

## RECORDINGS

**THE MUSIC OF DAN LOCKLAIR.** Marilyn Keiser, organist. IV/91 Casavant organ (Opus 3856, 2007) of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Indianapolis, Ind. Loft Recordings LRCD-1110. Loft.cc. Dan Locklair is one of America's most successful composers, enjoying an international reputation for his large compositional portfolio that includes symphonic and chamber works, an opera, a ballet, and numerous solo instrumental, vocal, organ, and choral works. He was named Distinguished Composer by the American Guild of Organists in 1996. His inimitable, infectious style is quintessentially American, with its economy of structure, jaunty rhythms, and stylish motifs. Marilyn Keiser has long been a worthy champion of Locklair's organ music. Thus, this is a most welcome recording, made on a marvelous large Casavant conceived in the Anglican tradition. Its multitude of colors, wide dynamic range, power, and clarity render it an ideal instrument for Locklair's music.

Keiser opens with *Rubrics: A Liturgical Suite for Organ* (1988), which has enjoyed immense popularity and remains one of the most widely played of 20th-century American organ works. Its five contrasting movements capture the essence of Locklair's style. This work was heard at both the funeral of President Ronald Reagan and as part of the 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. service during the inauguration of President Barack Obama.

The *Salem Sonata* (2003) was composed for the celebration of the completion of the restoration of the 1800 David Tannenberg organ. Its four movements, alternately joyful and reflective, convey Locklair's characteristically optimistic spirit. In this performance, Dr. Keiser uses the full resources of the Casavant, rather than limiting registrations to imitate the much more intimate Tannenberg.

The *Aeolian Sonata* (2002) was written to celebrate the famed Aeolian organ of Duke University Chapel. It further pays tribute to "the spirit of the American people in the aftermath of the September 2001 terrorist attacks." The first movement, titled "Aus tiefer Not" ("Out of the Depths"), is dark and highly dissonant. In the second movement, "Shalom," musical rays of hope shine through the preceding darkness, providing warmth and comfort. The third movement, "Laudate Dominum," is a triumphant paean that compels the listener to a joyful dance in the knowledge that good has prevailed over evil. Haig Mardirosian has hailed this work as "a refreshing delight . . . which literally screams for the appraisal of masterpiece . . . . Dan Locklair has achieved a summit."

Locklair's *Phoenix Processional* originated in 1979 as a larger work for organ, brass quartet, and percussion, commissioned for the February 1980 reopening and dedication of James Memorial Chapel of Union Seminary. Locklair made the organ solo version in 1996. While embodying Locklair's unique style, this work also reflects the spirit of pomp and ceremony of the great English processions. *Celebration (Variations for Organ)* was completed in 2003. It is inspired by Isaiah 51:3: ". . . thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." Interestingly, the variations precede the theme, which appears only near the

conclusion. The work is based on the Lydian mode, with strong emphasis on the raised fourth scale degree.

Locklair's *In Mystery and Wonder* was widely performed on November 13, 2004, in celebration of the 125th anniversary of Casavant Frères, by whom the work was commissioned. Its first movement (*Aria*) is meditative, in contrast with the ebullient *Toccata*, which sports extended virtuosic pedal solos and rhythmic flair. With the exception of *Phoenix* and *Celebration*, every movement in the aforementioned works is prefaced and inspired by a scriptural passage, liturgical rubric, or religious utterance. Thus, although these works are often encountered in a recital context, they are entirely appropriate for use in various liturgical situations. The splashes of color, exuberance, freshness, originality, and superior craftsmanship generate tremendous appeal that make Locklair's organ works an integral part of 20th-century literature for the instrument. Marilyn Keiser performs Locklair's music with passion, imagination, precision, energy, and understanding. This recording should become a classic.