

CD REVIEW 84

MIRROR OF ETERNITY

KHATCHATURIAN: Flute Concerto

HOUTAT KHOURY: Mirror of Eternity

YEVHEN STANKOVYCH: Chamber Symphony No. 3

Wissam Boustany (Flute), National Symphony Orchestra of the Ukraine,
Volodymyr Sirenko.

Nimbus Alliance NI 6168 (79.47)



I could never understand why Mozart did not like the flute.

Khatchaturian's Flute Concerto is an arrangement of his Violin Concerto in D minor of 1940 and runs for about 38 minutes. It works well on the flute and displays this soloist as a first rate flautist. In fact some may say it fares better on the flute than the violin; there is a freshness and the flute seems more human and personal.

I am quite staggered by this soloist who was born in the Lebanon and moved to Britain in 1977 and teaches at the Royal College of Music in Manchester. He has won many awards.

The playing is remarkable; there are no gasps for breath or oral noises and the sound is excellent.

Listen to the mighty climax at 11. 50 in the slow movement The control of soloist and orchestra is impeccable throughout. The cadenzas are spellbinding; the intonation faultless. And what an invigorating finale. On a personal note, I think the work is too long and does become somewhat self-indulgent. But do not let that put you off. Buy this CD if only to marvel at the playing of this flautist.

Houtaf Khoury was also born in Lebanon. This was in 1967. He studied in Tripoli with Michel Haddad from 1982-1985 and with Abdelhaq Masri in the Iqqbal Academy of Music from 1985- 1986, then with Yury Ishenko in Kiev. He has been the artistic director of the orchestra on this CD and an assistant director for Marco Polo and Naxos CDs from 1993-1997. He has written concertos for viola, saxophone and basset horn respectively, two string quartets, a Stabat Mater and piano variations on themes by Grieg and Prokofiev respectively and a piano sonata.

Mirror of Eternity is said to reflect life in the Arab world and its closed society. The third movement is a mirror image of the first and the music suggests a society in denial where all is forbidden so as not to attract the wrath of God. So writes the composer. One wonders whether this introspection is healthy but it is a personal view obviously important to the composer. The work was written for the soloist here. The middle movement with its active music comes off best!

Yevhen Stankovych is an Ukrainian composer born in 1942. His most well-known teacher was Boris Lyatoshynsky. Stankovych has written twelve symphonies, five ballets and an opera. This 17 minute symphony has three allegros, with slow interludes, which constitutes the whole work. It has much to commend it, not just wonderful flute playing but sensual string writing, and I shall pursue his other works with enthusiasm. I do not subscribe to the sleeve notes of this CD, although written by the composer. I found no despair here. Quite the contrary in fact.

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