

The Clarinet

by Christopher Bade

Clarinet Brillante. Caroline Hartig, clarinet; Claude Cymerman, piano. Leó Weiner: *Peregi Verbunk*, Op. 40; Luigi Bassi: *Concert Fantasia on Motives from Verdi's Rigoletto*; Louis Cahuzac: *Variations sur un Air du Pays d'Oc*; Eugene Bozza: *Bucolique*; Béla Kovács: *Hommage a J. S. Bach*; J. W. Kalliwoda: *Morceau du Salon*, Op. 229; J. S. Bach/arr. Langenus: *Chromatic Fantasia*; George Gershwin/arr. J. Cohn: *Preludes for Piano*; Donato Lovreglio: *Fantasia on Verdi's La Traviata*, Op. 45. CENTAUR RECORDS CRC 2572. Total time 73:03. (available from the manufacturer; Web site: <www.centaurecords.com>, from <www.Amazon.com>, and also from major retail outlets including Tower Records)

Clarinet Brillante

CAROLINE HARTIG, CLARINET



Caroline Hartig's recent CD demonstrates her characteristically warm, dark sound that exudes life and clear tonal focus. Her playing is always well planned, with excellent phrase direction. Technically, there seems to be no standard demand that she cannot handle with ease and fluidity. Her sense of pitch and balance are also excellent. In short, Hartig's playing on this recording is remarkable. She tackles eight demanding virtuoso pieces and the delightful adaptation of the Gershwin preludes with great aplomb.

The opening selection, Weiner's ethnically tinged *Peregi Verbunk*, is well paced yet sumptuous in its conception. The playing is certainly agile and warm, but not ingratiatingly sentimental. The cadenza is artfully controlled.

Bassi's *Rigoletto Fantasia* is a "warhorse" of epic proportions, the kind of piece that can thrill an audience, but presents a series of obstacles for the performer. Premiums on tonal consistency, mastery of all registers, and staggering endurance are well in hand for Hartig. Especially noteworthy are the octave skips.

Every note is meticulously played in Cahuzac's *Variations*. Superb control, smooth *legato*, and a wonderful feel between soloist and pianist are featured. The slow variation is affectionately played without bogging down or being trite.

Bozza's devilish *Bucolique* is a great test for the advanced clarinetist. Exotic impressionistic qualities are portrayed easily here. Many nuances within the piano dynamic are evident, and the extended solo cadenzas are handled expertly.

Hartig's love for Bach's harmonic implications and mastery of the clarinet make for a delightful romp in Kovács' *Hommage*. In the Langenus arrangement of Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia*, it is evident that the essence of multi-voice polyphony must be addressed by the soloist. A lovely and determined performance combined with excellent acoustics make for an inviting trip into Bach's genius.

Kalliwoda's *Morceau du Salon* is a neglected and sometimes hard-to-find gem of the salon style, although the technical demands extend even the expert player. It is often difficult to record such crowd pleasing music without benefit of an audience, but Hartig captures the essence of the cosmopolitan yet fiery soloist, particularly in the closing "chop buster" section.

Gershwin's *Preludes for Piano* have become a favorite of clarinetists in recent years. The Cohn arrangement is very skillful and places demands on both soloist and (now) accompanist. The work represents Gershwin balancing sauciness and sophistication. Particularly effective are the opening and closing movements where precise ensemble and rhythmic drive are most evident. Glissandi are excellently and playfully executed. The second movement is well controlled and bluesy, but perhaps not as earthy as the original version for solo piano.

The closing work, Lovreglio's *La Traviata Fantasia*, is another staple of the virtuoso repertory. The tests of singing *bel canto* style, multiple cadenzas, contrasting variations, ensemble interplay, and concentrated endurance are never an issue for Hartig and Cymerman.

The brilliant showpieces are thoughtfully presented to highlight the ample technical skills and fine artistry of Hartig and her superb accompanist, Claude Cymerman. The recording quality is excellent. The insightful program notes in the CD liner are also a valuable addition for clarinetists. This release is yet another high quality recording by Caroline Hartig and is an enviable addition to the libraries of clarinet teachers, students, and aficionados.