

TELEMANN (arr. A. Thomas) *Twelve Fantasias*, TWV 40:2-13. **MARAIS** (arr. Tappert) *Pièces de Viol, Book 2: Folies d'Espagne* • Cavatina Duo (Eugenia Moliner, fl; Denis Azabagić, gtr) • BRIDGE 9541 (70:44)

Entitled “Folies and Fantasias,” this splendid disc presents a fascinating program encompassing music by a composer who should be better known (Marais) and another whose greatness still goes without full acknowledgement (Telemann).

For some, Marin Marias’ name might only be known through the horn player Dennis Brain, who frequently played an arrangement of his piece “La Basque” for horn and piano as an encore to his recitals. An investigation of Marais’ music reveals a composer of real depth: try for example Robert Smith’s fabulous disc *La Gracieuse* on Resonus of a selection of *Pièces de Viol*, while a presentation in by viola da gambist Alberto Rasi as part of Ton Koopman’s *Baroque Itineraire* festival in the Périgord vert, France in July last year, *Moi, Marais!: Life and Music of the greatest violist of the 17th Century* was intriguing in presenting a dialog between composer and his own instrument (the bass viol) while also giving an account of Marais’ life. One of the court composers of the Sun King, Marais’ output is glorious. Rasi, Professor of Viol at the University of Verona, included “Folies d’Espagne” as part of his presentation, along with such pieces as the modern-sounding “Le tombeau de l’opération de la taille” from the fifth book of *Pièces de Viol*. Heard here with a guitar part realization by Johannes Tappert, one gets a sense of the greatness at work in the “Folies d’Espagne”. The Cavatina Duo give the music plenty of space, always within the limits of Baroque style; more, they project all of the composer’s limitless imagination in tandem with profundity, dance and joy. It is quite the musical and emotional journey. Marais himself said he made his pieces playable on other instruments apart from his own bass viol, so this arrangement has justification. This is, of course, the famous “La Folia” theme so beloved of Baroque musicians (and on to Rachmaninoff in his magnificent *Variations on a Theme of Corelli*). Laudably, the Cavatina Duo perform the piece in the original D-Minor (flutists often opts for a more comfortable E-Minor); there is no missing the flamenco element of Denis Azabagić’s guitar towards the end. A fabulous, life-enhancing performance captured in crystal clear, involving sound, this is a perfect way in to the disc, affecting and invigorating by turns. The splendidly international coupling of Spanish flutist Eugenia Moliner and Bosnian guitarist Denis Azabagić offers playing of polish and panache. And if Marais tickles your fancy, do use Robert Smith’s disc as your next port of call.

The Telemann finds us spoiled for choice in the catalog, with fine versions by Matsuyuki Motomura (Waon Records), Pamela Thorby (Linn) and, perhaps most memorably, Ashley Solomon on Channel Classics, in which Solomon plays on a variety of finely-honed instruments (including flutes of porcelain and ivory). *Fanfare* reviewer Laura Rónai waxed lyrical about the complementary readings of Jed Wentz on Brilliant Classics and Rachel Brown on Uppernote Classics (*Fanfare* 32:5), comments that reflect the very fertility of Telemann’s score. Again at *Baroque Itinéraire*, this time in 2017, there was a dramatized performance of these Fantasias, by Les Corps Éloquents (Hubert Hazeboucq, Baroque dance/choreography and Julien Martin, recorders), in which each Fantasia depicted a month of the year. While the Italian title of the work refers to “senza basso,” the addition of guitar for the present recording is most effective and offers a vibrant alternative to the solo original. In the filling out, something of what I at least hear as an inherent loneliness of the original is lost, but in compensation comes the joy of voices moving in parallel intervals, or of added contrapuntal lines. Alan Thomas’s arrangement is a work of great imagination; more, it is a labor of love, clearly underpinned by unshakeable respect for Telemann’s genius. The sheer tenderness of the delicate fifth Fantasia is reason enough for hearing the arrangement, the somewhat grounding guitar enabling the galant nature of the piece to shine. The at times improvisational nature of Telemann’s writing is beautifully honoured by the Cavatina Duo, too. Music noble and dignified, tender, lively, unstoppable: this sequence of Telemann Fantasias has it all, and the Cavatina Duo revels in each and every aspect. Flutist Eugenia Moliner’s articulation is a joy in and of itself (try the sixth Fantasia, perhaps, as a particular exemplar

of this trait) while the two players create the very definition of *galanterie* in the D-Major (No. 7). It is the eighth Fantasia that perhaps plunges furthest into the heart center, an E-Minor of decidedly dolorous intent (and how effective is the contrast when the music changes gear later in this particular Fantasia), while the tenth Fantasia talks us into the realms of F sharp-Minor: exploratory, almost mystical. The care lavished on this latter piece by the Cavatina Duo is remarkable, as if underlining Telemann's genius; and just listen to the sheer variety held within the eleventh Fantasia (if Telemann in G-Major implies the unremarkable to you, you need to hear this). Here in the eleventh is all one needs to know as to the care the Cavatina Duo in locating their tempos: sprightly at times *in extremis*, it is taken just far enough to convey infectious joy while ensuring that no detail is ever lost. The final Fantasia, in G-Minor, is also the longest, beginning plaintively before finding more active territory; a quickening nevertheless still colored by the recurring slow passage (and how the guitar's tremolo underlines the *Affekt* here).

An arrangement is perhaps by its very nature a supplement to the original; but it is hard to imagine a more satisfying or convincing take on Telemann's work of genius than this one. Unhesitatingly recommended. **Colin Clarke**

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