling out a Triocca debut concert, since the Dubliner's composition was commissioned for the same Music for Galway event in 2003. As you may divine from the title, this musical stimulation of pedestrian behavior at a traffic signal follows a fast-slow-fast scheme. The viola is more emphatic than the harp in setting up the metronomic scurry along this imaginary musical sidewalk as the flute noodles in with abrupt syncopations. The quiet 'Don't Walk' section is triggered by the viola's sudden disappearance, cuing a contemplative duet that grows restless and dissonant when the viola re-enters.

Swelling the program to respectable length are a Telemann trio transcription, a recasting of a Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) flute sonata commissioned by Triocca, and a new work by Philip Martin that was one of the ensemble's Musicwide Programme perks. The Telemann trio is the only inconsistent performance here, with O Duinnin far better attuned to the two adagios—the second a tedious drone—than to the interlocking vivace and allegro movements, which never fully ignite. Martin's *Fantasy*, with its melancholy modernism, better befits the flutist's temperament. O Duinnin

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and Johnson ravish the lament, which cites a quote from TS Eliot's 'Burnt Norton' as a starting point, and O'Doherty's cadenza is spun gold.

Harty's *Fantasy in Ireland*, arranged by David Brophy, now sounds inspired by the Bax elegy with its newly-minted viola part—bursting with even more Irish. I half expected the Riverdance troupe to come parading out of my loudspeakers when I first listened to the opening bars. As the fantasy unfolds, there's plenty of ardent flute writing way up in penny-whistle territory that speaks to O Duinnin's heart and brings out her most soulful Celtic phrasing.

TANNENBAUM

Gabriel Bianco, guitar

MERTZ: *Lob der Tränen*; *Capriccio*; *Tarantelle*; *Elegy*; *Hungarian Fantasy*; **BACH:** *Sonata 3*; **KOSHKIN:** *Sonata*

Naxos 572306—74 minutes

I continue to be stunned by the increasingly high quality of the latest generation of guitarists. The Naxos Laureate Series presents competition winners, including all who placed first in the Guitar Foundation of America's annual event. Gabriel Bianco is described as young (his photos look like he just started to shave). He's had time to earn first prizes not only in the GFA, but in international contests in Austria, Germany, Poland, Portugal, and France.

Bianco presents a substantial program with mature interpretations and absolutely comprehensive technique. The Mertz set is beautifully balanced—the *Capriccio* and *Tarantelle* function as dual scherzos, stunningly virtuosic. The *Elegy* is a challenge musically. It tends to meander from one emotional peak to the next, aiming more for perpetual stimulation than any real structure. Bianco is fully up to the challenges, and his *Elegy* is as strong as any I've heard. The only complaint I might register is that some of his climaxes come close to overwhelming the instrument. Still, he has a truly impressive dynamic range, as often hushed as strong.

The Bach is the third of the solo violin sonatas. Bianco gives a distinct sense of how the baroque sound world differs from Mertz's 19th Century era, yet the performance never seems like a transcription, so natural does the music lie.

Koshkin's sonata is new to me, and it's quite a discovery. It's a big work, almost half an hour, yet well integrated through its three movements. Koshkin has an easily recognizable style, and in works like *The Prince's Toys* and *Usher Waltz* has shown his ability to respond to extra-musical suggestions. The