

CD REVIEW 20

JOHN VEALE String Quartet

ROBERT CRAWFORD Elegiac Quintet for clarinet and string quartet

JOHN VEALE Impromptu for solo recorder

ROBERT CRAWFORD Three two -part inventions for recorder and clarinet

JOHN VEALE Triptych for recorder and string quartet

ROBERT CRAWFORD Clarinet Qunitett.

John Turner (recorder), Linda Merrick (clarinet), Addenbury Ensemble.

Metier msv 28520

At last... John Veale's String Quartet is available. Had it not been for Dr David Wright we and the world would not have had this gem. The composer did not like it, and all copies were destroyed except the one that Dr Wright had. He saved it from oblivion, edited it and John Turner kindly typeset it.

When you consider the appalling abuse Dr Wright has received on feedback services on two classical music sites including Music Web International and realise what he has done for music sponsoring from his own resources CDs of rare British music and his articles reviving interest in forgotten composers and, above all, his honest revelations about some admired composers, we can only be grateful for his sterling efforts.

Dr Wright was a friend of John Veale and has written two major articles about him on this site. He has also written about Robert Crawford. It was Dr Wright who secured the brilliant violinist Lydia Mordkovitch to record Veale's gorgeous Violin Concerto on Chandos.

As I have said, Veale was not happy with this quartet. However, it was premiered in the USA when he was living there and studying with Roy Harris and Roger Sessions. It was played by the Amati Quartet in Oxford in 1953 and received dreadful reviews by critics who could not even read music. We have such critics today who review CD in their ignorance..

The quartet was written after the death of Veale's little daughter, Jane, who suffered from acute asthma. It is elegiac and is in three movements Allegro molto moderato, Lento and Allegro molto with a more relaxed section.

It has the usual and endearing features of Veale's music... the sensitivity, lyricism and that infectious bustling busy-ness. When it was revived in Oxford in 2008 it was very well received. People commented on the beauty of the piece.

The sleeve notes are taken from Dr Wright's essays on John Veale and this is briefly acknowledged.

The Impromptu for solo recorder was written in memory of Tracey Chadwell a splendid singer whose life was cut short by leukaemia. She was keen to perform Veale's fascinating and challenging Song of Radha which calls for a soprano of superior technique. This little piece is magical and captures aspects of the uplifting character of Tracey Chadwell.

The Triptych for recorder and string quartet has three movements, a dance-like allegro, a melancholy Lento and a final waltz which is really a caricature. John Veale always found the waltz too predictable but revelled in Ravel's wonderful send up of this limited form in La Valse.

There is also a version for recorder and guitar.

Veale called this his outdoors piece. He was found of walking and even in his advanced years he could walk for miles. He loved nature and could imitate the call of some birds. He also loved some woods near his home and, although this was private property, the owners gladly allowed him to walk in them.

Robbie Crawford has comparatively few works to his name but is rightly admired for his string quartets and other fine chamber music. He is a craftsman of the highest order. The Inventions for recorder and clarinet provides a wonderfully colourful combination beautifully written and beautifully played.

Listen to and admire the finale of the Elegiac Quintet for recorder and string quintet

The Clarinet Quintet is a substantial work in two movements and another reminder of how excellent is Crawford's chamber music. The harmonic language is fascinating and I think this work has an elegiac feel as well. However, it is a warm piece and has a mercurial flow. Splendid music.

John Turner is known as the UK's finest recorder player and his performances are excellent and reliable. I had not heard Linda Merrick before and apologise to her but her sound and intonation is first class. The Addenbury Ensemble are also very good as is the sound.

An important CD

Linda Karen Dowson, MMus

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