

proto-John Adams. It builds to a climax of Respighian grandeur, and its aftermath unfolds with both beauty and a rare purity of utterance. The movement ends with a eulogy over somber brass chords—a lament for those lost on the journey. The third section has a more “Danish” sound and begins with a lively fugue, ending in a mood of earned jubilation.

His Second Symphony (1921), *Hellas*, also has a programmatic basis. Generally, its fabric is leaner and more refined, with the logic more compact. It’s like good Danish furniture—no extra padding, but still elegant and attuned to human needs. The first movement, ‘Oresteia’ has a great deal of harmonic tension, resembling Nielsen’s Sixth Symphony, composed a few years later. The conclusion is one of unease. II, ‘Solitude Amid the Ruins’, has an elegiac flute soliloquy and continues the lean, spare textures of I but with an added touch of warmth. The finale, ‘Pallas Athena’, begins with a procession developed into a fugue capped with brass fanfares in tight harmonies.

The work won a bronze medal at the 1928 Olympics. (The Olympic Committee used to give awards to works of art about the games.) The able, enthusiastic performances are well recorded, and Yinon’s conducting seems completely sympathetic. Recommended for the huddled masses yearning to be free from standard rep.

O’CONNOR

SIMPSON: *Fireflies; Tesserae; Mosaics of Ancient Rome; American Gothic Suite; Grant Wood Variations*

Red Cedar Trio

Fleur de Son 57985—58 minutes

Andrew Earle Simpson teaches theory and composition at Catholic University. He is tackling an interesting challenge here—each piece either evokes a specific concept or is directly inspired by art. The title work, *Fireflies*, is an engaging, well-written suite for flute and guitar. Each movement evokes a different folk style. It is quite long—28 minutes—but I never lost interest. As the liner notes suggest, he was trying to capture the essence of summer nights in the American Midwest. This sense of place also links well with the Iowa-based performers. The Cedar Rapids Museum of Art commissioned the second piece, *Tesserae*, in conjunction with an installation of Roman artifacts. Simpson used three busts from the museum for inspiration. The result is a three-movement suite for flute, guitar, and viola that breaks into six distinct sections. It is a pleasant, somewhat challenging work. Without the actual art in front of me, I could still conjure visual images that evoked ancient Rome.

The Red Cedar Trio premiered the last

work, *American Gothic Suite*, in the studio where Grant Wood painted this iconic American painting. It must be a considerable challenge to take such a well-known painting and create a piece of music “about” it. But it works. There is a bit of bite to this piece, a sardonic edge that fits well considering the source of inspiration. I would like to see Simpson tackle my favorite Grant Wood painting, “Daughters of Revolution”, to see how he would translate its vicious satire into music. I think he could pull it off.

The Red Cedar Trio plays this music with elegance and impeccable skill. All three musicians have a warm, rich tone that never has even a hint of edge—a refreshing change of pace when so many musicians, flutists especially, seem to enjoy blasting away all the time. This is my second encounter with this ensemble (Nov/Dec 2005), and I enjoyed it just as much. I hope they continue to foster and perform such interesting music.

CHAFFEE

SMART: *Hot Sonatas*

Christine Gustafson, fl; Michael Finckel, vc; Guy

Yehuda, cl; Gary Smart, p

Albany 1115—59 minutes

University of North Florida professor Gary Smart admits that he didn’t think of the name “Hot Sonata” first; the moniker belongs to Erwin Schulhoff’s sonata for alto saxophone and piano. Like Schulhoff’s piece, though, Smart’s sonatas for flute, cello, and clarinet, all presented here, draw inspiration from American jazz. While the music is classically structured and developed, elements of be-bop harmony, rhythm, and improvisatory technique pervade the music.

For this recital, Smart sits at the piano and allows three friends to take center stage. East Carolina University professor Christine Gustafson plays *Maybrook Fancy* (1984) for flute and piano; the prominent East Coast cellist Michael Finckel plays *Sonata in Fancy* (1982), which was written for him; and UNF professor Guy Yehuda plays *Passing Fancies* for clarinet and piano, which was premiered at the 1985 International Clarinet Association conference in London.

In his liner notes, Smart refers to Gunther Schuller and his “Third Stream” idiom, and for the curious CD collector, this is a good starting point. Smart’s sonatas are much more accessible than Schuller’s work and make for interesting listening. But they seem better suited to the cafe than the recital hall; the concertgoer who invests all of his attention may get lost amid the fantasy-like eclecticism. The listener who enjoys the music with a good cup of coffee will likely appreciate Smart’s work.

Copyright of *American Record Guide* is the property of Record Guide Productions and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.