

Chamber Music - French Flute Quintets (2009)

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Marcel Tournier Suite, Op. 34 1. *I. Soir* 00:03:26 2. *II. Danse* 00:02:01 3. *III. Lied* 00:03:22 4. *IV. Fete* 00:04:48 Florent Schmitt Suite en rocaille, Op. 84 5. *I. Sans* hate 00:03:40 6. *II. Anime* 00:03:49 7. *III. Sans lenteur* 00:03:38 8. *IV. Vif* 00:02:31 Gabriel Pierné Variations libres et final, Op. 51 9. *Variations libres et final, Op. 51* 00:10:52 Jean Françaix Quintet for Flute, Harp and String Trio 10. *I. Andante tranquillo* 00:02:27 11. *II. Scherzo* 00:02:30 12. *III. Andante* 00:02:40 13. *IV. Rondo* 00:01:30 Albert Roussel Serenade, Op. 30 14. *I. Allegro* 00:04:32 15. *II. Andante* 00:06:55 16. *III. Presto* 00:04:26 Mirage Quintet: Robert Aitken - flute Erica Goodman - harp Jacques Israelievitch - violin Teng Li - viola Winona Zelenka - cello

The five composers on this disc share the clarity and refinement, brio and wit, and subtle sensuality that permeate French music in the early years of the twentieth century. Each found in literature, the visual arts and the music of Debussy and Ravel touchstones for their own compositions, while expressing their individual personalities. Refinement and pellucid textures characterise Tournier's Suite; vigour, elegance and passion Schmitt's. Françaix's Quintet, much-loved for its charm and delicacy, matches Roussel's neo-classical Serenade and complements Pierné's virtuosic and translucently scored Variations. --- naxos.com

Here are five late-19th- and early-20th-century French composers gathered together to illustrate what the booklet-note so rightly calls an "emancipation from Germanic cultural values". Sharply

individual, all five none the less show a “clarity and refinement, brio and wit, and subtle sensuality” that are inimitably Gallic.

They also pay unmistakable tribute to Debussy and Ravel. The influence of *Prélude à L'après-midi d'une faune* hangs heavily over Tournier's *Suite*, most notably in the opening *Soir: Calme et expressif*. There is an exotic twist to the *Lied: Assez lent, avec mélancolie* reflecting Debussy's fascination with the East but it says much for Tournier that he maintains his own voice and character. Florent Schmitt, who studied with Fauré, also shows a fleeting love of the Orient before continuing with a gracefully flowing Minuet and whirlwind finale. Pierné (whose *Variations* for solo piano were greatly admired by Cortot) sounds a more substantial note with much restrained but demanding virtuosity in his finale, while Françaix closes his characteristically piquant Quintet with a Rondo based on the folksong “*Savez-vous planter les choux?*” and a touch of outrageousness.

Finally Roussel and a more astringent modernist style, including a flourish from the harp like a sudden cascade of stardust in the central *Andante* and some ghostly glissandi behind the final *Presto*'s hyperactivity. All this alternately thoughtful and exuberant music is played with great care and authority by the *Mirage Quintet* who never mistake a term such as *animé* for fast. Brilliantly alive to their challenge, they have been well recorded. --- Bryce Morrison, gramophone.co.uk

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