

RAPHAEL **Duo No. 5**, op. 47/6, “Kanonische Suite”¹. **Solo Flute Sonatas**: No. 7; No. 8. **Wind Quartet**, op. 61². **Sonatina for Two Flutes**¹. **Triptychon Maria**³. **Trio-Suite**, op. 44⁴. **Trio in B**, op. 48⁵. **Sonata in e**, op. 8⁶. **Sonatine**, op. 65/1⁷ • Ana Ioana Oltean, ¹Kaspar Zehnder (fls); ²Doris Mende (ob); ²Séverine Payet (cl); ²Norihito Nishinomura (bn); ^{3,5}Stefan Muhmenthaler (vn); ^{3,5,7}Julia Malkova (va); ^{3,4}Joël Marosi (vc); ³Claude Eichenberger (alto); ^{4,6}Atena Carte (pn); ⁷Cornelia Lootsmann • QUERSTAND 1805 (two discs: 138:24)

While all the works here in this sixth volume of music by Günther Raphael include flute, there is more than sufficient timbral variety with the addition of various instruments to avoid monotony. Born in 1944 into a musical family, Günter Raphael, his grandfather, Albert Becker, had taught both Sibelius and Raphael’s father, Georg. Günter was a teacher at Leipzig State Conservatory of Music, and his First Symphony, written at the age of 23, was premiered by Wilhelm Furtwängler, no less. He held a variety of notable academic positions, dying in October 1960. Most of the works on this twofer date from his transitional period between early and late styles (he rarely wrote for flute in the early and late works)

Far from being a musical revolutionary, Günter Raphael’s music is steeped in the past, from the counterpoint of the “Kanonische Suite” (1944, beautifully realized here), to a kind of tonal dodecaphony. Far from an exercise in composition (or exercises for two flutes, come to that), there is a rigor of this Suite that is most appealing; although the language is not directly analogous, one might perhaps reference Hindemith in the serious demeanor. Both Ana Ioana Oltean, who plays throughout the two-disc set, and Kaspar Zehnder, who joins her for the Duo, are perfectly attuned to Raphael’s fascinating mode of discourse, as they are in the rather more playful *Sonatina* for two flutes of 1966, a piece from Raphael’s late period that utilizes the tonal dodecaphony for Raphael’s later period. The Solo Flute Sonata No. 7, dating from the same year, is a beautiful outflowing of melodic inspiration, sometimes cheeky, sometimes lyrical. The ending is perfectly judged by Oltean, who gives a similarly impressive performance of the Eight Sonata.

Many a wind group could benefit from the inclusion of Raphael’s op. 61 Wind Quartet (1945) in their repertoire. Spiky, pungent and, a key part of its expressive remit, witty, this is a glorious outpouring of inspiration spanning a quarter of an hour. The slow movement has tender intricacy, the melodic lines additive with a sort of inbuilt inevitability. A pastoral-like third movement (still with those intricate lines though; there is a watchmaker’s precision about this) leads to a deliciously laid-back finale which seems to have Haydn’s wit, even cheekiness, hiding in its shadows.

Wonderful to have the *Triptychon für Maria* (1943) with its radiant tonal arrivals in the first panel (setting a text from 1421; the piece is presented as one track). This work was written on the birth of the composer’s second daughter, Maria Christine. That intricacy of line is there again, but the move to setting a text seems to inspire Raphael to incredibly profound writing. A second text, from around the year 1160, furnishes the second movement, all birds and children and innocence (beautifully done here). The vocal soloist, Claude Eichenberger, has a lovely voice but the diction could be clearer. A lovely work nonetheless.

Angular and fascinating in that sort of Hindemith way, the *Trio-Suite* is an earlier work, dating from 1936. Cellist Joel Marosi is particularly expressive in this work scored for flute, cello and piano. There are frequent moments of delight and freshness in this piece, as befits its designation of “Trio-Suite,” perhaps. We certainly enter into a different world for the rather more Stravinskian *Trio in B-Major*, op. 48. Listen to how carefully the performers here (Oltean, Muhmenthaler and Malkova) sculpt their melodies, and the joy in the multiplicity of textures in the finale, where a conversation between violin and viola is a real

highlight. It is difficult to imagine a more attuned one than the present account, though the performers delighting the the counterpoint of the third movement and indeed finding great peace in the second (the marking is “Mit großer Ruhe”). The slow fourth movement is marked to be played “simply,” which just adds to its touching, aching dissonances.

The op. 48 Trio for flute, violin and viola (1940) appeared on the previous volume in Querstand’s series, also, with different performers (there Wilhelm Schwegler, flute; Reiner Moog, viola; Gunter Gugel, violin). The recording is fabulously managed throughout, and presentation is top-notch.

The Flute Sonata in E-Minor, op. 8 is the earliest work on the twofer, hailing from 1925. It has a bright and breezy aspect to it, Oltean nimble and sprightly and in perfect accord with her superb pianist, Atena Carte. A tinge of sepia-toned regret suffuses parts of the central Commodo, which include some delicious, reciprocal phrasing from Oltean and Carte. The finale, a Rondo, is surprisingly gentle.

Finally, a Sonatina for flute, viola and harp (1948), beautifully varied, harmonically spicy in its finale. This is one of the triumphs of the disc, both compositionally and in terms of the superbly calibrated performance. A brilliant end to an important release: a fascinating and rewarding piece of musical archaeology with a number of World premiere recordings, caught in uniformly fabulous sound. **Colin Clarke**

Five stars: An important release, : a fascinating and rewarding piece of musical archaeology