



Fall 2023 Reviews

HEARTDANCE

BERGERON *Dragonfly. Dream Dances.*

BERGERON/MARET *Alchemy.* · Folias Duo
FOLIAS MUSIC 03 (53:54)

The 20-year artistic and life partnership of flutist Carmen Maret and guitarist Andrew Bergeron is celebrated in this lovely release. They explain in the booklet note how they work, and it is both fascinating and elevating: the very source of their creativity lies in a connection with Nature. So, every Summer they drive across the country to self-booked venues, cooking their own food and sleeping at campsites in a tent. Breaks are scheduled for composition in remote cabins, all of which comprise what they call a “minimalist approach to touring”.

The first piece, Andrew Bergeron’s *Dragonfly*, traces the lifecycle of that insect from those watery insectile moments depicted in the initial movement, “Aquatic,” to its final mating formation in the shape of a heart in “Heartdance” (as the Folias Duo’s co-written notes so neatly put it, “a kind of flying valentine”). The pastoral, flowing feel to the opening “Aquatic” sets the tone for the album: flute and guitar in perfect accord. There is a hint of minor-mode sadness here, but the flute line floats freely. The way the music traces the insect’s flitting directions in this movement is most effective, and the rapport between Carmen Maret and Andrew Bergeron is everywhere apparent. It is followed by “Molting,” a triumph of texture: stuttering guitar treble, firm guitar bass, and flute over the top. The virtuosity of Maret is writ large in the never-ending flurries of the decidedly, and unsurprisingly, airborne “Flying”, with Bergeron’s guitar animating the motion from below. This extended movement is remarkable, as its sense of expansion allows the listener to fully immerse themselves in the action (or to be carried away, if you will!). The final piece in this part of the disc is “Heartdance,” which includes a sort of call-and-response between the two instruments using a gesture that is in itself decisive. This finale is decidedly celebratory and is heard in an impeccable performance.

The next piece, *Alchemy*, features the collaborative composition “Nighthawk” (created via what the authors call a “tag-team approach. to composing”), an atmospheric, haunting melody on alto flute. As they say, they “created something mysterious, like the bird itself,” and its rhythmic shiftings are absolutely fascinating. All credit, too, to Maret’s calm and sophisticated way with flutter-tonguing. It is preceded by “Meadow Dream:” by Maret, a piece that uses Scriabin’s “Mystic Chord” and a quote from the song *Pure Imagination* (the line “If you want to view paradise, simply look around and view it”). All of this makes it sound more complex than it actually sounds: this is an artfully constructed, melodic piece. The work’s next section, “Looking Glass,” the third and final movement, features piccolo and guitar. Maret’s tone is well-rounded; this is no succession of squeaks, but an instrument capable of graceful cantabile as it presents Maret’s long melodic line. Composed in Oregon’s Blue Mountains while studying Argentine music, and specifically the music of Piazzolla, “Looking Glass” has an easy flow peppered by hints of South America.

We return to the music of Bergeron for the final *Dream Dances*. There are two movements: “Procession of the Foxes” and “Forgotten Peach Blossoms”. The first movement is for tambin (a handmade three-holed flute from Guinea, West Africa) and guitar. The breathy, woody sound of the tambin reminds me of the Japanese shakuhachi, and the harmonies used appropriately reference the non-Western. Bergeron is expert at creating what might be best described as a field of texture in this movement, the music of which depicts a dream in which magical foxes danced at a wedding in the woods; the final “Forgotten Peach Blossoms” is just as remarkable and inspired: this time the music depicts a felled orchard revived by spirit-possessed Japanese dolls. It comes as no surprise to learn that *Dream Dances* was inspired by Akira Kurosawa’s film *Dreams*.

The recording is fabulous: present but nicely placed (Sono Luminus Studios in a former Episcopal Chapel in rural Boyce, VA). This is quite a voyage into the imagination, echoed by the superb artwork within the booklet (by David McKie, Alynn Guerra, Gregg Bruff, and Alina Poroshina). Most of all, this is a life-enhancing experience that stays with the listener long after the final note has sounded. **Colin Clarke**

Five stars: A life-enhancing experience that stays with the listener long after the final note has sounded