

on to give informative background on the various pieces performed. Naxos also provides recommendations for further reading.

Sousa has long been an iconic American composer, though his reputation has rested on a handful of brilliant works; how refreshing to hear more of his output and discover just how wide ranging and satisfying it is. EMI and Naxos provide proof that over three hours of Sousa is not too much of a good thing.

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Elliott Schwartz, *Tapestry: Chamber Music by Elliott Schwartz*. Métier MSV28537, 2013, CD.

Elliott Schwartz's 2013 CD, *Tapestry*, offers perhaps the clearest and most consistent perspective to date on Schwartz's signature mosaic of methods and concerns over the past three decades. The four compositions on this CD all share the same brooding personality, driven by a search for new musical paths but continuously haunted or confronted by echoes of music from past centuries. In fact, it is often *three* basic elements, juxtaposed in unsynchronized layers, whose interrelationship animates the structure of these works: an extended, soloistic, introspective melodic line; a sequence of restless textures, striking timbres and impulsive gestures; and the fragmentary, sometimes ephemeral, sometimes abrupt appearance of music that either intimates music of bygone eras or quotes it directly. In this way, each piece on the recording conveys in its own way the composer's oft-stated preoccupation with the plight of modern-day humanity, caught in a three-way tug of war between a chaotic present, an unpredictable future, and an irretrievable past. In every composition, the beauty and terror of spontaneity are pitted in some way against the nostalgia of familiarity and expectation.

String Quartet No. 2 (2008), subtitled "for Louise and Aaron," is the most recent opus on the disk, superbly rendered by the London-based Kreutzer Quartet. The dedicatees are sculptor Louise Nevelson and composer Aaron Copland (who, the composer notes, were born of immigrant Jewish families from Russia and Lithuania, respectively). Inspired by the way Nevelson assembled twigs, broken furniture pieces and other detritus into monumental installations, Schwartz grounds his quartet on a mercurial, continuously undulating sonic layer generated from analogous "shards" of folk music and other musical Americana found in Copland's repertoire. Although these are atomized and accelerated beyond recognizability, they are a foil for more transparent activity—sometimes poignantly lyrical, sometimes fraught with intensity—based partly on Slavic folk material and partly on a motive generated from Copland's name. (This use of *soggetto cavato* is one of Schwartz's favorite devices and is employed elsewhere on this disk.) As the quartet nears its conclusion, performers speak overlapping lines from the writings of both Nevelson and Copland, and in a deft touch, Schwartz has their speech fade into the backdrop

in raspy whispers that re-emerge moments later as shadowy *sul ponticello* tremolos. All told, Schwartz's quartet is an extravagantly chimerical but soulful journey that, from beginning to end, offers a rich feast for the ears of any thoughtful and attentive listener.

The quartet is followed by *Memorial in Two Parts* for violin and piano, the earliest work on the disk. A 1984 commission from the McKim Fund in the Library of Congress, the composition is dedicated to the memory of pianist Andrew Wolf and an amateur vocalist, Gabor Brogyanyi, who was also a language professor and colleague of the composer. The first movement, an homage to Andrew Wolf, features a piano part in which references to some of Wolf's favorite repertoire—primarily from Schumann and Gershwin—erupt dramatically, rise eerily to the surface or give way to violent outbursts. These exertions are set against even more erratic changes of character in the violin. The second movement honors the memory of Brogyanyi with fragmentary quotations from his musical favorites, while seeming to create a sometimes-argumentative relationship between violin as singer and piano as accompanist. Included are hints of Mozart and Monteverdi, along with playfully unintuitive adumbrations of Schubert's "Shepherd on the Rock." Throughout the work, the two instruments comprise two layers of discourse that coordinate briefly from time to time but always devolve thereafter into an uneasy independence, leaving a vaguely mournful sense of irresolution at the end. Violinist Peter Shepard Skærved and pianist Aaron Shorr are both impressive in their technical and interpretive command of the virtuosity and emotional range—from the explosive to the gently nuanced—demanded by this work.

