

# American Record Guide

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### *Jatamansi*

Barabas, Decker, Job, Macourek, Rogg, Ropak

Due Solisti—Raven 922—58 minutes

It is not common to get programs of music for flute and organ, and yet there were two for this issue. One (above) has largely familiar French pieces and consists mostly of arrangements. This release has original music that will be new to anyone. The performances by Czech flutist Zofie Vokalkova and American organist Kathleen Scheide are impeccable, and the sound is luscious. I found value in these selections that I believe flutists and organists would appreciate.

The three-movement sonata by Jiri Ropak (1922-2005) opens with a declarative character and the flute nearly engulfed in the organ sound. It is neoclassical and straightforward. Ropak was an organ professor at the Prague Conservatory and played the largest organ in the Czech Republic for decades in his position at the Basilica of St James.

The *Chaconne on Ave caeli janua* by Pamela Decker (b 1955) works up to a furious and grand conclusion in only five minutes. It was written for these players. The chant this piece is based on is included, sung by Jennifer Elaine Young.

The three movements of Lynn Job's *House of Jatamansi* are introduced with narration. Job's style is tonal and simple but appealing, and the pieces are not too long or too demanding to be welcome in a church service. The basis for the work is the story in John 12:1-8 of Jesus at the house of Mary, Martha, and

Lazarus. Mary takes an alabaster jar and pours fragrant oil over the feet of Jesus. This oil was believed to have been the Himalayan herb jatamansi (also called nard in the Bible), and it was outrageously expensive, worth more than a year's wages according to an analogous passage in Mark 14.

The Czech composer Michal Macourek (b 1972) is married to a flutist, but he wrote this piece for Due Solisti. His *Duo* is a single movement marked Andante maestoso written with gently plodding motion, but it is more mysterious than majestic.

After moving into her home, flutist Zofie Vokalkova found some handwritten flute music on paper that looked old. It was a suite for unaccompanied flute by Yen Barabas (1901-39), a Polish Jew who died in Prague during World War II. There are three movements that together last about five minutes. The final movement, *Con brio*, is a brief study in intervals. Even given such a sympathetic performance, like many unaccompanied flute pieces, the *Jody Suite* doesn't mean much. Try the unaccompanied suite by Austrian Jew Hugo Kauder for comparison and you'll realize the difference.

Lionel Rogg (b 1936) needs no introduction as an organist, but he also composes. The piece here is his 2007 sonata for oboe and organ. Like the Ropak, it is neoclassical and suits the instruments well.

There are pictures and registrations of the two splendid organs in Pennsylvania this program was recorded on. People who like flute or organ should definitely give this a try.