

CAVATINA AT THE OPERA



CD review by A. Kunze

SOUNDBOARD

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If there is a finer flute and guitar duo in the world than Cavatina Duo, I have not heard them. Denis Azabagic and (his wife) flutist Eugenia Moliner are both world class virtuosos and brilliant musical interpreters. And on their delightful disc of operatic arrangements they are immeasurably aided in most of the works by the inspired and creative work of composer and arranger Alan Thomas.

Thomas's wonderful piece *Out of Africa* gave its title to Azabagic's most recent solo disc. Operatic Potpourris are generally vehicle for displays both technically and lyrical. The works on offer here do not disappoint in either regard. Sometimes the facility is quite staggering and one almost forgets just how beautiful the music is. Each of the works is delightful.

Bizet's *Carmen* is full of glorious melodies, which have often exploited off the operatic stage. Francois Borne's *Fantasie Brillante* is as good as any of them. Giuliani's take on themes from Rossini's *Tancredi* sound like an implausibly exciting version of one of his *Rossiniane*, on which it is a decided improvement. Alan Thomas deftly reworks Sor's famous *Magic Flute* variations, interweaving ingenious flute parts into the guitar original and adding little bits of the bird-catcher Papageno's introductory aria. Since Papageno uses his flute to lure birds, it is a most appropriate addition. The famous "*Carnival of Venice*" tune has been used to create virtuoso works for many instruments. Alan Thomas again cleverly conflates Tarrega's guitar version with a flute showpiece by Giulio Briccialdi. Good clean fun!

Briccialdi also wrote a Potpourri on *La Traviata*, and Thomas merges it with one by Emanuel Krakamp. The result is effective and often affecting. (Moliner's part at the end sounds superhuman. Very cool.) Weber's *Der Freischutz*, is likely to be the least familiar source work on the album, but this *Fantasie* stands on its own even if one doesn't know the opera. Written by the great flutist Paul Taffanel for flute and piano (with the piano part transcribed by Thomas), it is a very impressive piece, drawing powerful performances from the duo. I'm glad I have come to know it. Beautiful recorded sound makes this disc an irresistible recommendation.