

TWELVE BY THE MOON-DIAL

Riverdale Ensemble (Stephen Fox, clarinets, saxophones). Chestnut Hall Music, CHM 080930
York Bowen, *Phantasy Quintet* for bass clarinet and strings; Ireland, *Trio in D* for clarinet, cello and piano; Holbrooke, *Nocturne 'Fairyland'* for clarinet, viola and piano; Holbrooke, *Eilean Shona* for clarinet and string quartet; Holbrooke, *Sonata* for saxophone and piano - transcribed by the composer from Op. 88 for saxophone and orchestra



This CD *Twelve by the Moon-dial* (title courtesy of Edgar Allen Poe) consists of over 78 minutes of fascinating music, presenting five lesser known works which deserve to be much

more widely known. I am delighted to say our own (British) June Emerson Wind Music has taken the lead in publishing and printing some of these works; Blenheim Press is responsible for the remainder.

The Bowen *Phantasy Quintet* is a work that has been influenced by other great British composers, (notably Bax in a reference to the last movement of the First Sonata).

Stephen Fox produces a bass clarinet sound that is very even and rounded in all registers and he has a fluent control of the instrument. All the clarinets on this disc are of Fox's own design, either in Grenadilla or Delryn material.

The Toronto based Riverdale Ensemble is highly skilled and plays with panache and virtuosity. Some very high, difficult, angular passages in the Bowen are negotiated with considerable control, particularly by the first violinist.

The Ireland Trio in D (reworked using material from Ireland's 1938 revision for violin, cello and piano) is reminiscent in places of the magnificent *Fantasy Sonata* and has passages of interest for all players, long lines and innovative harmonies. The 'Fairyland' and *Eilean Shona* by Holbrooke are works well worth having in the repertoire and I particularly enjoyed the latter in which a warm, British style sound is evident from Fox. (Interestingly he uses a *Grenadilla* version of his Nexus clarinet in this piece).

The piano in the trio works and sonata is always supportive and played with sensitivity and integrity by Elen Meyer. In the Holbrooke Sonata I found the soprano saxophone sound to be a little too transparent to support the vibrato, although the work itself is charming and I enjoyed the performance by Fox very much. Despite this small criticism Stephen Fox (clarinet, bass clarinet, soprano and alto saxophone) displays a highly cultured clarinet sound and controlled technical facility in all the works on all instruments on this disc and I highly commend him for bringing these relatively unknown works and his own design instruments to the attention of the clarinet and saxophone fraternity.

Leslie Craven ■