

AUDIOPHILE AUDITION

SIROTA: Celestial Wind [TrackList follows] – Victoria Sirota, organ/ Norman Fischer, cello/ Robert Sirota, piano – Albany

Contemporary organ music well-performed and recorded.

By Mel Martin

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I have a large collection of classical organ music on my shelves, from Bach to Widor, but not so much of the contemporary flavor. That gap has been filled by this recent CD from composer Robert Sirota.

Robert Sirota's music has garnered praise from audiences and critics alike throughout the United States and abroad and he is the recipient of numerous commissions and awards. A graduate of Juilliard, Oberlin, and Harvard, Sirota studied in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. He served as Director of The Johns Hopkins University's Peabody Institute, Director of Boston University's School of Music

and most recently as President of The Manhattan School of Music. His wife is the noted organist Victoria Sirota, Sirota has collaborated over the years with her in creating a body of work for organ, as well as liturgical and concert works for organ with choir, orchestra, and chamber ensembles. All the works on this recording were composed for, and are performed by Ms. Sirota.

I thought the most impressive composition is the track that begins the disc, the Toccata. Sirota describes the work as the most difficult organ piece he was written, and indeed, one can sense the acrobatics Ms. Sirota had to endure playing it. While difficult, the work is accessible and interesting. The playing is flawless. Another noteworthy work is the Easter Canticles, composed in 1993. It's played by cellist Norman Fischer along with Ms. Sirota. The cello and organ blend quite beautifully, and the work is inspiring and thoughtful.

The recordings were made in Baltimore and New York. The recording is fine, with a very clean high register and good, but not thundering bass. Organs are hard to record properly without distorting the instrument size, but the acoustic footprint seems quite accurate here.

I enjoyed this disc, and will seek out some more of Sirota's work. If you like contemporary organ music this disc will provide a very nice hour of reflection and refreshment.

TrackList:

1. Toccata
2. Four Pieces for Organ
3. Easter Canticles
4. Letters Abroad
5. Two Lenten Choral Preludes
6. Celestial Wind

<http://audaud.com/2014/08/sirota-celestial-wind-tracklist-follows-victoria-sirota-organ-norman-fischer-cello-robert-sirota-piano-albany/>