



Nancy GALBRAITH (b. 1951)

Missa Mysteriorum (1999) [42:20]

Concerto for Piano and Wind Ensemble (2000) [22:21]

Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh/Robert Page

Donna Amato (piano)

Carnegie Mellon Wind Ensemble/Denis Colwell

rec. 13-14 Feb 2002, Carnegie Music Hall, Pittsburgh (Missa); 19 Jan 2002, Concert Hall, Homestead, Carnegie Library. DDD

CARNEGIE MELLON RECORD LABEL CMRL 03-0006 [64:41]

Hearing these pieces for the first time I thought [Galbraith](#) might have been an Eastman alumnus. No such thing. She was born in Pittsburgh into a musical family. In her music she was encouraged and supported by her uncle, Pittsburgh Symphony violinist, Freeman Hoffman. She studied at Ohio and West Virginia and at Carnegie Mellon where she now teaches.

The Missa Mysteriorum was commissioned by the artists who recorded it here at the second of a Pittsburgh series of Mendelssohn Choir concerts. As a quick and crude summary – the music deserves better - one can characterise the writing as Eastman meets minimalism. The silvery stutter of minimalist cells in the *Kyrie* establish a rather American-accented supernatural fervour. It's all rather fierce and Hansonian. The *Gloria* moves between a Reich-style underpinning to celebration: Rutter and Hanson meet Walton. It's bright and lyrical with lots of intriguing rhythmic patterning and a dash of Latino. After a reverentially intoned *Credo* comes a shattering, inspiring and life-imbued *Sanctus*. The concluding *Agnus dei* has an indomitable minimalist pulse.

Among Galbraith's other sacred works setting traditional Latin Christian texts is the 2004 *Requiem* for concert choir and orchestra. It's a big piece lasting 55:00. It was premiered by the same choir and conductor with The Academy Chamber Orchestra at Carnegie Music Hall, Pittsburgh on 10 April 2005. If it has any of the virtues of the Missa Mysteriorum it should be a strong prospect for recording. I would certainly like to hear it.

The Concerto for Piano and Wind Ensemble is the second of Galbraith's two piano concertos. The first – which I have not heard – is on Ocean Records and has Ralph Zitterbart (piano) with Keith Lockhart conducting the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra. It was written in 1993 and runs to 33:00. The second was premiered in 2001 a commission by Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania for the soloist and dedicatee Nanette Kaplan Solomon. The first movement is bright-eyed and instantly appealing. The music is in constant kinetic action – a touch of Gershwin and of Constant Lambert. The locale might be a lively Latin-American dockside. This contrasts with the quasi-bluesy second movement. A melody, deep in the bass, gradually up-wells to peal out over a hazy minimalist rhythm. There's a Petrushkan bustle in the gleefully entertaining finale. The brass is very jazzy. There's a chance to dream but ruthlessly scorching rhythmic material and a return to Rio Grande style zest dominates the finale.

This life-lofted music makes one want to hear the handful of other Galbraith CDs including the three string quartet works written for the Cuarteto Latinoamericano between 1996 and 2000 and a mixed Albany (TROY 556) anthology including the Wind Symphony No. 1, *Atacama Sonata* for flute and piano, *Inquiet Spirits* for string quartet, Piano Sonatas Nos. 1 and 2 and the *Danzas Latinas* for small orchestra.

A melodist not to be overlooked.

Rob Barnett

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