

SAXOPHONE

Run, Sing, Fly – Programmatic Works for Saxophone and Piano

Sarah Markham (alto saxophone), Paul Turner (piano)
Saxophone Classics, £9.50



If every picture tells a story, then each of the vividly evocative miniatures on this 2010 release by saxophonist Sarah Markham paints a picture. Due to the saxophone's exoticism and apparently timeless modernity, its repertoire is littered with modish, explicitly programmatic works, and in the hands of Sarah Markham, the myriad voices available to the instrument bring these to life.

Run, Sing, Fly, opens with spirit and panache in Dubois's quirky *Pièces Caractéristiques en forme de suite*. This five-movement work features light-hearted caricatures of the musical traditions of Spain, Russia, France, Hungary and Paris. Markham revels in the chaos and physicality of the Spanish dances of *A l'Espagnole* and the sorrow and joy of Dubois's imagining of peasant life in Russia, while her energised vibrato is well suited to the bustling *A La Parisienne*, redolent of the fashionable verve of *The City of Light*.

Takashi Yoshimatsu's *Fuzzy Bird Sonata*, whose movements *Run, Bird; Sing, Bird; and Fly, Bird* contribute the album's name, has enjoyed an extensive vogue among saxophonists. Following recordings by Nobuya Sugawa and Rob Buckland in the 90s, Sarah Markham's version could be hoped to be its final appearance on CD for between them they have surely exhausted all possible interpretations of the singularly histrionic work.

Markham adds delicately understated phrasing and a measured dynamic structure to the repertoire of approaches.

Markham brings a delightfully reedy quality to Debussy's *Syrinx*, originally for solo flute, playing the more problematic but suitably fragile arrangement for alto saxophone, which pushes the instrument's capacity for delicacy in the highest registers to its limits.

James Rae's *Sonata in Eb* has all of the energy and lyricism one has come to expect of the composer, and Markham's playing is fluid and effortlessly virtuosic. Paule Maurice's *Tableaux de Provence* is one of the most enduring works in the repertoire with its endearing charm and her idiosyncratic approach to harmony and rhythm ensures it can thrive under any interpretation, and it is sure to transport the listener to the sun of the Mediterranean. Markham's effervescent playing on the opening movement *Farandoulo di chatouno*, or dance of the young girls, is the highlight of the CD. Markham skilfully combines the delicacy of the French style with the powerful vocalicity of the British.

Richard Rodney Bennett's craftsmanlike *Three Piece Suite* constitutes a quintessentially British take on samba, ragtime and funk. His unusual approach to ragtime will confound and amuse audiences, while the funk counterpoint of the 'Finale' constitutes a muscular and convincing conclusion to the album.

The absence of biographies and dates of composition for the lesser known composers and works is a surprising omission from an otherwise well presented and recorded album, which I enjoyed.

William Upton

REMEMBERING SONG

The Evan Christopher Quartet
Evan Christopher (clarinet),
Bucky Pizzarelli (electric guitar),
James Chirillo (acoustic guitar),
Greg Cohen (double bass)
Fremaux & Associates FA 568
£8.95



Both Wikipedia and Evans's personal website describe this American (b. 1969) clarinetist as being devoted to 'contemporary early-jazz', in other words, a modern-day New Orleans style. I have a slightly different take to this particular 60 minute set. With my eyes tightly closed and ears wide open I distinctly heard an Artie Shaw trying to imitate Barney Bigard under strict instructions not to disturb any members of the audience who had fallen asleep. In case you feel this is too negative an opinion I urge you to audition the 13 tracks on Spotify.

Two thirds of the tunes are Christopher's compositions and are quite attractive, spanning slow and medium tempi and even one waltz. Four are New Orleans 'standards' (*Way Down Yonder in New Orleans, Mojo Blues, My Home is in a Southern Town and Dear Old Southland*). All bring modern-day high quality musicianship and musical discipline to the genre especially so when it comes to the improvised solos in which all members of the quartet participate and excel.

