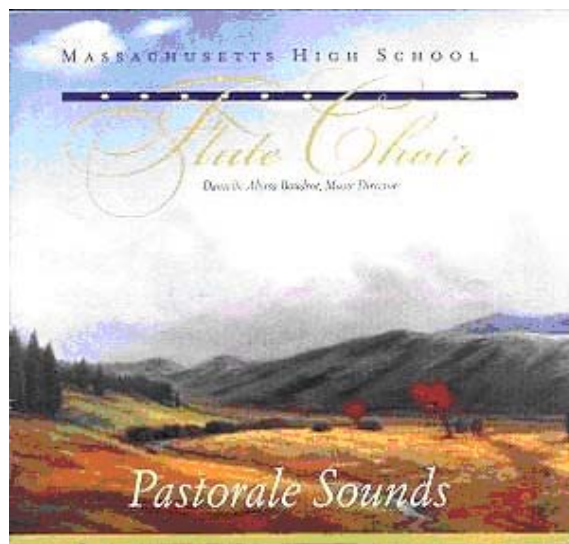


PASTORALE SOUNDS



Music for flute choir

Massachusetts High School Flute Choir/Danielle Alyssa Boudrot
rec. Massachusetts 2000

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Available from Lynwood Music, 2 Church Street, West Hagley,
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This first disc opens with a simply sensual arrangement of Holst's I'll love my love. It is a beautiful melody and played to perfection; a splendid start to any CD.

The Three Children's Dances of Luigi Zaninelli are fine. The central item, the Melancholy Dance, introduced by the bass flute, is quite something and the final dance is remarkable and, would you believe it, percussive: wild trills and flutter tonguing. The

first dance, Gay Dance, is not that gay but very well written. Some of the harmonies and the spacing of the flutes are brilliantly judged. I love the bright sound. Engaging music and well played. Can you imagine the beautiful sounds of the piccolo?

Charles Threatte comes from Atlanta. His Pastoral dates from 1988 and is scored for six flutes and alto flute. It is not one of those idyllic, uneventful pastorales but one which demands technique and a high emotional content. The flute is a very sensual human instrument. It can convey a wide range of emotion and colour and, my goodness, how well these young players excel themselves!

The brief four movement Sextet of Matt H. Doran follows. He was born in Kentucky in 1921 and has ten operas, six symphonies and six concertos to his name as well as 67 pieces involving the flute. I know his Sonatine for flute and cello. This little Sextet is simple, direct and effective. It is not ostentatious and this is why it is a success. It does have a few clichés but it is very pleasing music and receives a good performance. The balance and sound are exemplary. After the luscious andante comes an allegro scherzando which says in 99 seconds what some composers take ages to do. Brevity can be very effective. This is what makes Webern a genius! Another andante follows but it relies on too much unison work. It is better which the music diverges. There is a final allegro which isn't merry!

Two pieces by Raimundo Pineda follow. He hails from Venezuela and was born in 1967 and is closely linked with this ensemble. The Latin rhythms will appeal to some but whether it works aesthetically I doubt. The first piece, Polo Oriental, has little to say and the second piece, Las Piruetas de Mariana sounds very banal. Oh dear! It simply does not work. It sounds like a constipated hurdy-gurdy! Dreadful music!

The second disc consists of music by two composers. Paule Maurice's Suite for a quartet of flutes is full of colour. But she is not a composer of the same stature as her husband Pierre Lantier whose Piano Concerto is a very good piece.

The opening of this quartet is called a preambule. Indeed. The second is called a divertissement but I did not find it so. The pavane, fughette, arioso and rondo movements are all anachronistic. It is 'living in the past music' which often betrays a composer's inability to write original music and music of our time. One movement sounded like a take off of a popular musical number.

Andrew Downes' Fantasia for alto, bass and flute choir is a substantial piece and clearly a labour of love. It is not my favourite among Andrew's works but is beautifully played.

It is his Sonata for flute choir Op 58 that completes this second disc. It is a very fine piece showing influences from Renaissance music to music of Africa and North America. There are some very telling moments and both the slow third and fifth movements are truly memorable as is this performance. The terrific contrasts in this composer's works sets him apart. This is a very important and unusual work and deserves attention. It is not merely a curiosity but music that is often very special indeed. I loved the performance.

David Wright

