
RECORDING REVIEWS

Victor Hill

The Music of Dan Locklair. Marilyn Keiser, organ (Loft Recordings #1112; www.loft.cc; <http://www.gothic-catalog.com/>), \$18.98, or \$14.98 online.

Two of our most distinguished AAM colleagues appear here in a most welcome survey of Dan Locklair's organ music. Marilyn Keiser has long been a champion of his work, and an affinity for his output is in her blood.

The program opens with what is perhaps Dan's best-known organ work, the 1988 *Rubrics: A Liturgical Suite for Organ*, premiered in 1989 by another AAM colleague, Mary Preston. Excerpts from this collection and the full suite have been featured in previous reviews, but this is surely the definitive recording. The very idea is clever: five short movements based on phrases from the rubrics in the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. The fourth section, "The Peace may be exchanged," evokes the intent of this liturgical act much more faithfully than does the act itself in many services I have attended, where it sadly devolves into a quasi coffee hour. Might it be possible for this piece, lasting 3:17, to be played on some occasion before the Exchange of the Peace in order to set a more authentic tone? The final rubric, "The people respond—Amen!" could well serve as the listener's reaction to the entire work. While not being expressly programmatic, these movements do catch the spirit of each of the respective points in the liturgy.

The *Salem Sonata* that follows was written for the newly restored 1800 Tannenberg organ in Salem, North Carolina (see the review of Jack Mitchener's program on this instrument in the January 2010 issue of *The Journal*). It, too, has short phrases as movement titles, these taken from various sources. Each of the

four sections evokes, respectively, words of thankfulness, "Hallowed be thy name," praise, and pleasure in God's work. The dedication honors, among others, Dan's wife Paula "whose vision and dedication to the [restoration] project made it a reality." The brilliant *Phoenix Processional* (solo organ version) was derived from a larger work for brass sextet and organ, *Phoenix Fanfare and Processional*. This piece would be especially effective if played at the entrance of the principals at any celebratory occasion.

The largest work on the disc is *Celebration*, a set of variations inspired by the Scripture verse "... thanksgiving, and the voice of melody" (Isaiah 51:3). Based on a transposed Lydian mode, this piece progresses through-composed until the actual theme of the variations is stated near the end. The entire work is luminative, imaginative, and compelling. Next is the *Æolian Sonata* of 2002, which makes more use of striking dissonances than do other items on the program, especially in the opening movement, *Out of the Depths*. A contrast follows in the meditative movement *Shalom*, leading to the triumphant concluding *Laudate Dominum*. The liner notes explain that the use of titles in three languages "symbolically [pays] tribute to the outpouring of support that Americans have felt from peace-loving people throughout the world."

The program closes with *The Casavant Diptych: In Mystery and Wonder*. The evocative *Aria* ("God moves in a mysterious way") builds to an excited climax, then subsides into warm sounds that convey the wisdom of accepting God's mysterious way. The concluding *Toccata* continues the thought, "His wonders to perform." The wonders of God's works are brilliantly celebrated here.

Marilyn's playing is, as always, technically secure, rhythmically vital, and artistically informed. Having this exemplary artist perform music that she loves is a priceless treasure! The 2007 Casavant at St. Paul's Church, Indianapolis, is an ideal vehicle for all of Dan's work. Roger W. Sherman's recording, editing, and mastering have produced a disc of most admirable sound and effect. The liner contains program notes, information and a stoplist for the organ, biographies, and technical notes.