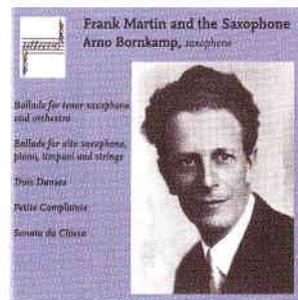
Christopher has a mysterious clarinet sound, no outrageous Sidney Bechet vibrato, thank goodness, but a slightly fuzzy tone. I would have liked to have heard more up-tempo material to liven up the proceedings but I suppose the intention here was to project the song-like tunes.

Those who feel that genuine New Orleans music is far too rough at the edges (but like their tunes) will find this CD enjoyable. Those who require exciting early style clarinet jazz should re-visit the 1930s Benny Goodman material.

Kenneth Morris

FRANK MARTIN AND THE SAXOPHONE

Arno Bornkamp (saxophone)
Ottavo Recordings OTR C12095
£18.95



A new recording by internationally renowned lyrical saxophonist Arno Bornkamp is always welcomed, and this CD of works by Swiss composer Frank Martin is no exception. A strong advocate for the composer and his music, Bornkamp showcased an arrangement of Martin's *Trois Dances* at the World Saxophone Congress in St. Andrews in July 2012, which is one of the works on this disc. Originally for oboe, harp, string quintet and string orchestra, the piece provided an exciting part of the opening gala concert at the congress with Bornkamp and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. This recording is no less exciting, indeed it is recorded from a live performance by Arno, this time playing with the Hague Philharmonic at The Anton Philipszaal in Den Haag, Netherlands.

Written in 1970, when the composer was 80, it was inspired by his daughter, who was a flamenco dancer, and is full of the energy and rhythms typically found in flamenco music. Arno Bornkamp himself sought permission from Martin's wife, Marie Martin, to have the work arranged for soprano saxophone, which was realised by Christoph Enzel in 2005.

Also on the disc are important recordings of Martin's two 'ballades', one for tenor saxophone and one for alto saxophone. Both these are from live performances too, with the Netherlands Radio Chamber Philharmonic (tenor) and the Amsterdam Sinfonietta (alto).

Although similar in style, they stem from different

beginnings, the tenor *Ballade* being an adaptation from Martin's *Trombone Ballade*, and the alto written for Sigurd Rascher. The tenor *Ballade* is much shorter at around eight minutes long, and maintains its lyricism throughout, although there is a dance-like middle section. Arno's centred tone and sense of line throughout the tenor *Ballade* brings this piece to life. Although similar in style, the alto *Ballade* is longer, at 14 minutes and is more virtuosic. The alto *Ballade* was designed to exploit Rascher's love of the four octave range, and the saxophone part goes dizzyingly high at times. In Arno Bornkamp's hands the piece maintains a beauty and line despite the challenging technical demands, and is incredibly well played. One only realises it is a live performance by the applause at the end.

The final two works on the disc are *Petite Complainte* for soprano saxophone and piano (originally oboe) and *Sonata da Chiesa* for soprano saxophone and organ (originally viola d'amore). Pianist and organist Leo van Doeselaar accompanies Arno in both these works. The soprano saxophone never loses its beauty in Arno's hands, and these beautifully crafted works finish the disc off well.

Sarah Markham

DUO SAX

Michael Duke
Music for two saxophones
Saxophone Classics CC 4006
£12



This recording of classical repertoire for two saxophones could only exist on a specialist label, and confirms the value of such endeavours. My sole experience of saxophone duets has been social (or antisocial depending on whom you ask) so

it was a pleasure to hear the standard repertoire so convincingly played and to discover works of which few in Britain are aware. Michael Duke is an Australian saxophonist with an international reputation. On *Duo Sax* his accompanist never stays the same, but such is the seamlessness of their ability that this conveyor belt of saxophonists might pass unobserved. Listening to two saxophonists for over an hour requires some stamina, but the variety of the repertoire and the excellence of its execution make the effort worthwhile. It is rare to hear a saxophone performance where tuning is never an issue, and here even the octaves of Dubois's *Six Caprices* are perfectly balanced. In a duo of two same instruments any technical flaw is cruelly exposed - the unwieldy low end of one must be as polished as the upper register of the other, but such is the variety of colour in *Duo Sax* that it is possible to forget that you are even listening to saxophones.

