

AN AMERICAN JOURNEY • Avguste Antonov (pn) • HARTSHORN no catalog number (27:10)

VOLLINGER *Dreams Before You Awake*. ZACHARIAS *First Romance*. SAUNDERS *Starry Wanderers* (excerpts).
ROLLIN *Blue Fantasy*. HOGAN *Cumulis Humilis*

This short disc of music by living American composers was born out of a series of recitals Avguste Antonov gave in Ohio, New Jersey, and New York in 2013, where these pieces were programmed with standard repertoire. Antonov is a staunch advocate of contemporary American music, and his belief and unfailing musicianship is everywhere in evidence here.

Ohio composer Richard Zacharias's *First Romance* is fascinating but short. In its 3:24 it holds huge emotion, and Antonov seems to resonate with the composer's language. More harmonically challenging perhaps is Samantha Hogan's *Cumulus Humilis* (a type of cloud: fair weather cumulus, as it is also known). Hogan's response to Nature is clear and heartfelt.

Matthew C. Saunders lectures in Ohio. We hear here three excerpts from *Starry Wanderers*: the rather austere "Venus" is perhaps a sort of flip-side to Holst's view; "Earthly Hope" seems to touch on Messiaen, harmonically; "Stillness at the Edge" finds more respite, its chords beautifully articulated by Antonov.

There is no missing the blues-inflected harmonies of Robert L. Rollin's *Blue Fantasy*. Rollin has studied with an impressive roster of composers, including Ravi Shankar, Karel Husa, Elliott Carter, and Ligeti. Married to the blues element is a Romantic temperament (this is essentially a Romantic miniature). Finally, there comes William Vollinger's *Dreams Before You Awake*. Although primarily a composer of vocal music, Vollinger shows a real awareness of the expressive capabilities of the piano, plus an expert and consistent use of harmony. His music has real real character as well.

Hartshorn Classical has joined the ProArte movement in supporting a natural approach to tuning instruments (including the piano), increasing the clarity of consonances and the acidity of dissonances as well as lessening the percussive quality of the piano (this latter is certainly true). A 1968 Steinway has been used, tuned to A=436Hz with "ProArte Genuine Tuning." The recording took place just after a live recording in New Jersey, which may help to

account for the freshness and spontaneity of Antonov's playing. A rewarding disc, if rather short measure.

FANFARE: Colin Clarke