

Review: *Blue Solitude* • Alturas Duo; Nicole Esposito (fl)¹ • CON BRIO 21342 (60:00)

BROUWER ¹*Paisajes, retratos y mujeres*. PENAFORTE ¹*Elegia*. ¹*Interlúdio*. RAMÍREZ *Alfonsina y el mar* (arr. Lezcano). FOLK SONG ¹*Diosllai Runa*. J. & R. MÁRQUEZ ¹*Sipassy*. ASSAD ¹*Winter Impressions*

By Lynn René Bayley | www.fanfaremag.com

Immediately from the opening movement of Leo Brouwer's mood-oriented piece, *Paisajes, retratos y mujeres* (Portraits, landscapes and women), "Portrait of Wagner and Mathilde," one is aware of three extraordinary musicians at work. Flautist Esposito, initially playing in her low range, creates a sensuous mood at the outset with Scott Hill of the Alturas Duo on guitar and his partner, Carlos Boltes, on viola, but the mood soon changes as sharp shards cut into it. Brouwer's music continues on its quixotic, musically schizophrenic way through a number of such tempo and mood shifts in this movement, which lasts nine and a half minutes. The second, marked "Mujer balando un minuetto" ("Woman dancing a minuet"), is steadier and more conventional in rhythm but just as wildly inventive in its melodic-harmonic construction, taking one on a wildly swinging minuet indeed. Similarly, the last movement—dedicated to John Dowland—goes through a series of strange yet wonderful variations, considerably faster in tempo than I think of when I think of that lute composer's music.

The *Elegia* and *Interludio* which follow are two parts of Brazilian composer Raimundo Penaforte's Three pieces for Flute, Viola and Guitar, although the notes say that *Elegia* was originally part of his *Sweet New York*, composed for trumpet and piano in 1995. It is very richly scored, with the viola playing in its mid-range and the flute seldom venturing very high. The accompanying *Interludio* was commissioned by the Arizona Friends of Chamber Music and was part of a four-movement work, *Quartetice*, which had previously been written for the Los Angeles Guitar Quartet in 1999. Penaforte arranged both of them for this recording. The music is both pensive and strange, reminding me of some of the music of the legendary Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas.

"*Alfonsina y el mar*" is described in the notes as a popular folk song "about the suicide of the renowned Argentinian poet, Alfonsina Storni, who drowned himself by walking into the ocean." This is a simple, lyrical tune played in a delicate style by the duo and flute. A similar arrangement was made by the performers of a Peruvian Christmas carol, "*Diosllai Runa*," on which Carlos Boltes switches from viola to charango. This instrument is described in the liner notes, very politely, as a "ten string guitar-like instrument from the Andres region," but I owned one once (given to me by a relative who had traveled to South America), and what the notes fail to mention is that they are usually made from the shell of a dead armadillo! Similarly, José and Roberto Márquez's instrumental piece *Sipassy* was also written for the charango, and it is played by that instrument along with guitar and flute. After a slow introduction, it switches into high gear with a foot-stomping melody played with great gusto by the trio.

The disc concludes with *Winter Impressions* *Winter Impressions* by the well-known Brazilian

guitarist-composer, Sergio Assad. The first movement, titled "The Frozen Garden," opens with sharp rhythmic shards played by the trio which continue to arise throughout its five-minute duration, despite a lyrical interlude that changes the mood but not for long. "Blue Solitude" is a more songlike piece, emphasizing the lyrical qualities of both flute and viola while the guitar continually changes the rhythm beneath them. In the last movement, "Fire Place," a strong but asymmetric rhythm underscores much of its duration—again, with a lyrical interlude in the middle. In the final section, the flute is required to play in an almost spitting style into the instrument while guitar and viola play similarly sharp shards in the background.

In my praise of the Alturas Duo above, I hope I have not given short shrift to flautist Esposito, who is an exceptional player in every way. Her rare combination of rich, warm lyricism and brilliant, exciting staccato playing makes her participation a delight to hear. This disc is very warmly recommended.

- Lynn René Bayley