

It's Music to His Ears

Five symphonic works by WFU composer-in-residence included on a new Naxos CD compilation of major American classics

Dan Locklair, the composer-in-residence at Wake Forest University, will hear the Winston-Salem Symphony perform his *PHOENIX for orchestra* today at the Stevens Center. But that's not the only reason he's celebrating these days.



The CD puts Dan Locklair in some formidable company.

Naxos, a record label, has included some of his best music on a CD that's part of its "American Classics" series. The recording features five selections, from *Symphony of Seasons* to Harp Concerto, with Jacquelyn Bartlett, an instructor at the N.C. School of the Arts, as soloist. Kirk Trevor conducts the fine Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra. Locklair provides illuminating liner notes on each piece.

This is a significant honor. Naxos has compiled one of the world's most comprehensive catalogues of classical music. It's where every serious collector begins looking when he wants not only the best-known masterworks but also such hard-to-find items as the oboe music of Benjamin Britten or *Yikor Requiem*, by Thomas Be-



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Adams, Samuel Barber, William Bolcom, George Crumb, Morton Feldman, Lucas Foss, Charles Ives and Joan Tower. That's formidable company, to say the least.

The compositions on Locklair's "American Classics" CD will not shock in the way that thorny, hard-to-digest music often does. Is that pandering? I think not. Locklair always comes up with something fresh, challenging and appealing within the framework of tonality and other time-honored traditions. And his command of craft never falters even as he takes on a wide range of genres, from an engaging symphony to *Lairs of Soundings*, a stunning triptych for soprano (Janeanne Houston) and string orchestra.

There is a dazzling, bubbly overture, *Phoenix and Again*, which was written in 1983 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Wake Forest University. Locklair takes care to temper the celebratory nature of the piece with some introspection as when, for example, a solo trumpet soars glowingly over quiet strings.

veridge (b. 1938). Now, Naxos selections, which are reasonably priced, can be downloaded on to your iPod; go to www.classiconline.com to find out how easy the process is.

Moreover, Locklair's inclusion in "American Classics" means that he is now rubbing elbows with the likes of John

The whole piece ends with a bang.

I especially enjoyed two radically different pieces — *In Memory* and Harp Concerto. The former was written in honor of Hester Helms Locklair, Dan Locklair's mother. Trevor believes that it will emerge as the next Adagio for Strings; it's an elegiac composition that conveys a world of heartfelt emotions in just over five minutes.

As for the concerto, it brings out Bartlett's considerable virtuosity in the best possible way. The orchestra has plenty to say. But it never obscures the soloist when it says it. The writing combines felicitous melody, wondrous rhythm and appealing idiomatic writing for solo harp.

Unfortunately, Locklair's "American Classics" CD is limited to his symphonic output. We sample nothing from his chamber music, such as *Reynolda Reflections*, which has gone over so well with local audiences. Nor do we hear anything from his solo-organ or choral creations.

Perhaps, some of that music will find its way on to another "American Classics" CD at a later date. Or you can seek it out on other labels; much of Locklair's music is recorded along with selections by other composers.

Until then, though, "American Classics" will serve as a perfectly fine introduction to the music of one of the best American composers around.

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OPERA

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free. Washington National Opera's board has underwritten the entire cost of a \$750,000 effort aimed at attracting new patrons and/or reaching audiences that might not otherwise attend a live performance. Similar simulcast productions are planned.

"It's an investment we're making," said Steve Blair, the Washington's director of marketing and audience services.

