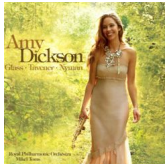


Glass, Tavener & Nyman, arranged for saxophone (2009)

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 05 March 2014 16:59 -

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Philip Glass – Violin Concerto 1. *Concerto For Violin And Orchestra/I. Crotchet* = 104 6:52 2. *Concerto For Violin And Orchestra/II. Crotchet* = 108 9:06 3. *Concerto For Violin And Orchestra/III. Crotchet* = 150 10:26 John Tavener 4. *The Protecting Veil (1st Movement)* 14:56
Michael Nyman
5. *Where The Bee Dances* 16:29
Amy Dickson – soprano saxophone Royal Philharmonic Orchestra Mikel Toms – conductor

When it comes to the soprano saxophone, some of us might think right off the bat of New Orleans legend Sidney Bechet, which is good. But most think of Kenny G, which is not so good. When it comes to women who play the saxophone, we might think of Candy Dulfer, who is definitely a good player. However, she has a tendency to be ruthlessly commercial and suave, and perhaps that's also not so good. With Australian Amy Dickson we discover a female soprano saxophonist who is offering something far different from either of these mixed options; her main focus is with classical literature, and Dickson has a luscious, creamy tone that sounds somewhere between a clarinet and a flute, reflecting the instrument in the light of the intentions of its creator, Adolphe Sax; even Bechet would have found it tough to beat that action.

In RCA Victor's Amy Dickson: Glass -- Tavener -- Nyman, Dickson takes on one authentic soprano saxophone concerto and two "stolen" ones. Classical soprano saxophone concerti are relatively rare, with many such works produced by French composers who do not enjoy an international reputation, so it makes sense to arrange. Dickson's saxophone realization of the Philip Glass Violin Concerto on the soprano saxophone is a winner. It works not only because the soprano sax has the flexibility to approximate the tone of the violin, but also because Dickson makes it work; she makes the Glass concerto sound as though it was written for her instrument, rather than the violin, and her breath control is astonishing; it makes you wonder where she comes by all of that air. John Tavener's *The Protecting Veil* was originally written for cello, and while the performance is well handled -- Mikel Toms and the Royal Philharmonic

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remain just in the right relative configuration to the soloist -- one ultimately has to come to grips with the reality that the Tavener is just not as interesting as the Glass work. Michael Nyman's concerto Where the Bee Dances was originally written for John Harle; Nyman is well acquainted with the properties of the saxophone, already utilizing the instrument in his Michael Nyman Band for decades before this concerto made its bow in 1991. It is a strongly appealing work with a vibrant sense of rhythm and shimmering orchestration, although some American listeners might have a hard time not recognizing the similarity between a key progression in this piece and an old-school slow jam by the Stylistics, "You Are Everything." Nevertheless, that's two for three, and with this sophomore effort for Sony it appears that Dickson is here to stay; hopefully she'll be back when she can locate some more repertoire. It would be worth the effort, as Dickson can make a believer out of people who can't stand to listen to Kenny G, and that's no small achievement. --- Uncle Dave Lewis, Rovi

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