
NEWS & INFORMATION

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RAMON SALVATORE HARVESTS AMERICAN PIANO DELICACIES

Recording Reaps Raves from Composers

Pianist Ramon Salvatore, a champion of American music, harvests a program of attractive, distinctive yet neglected works by four prominent, living composers on Music in the American Grain (CDR 90000 010), his first recording for Chicago's Cedille label.

The disc offers debut recordings of Robert Palmer's neoclassically seasoned Third Sonata (dedicated to Salvatore) and Paul Bowles' evocative Carretera de Estepona. Other works include Bowles' Six Latin American Pieces, John LaMontaine's dramatic Piano Sonata, Op. 3, and Hunter Johnson's Piano Sonata, which the New York Times described as "an engrossing combination of Hindemith-like counterpoint and American blues."

The composers, who received advance copies of the recording, praise it robustly. Palmer notes "a clarity and understanding of every part of the work that is truly outstanding." He describes Salvatore as a "superb musician" and likens him to the late John Kirkpatrick for his dedication to popularizing neglected American masterpieces.

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Bowles calls the recording of his pieces "the best I had heard." Johnson declares the recording of his Sonata "a knockout in every respect. I would call it definitive -- everything exactly right -- one by which to measure all other performances of it." To LaMontaine, it's "nothing less than stupendous."

Salvatore's interest in American music extends back into the 19th century, but he devotes his new Cedille recording to "a lost generation of works" by American composers whose personal styles blossomed in the 1930s and 1940s -- styles marked by new harmonies and rhythms an ocean apart from European influences that once dominated American music.

Most of the works were performed in Salvatore's landmark concert series, "American Piano Music in the Grand Tradition," presented in New York and Chicago in early 1991 through a National Endowment for the Arts grant for research and performance. Listeners who missed those events can partly offset their loss with this new CD.

Cedille's catchy advertisement for Music in the American Grain promises "All Wheat, No Chaff." The feisty independent label tweaks the majors for their addiction to "run-of-the-mill" repertoire and the avant-gardists for their embrace of "cereal music." The ad quotes a Chicago Sun-Times concert review which calls Salvatore's programs "fresh and vital repertory listeners should be happy to discover."

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LaMontaine: Piano Sonata, Op. 3
Palmer: Third Sonata
Johnson: Piano Sonata
Bowles: Six Latin American Pieces; Carretera de Estepona
Ramon Salvatore, piano
Cedille 90000 010

Note to Broadcasters: For light fillers, try Bowles' Six Latin American Pieces, each under two minutes (Tracks No. 10-15). Intriguing selection is third movement of LaMontaine's Sonata, which starts slowly, then builds in tempo and tunefulness (Track No. 3).