If I had my way composers would be limited to composing only one novelty piece comprised of extended techniques each. Barry Cockcroft is a serial offender but his imagination in conceiving new outlets for unconventional sounds has earned him a popular appeal. *Slap Me* uses slap tonguing, multiphonics and circular breathing to elaborate upon a simple blues. Dubois's *Six Caprices* are mellifluous pieces that push the saxophone's powers of delicacy to the limit. The slightest hesitation in *Perpetuum Mobile* would bring the illusion crashing around its performers' heads, and they are well carried off.

Hindemith's *Konzertstück* is the highlight of the recording, particularly the exuberant final movement. The piece was written for Sigurd Rascher, but such was its difficulty that he had to wait 27 years before finding a duo partner able to perform it. Fortunately his daughter Carina was up to the challenge.

Steven Galante's *Saxsound III* will remind listeners forcibly of The Who. It will be a brave

listener who approaches Stockhausen's *Medievalesque Knabenduet*, Christian Lauba's *Ars* and Bruno Moderna's *Dialodia* back to back, but anyone who does so will be rewarded by an almost exhaustive appreciation of the saxophone's place in contemporary music. Also featured on the record are Paul Stanhope's *Air*, Samuel Adler's *Contrasting Inventions* and Martin Kay's *Honey*. *Duo Sax* concludes with the refreshingly quaint *Barefoot Dances* by John David Lamb. *Duo Sax* confirms that the saxophone duet is worthy of more serious consideration from both performers and audiences, and if Hindemith could devote so much effort to the medium then it should not be below the dignity of any composer to expand the repertoire.

William Upton

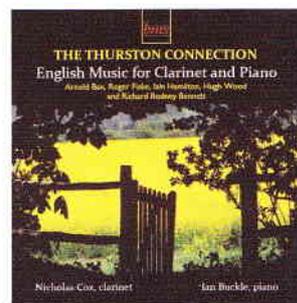
CLARINET

THE THURSTON CONNECTION

English Music for Clarinet and Piano

Nicholas Cox (clarinet) and Ian Buckle (piano)

Arnold Bax, Sonata; Roger Fiske, Sonata; Iain Hamilton, Three Nocturnes, Op. 6; Hugh Wood, Paraphrase on Bird of Paradise Op. 26; Richard Rodney Bennett, Duo Concertante
British Music Society BMS 440
CD £12



This excellent CD combines fine recordings of three works written for and played by the legendary Frederick Thurston with two written for Nicholas Cox and pianist Vanessa Latache. Nicholas Cox and his pianist here, Ian Buckle, capture the broad sweep of Bax's first movement with tasteful use of *rubato* and a

wide dynamic range. The second movement is at a suitably brisk tempo but also with great technical accuracy and a smooth, even sound.

The Sonata by Roger Fiske has remained largely unknown since 1941 when Thurston gave a private performance of the work and like many of his other pieces it was not promoted until after the composer's death in 1987. Cox and Buckle give such a compelling interpretation that I am sure this premiere recording will whet the appetite of many clarinetists looking for English repertoire.

Iain Hamilton's *Three Nocturnes*, were premiered by Frederick Thurston in 1951, the year after Hamilton's graduation from the Royal Academy of Music. These provide a colourful contrast to the Fiske, especially in the second movement, 'Allegro diabolico', which is full of satanic outbursts and an exciting and demonic climax. In the final 'Nocturne' there is more than a respectful nod to the clear simplicity of Benjamin Britten before it dissolves into nothingness.

The Hugh Wood *Paraphrase on Bird of Paradise* is a continuous, five-section work based on a song written by Wood to a poem by Robert Graves. Most impressive is the high register playing of the opening of the original song, in the final section.

The CD concludes with the brilliant *Duo Concertante* by Richard Rodney Bennett, which was written for Nicholas Cox as a companion piece for the Weber *Grand Duo Concertant* in 1985. There are solo cadenzas for both clarinet and piano and then a double cadenza before the final section.

The playing of Nicholas Cox is really superb throughout this CD with a beautiful sound, excellent intonation and intelligent musicianship. I recommend it most highly.

David Campbell ■