

LP Review by John Ditsky

RODRIGO Concierto-Serenata, for Harp and Orchestra. Concierto pastoral, for Flute and Orchestra. • Nancy Allen, harp; Lisa Hansen, flute; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Enrique Bátiz. • ANGEL DS-38278 (digital), produced by Brian B. Culverhouse.

Angel's current Rodrigo series continues with this pairing of two concertos long associated with the men for whom they were written, men by whom each respective work has also been famously recorded. This disc thus constituting an assault by intelligent-attractive women upon a small but heretofore exclusive men's club, I dithered through repeated hearings about the right tack to take in this review. Alas, I have not found one. I think I prefer the older readings, but that is very likely because I am used to them; overall, the lead enjoyed by the men is a small one. Zabaleta seems more smoothly expressive than Allen, while one might well prefer Hansen to Galway, who is up to his usual virtuoso tricks again here: taking the fast passages at breakup speed and dragging out the slow ones. As to which British orchestra and Hispanic conductor I prefer in the flute concerto, it's a tossup; what is apparent is a certain recessive—muddled—quality to the bulk of Bátiz's players (quasi-soloists excluded), even though in the harp concerto *tutti* passages are apt to drown the harp. Moreover, there is a distracting amount of thumping—podium noise?—here, especially during the harp concerto; rendered digitally, it is enough to argue a singular lapse at Culverhouse Productions, one neither explainable nor dismissable. Galway seems brighter, Hansen warmer. With the Zabaleta well over two decades old and still available, the collector has to consider pairings as well—Zabaleta's in several different formats; Galway's the flute arrangement of Rodrigo's *Fantasia*. Notes are good, and the German pressing quite fine. What I guess I'm suggesting, then, is to hang on a bit and see what the—hear what the—CD sounds like.

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