*Tapestry* for violin, cello, and piano was originally commissioned for piano alone by Victor Borge's *Thanks to Scandinavia* fund; in 1996, it was augmented at the request of the Tivolo Trio of Denmark. Both versions of the work commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of successful efforts during World War II to transport Danish Jews safely across the Kattegat to Sweden. Schwartz chooses his quotations for this work on a programmatic basis, with music by Gideon Klein (a Jewish composer who died at Theresienstadt), the Fifth Symphony of Vaughan Williams (written during the blitz), a children's song from Denmark, and a musical cryptogram based on Victor Borge's name. Among the four compositions on the disk, this one is unique in the ensemble coordination and unanimity of texture it entails, especially as the bittersweet chorale passages in the middle are overtaken by a sardonic march, one that builds maniacally until it becomes unhinged, after which the music regathers itself in a gentle, quiet ending that somehow conveys both tragedy and a sense of relief. To the exceptional playing of Skærved and Shorr is added the deeply sonorous and poetic contribution of cellist Nicole Johnson.

In 2002, Schwartz completed *Water Music*, the final composition on this disk, in preparation for a weeklong residency at the London College of Music and Media or "LCMM," letters used to derive one of the work's most persistent motives. There are three protagonists in this musical drama: a string orchestra, a string quartet, and recorded sounds that include rainfall, thunder, burbling streams, crashing waves, and fog horns, among other sources. In this performance, the Kreutzer Quartet plays the role of concertino and the Longbow string ensemble serves as the ripieno, with Peter Sheppard Skærved both conducting and playing first violin in the

quartet. Throughout the work, string quartet and orchestra exchange momentary whiffs of music literature that relate in some way to water, drawn from works by Smetana, Saint-Saëns, Händel, Wagner, Chopin, and Vaughan Williams (e.g., Chopin's "Raindrop" prelude or Händel's own *Water Music*). The textural palette in this final work on the recording is even more varied than in the compositions that precede it, ranging from slow, introspective unaccompanied solos to violent ensemble eruptions and clustering dissonances, sometimes colliding with a cascading amalgam of water noises. Crucial to a meaningful hearing of this music is a willingness to forgo anticipation of any narrative thread leading to a palpable sense of totality. Here, as in much of Schwartz's music, it is the intricately surprising, moment-to-moment encounter between musical thought and a raw (in this case watery) environment that rewards multiple hearings.

Both the string quartet and *Water Music* were recorded in the UK; although both recording sessions took place in churches, the acoustics were not overly live, and the quality of sound is clear, clean and appropriately resonant. Both *Memorial in Two Parts* and *Tapestry* were recorded live at the Library of Congress. Although audience noise is occasionally obvious, it is not enough to disrupt or distract from an otherwise gratifying experience.

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*Deems Taylor, Through the Looking Glass; Charles Tomlinson Griffes, Poem; The White Peacock; The Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan; Three Tone Pictures; Bacchanale. The Seattle Symphony, Gerard Schwarz, conductor; Scott Goff, flute. Liner notes by Paul Schiavo. Naxos American Classics Seattle Symphony Collection 559724, [1990] 2012, CD.*

I was first introduced to the music of Deems Taylor during the 1980s in a graduate seminar on American opera. My curiosity piqued by two excerpts of his opera *The King's Henchman* (1926), I started to explore the reasons behind his rise to prominence as a composer over the first three decades of the twentieth century, and his fall into relative obscurity shortly after his death in 1966.<sup>1</sup> When I embarked on my study of Taylor, the literature on his work as a composer was extremely limited and few commercial recordings were available. The 1923 version of *Through the Looking Glass*, the work appearing on this Naxos release, was released on commercial recordings three times prior to 1990: the first by the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony under Howard Barlow (ca. 1940); the second by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony under Howard Hanson (1954); and the third by the Interlochen Youth Orchestra (1965).

<sup>1</sup> Christopher E. Mehrens, "The Critical and Musical Work of Deems Taylor in Light of Contemporary Cultural Patterns" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1998).