

The Stark Quartet takes its name from German clarinetist/composer Robert Stark (1847–1922). The ensemble was founded in 1992 with a goal of promoting the clarinet quartet and enlarging its repertoire. Vinibaldo Baccari, First Prize at the Amilcare Ponchielli Competition in Cremona, teaches clarinet in the public schools; Antonio Fraioli, First Prize at the *Tournoi International de Musique Competition*, is Professor of Wind Chamber Music at the G. Martucci Conservatory in Salerno; Simone Saccoccio is a permanent member of the National Italian Marine Band; and Sergio Brusca, director of the *Città di Priverno Band*, teaches clarinet in the public schools.

Astor Piazzolla's (1921–1992) *Histoire du Tango*, originally written for flute and guitar, traces the evolution of the tango through the 20th century. Each of the four movements in this 22-minute work depicts a stage in its development: "Bordel 1900," "Café 1930," "Night Club 1960," and "Concert d'aujourd'hui." The very effective arrangement for three B's and bass clarinet by Bruce Edwards is an adaptation of Claude Viorpy's transcription for saxophone quartet. The Stark Quartet's performance is exciting and totally captivating. Rhythm is precise throughout, and the rapid articulation and intonation are superb. Vinibaldo Baccari's glissandi are nothing less than spectacular. The beautifully played second movement with its lyric melodies provides a nice contrast to the energetic outer movements.

American jazz pianist and composer Errol Garner (1921–1977) began his career at the early age of seven, appearing on Pittsburgh radio with the Candy Kids. Jazz classic "Misty," Garner's best known composition, is tastefully played by the Stark Quartet in this skillful arrangement by Gareth Brady. A fine jazz clarinet solo, featured above the bass clarinet's walking bass, provides the perfect improvisational element and attests to the ensemble's versatility. An exquisite *pianissimo* ending brings the work to a close.

Mozart's ebullient *Rondo* finale to the *Gran Partita*, K361, in an arrangement by Harry R. Gee, is also attractive. Originally scored for pairs of oboes, bassoons, clarinets, basset horns, four horns and contrabass, the *Gran Partita* is Mozart's largest and most ambitious work for wind instruments. Gee's setting for clarinet quartet

captures the spirit of the *Rondo* in this exuberant performance by the Stark Quartet.

The *Thème du Film Amarcord* by Nino Rota is a short, appealing arrangement by Stark Quartet bass clarinetist Sergio Brusca. Best known for his film scores to *The Godfather* and numerous Federico Fellini films, Nino Rota (1911–1979) also composed 10 operas, five ballets and many instrumental works. A warmly nostalgic film, Fellini's *Amarcord* recreates daily life in his hometown village of Rimini during the age of Mussolini. Winning the 1974 Academy Award for the Best Foreign Film, *Amarcord* no doubt owes much of its success to the music. Rota's tender, melancholy melody is tastefully played in this charming arrangement. Brusca's scoring also effectively recreates the sound of the big band era saxophone section, played with gusto by the Stark Quartet.

Jan Van Der Roost (b.1956) teaches at the *Lemmensinstituut* in Leuven, Belgium and also serves as guest professor in Japan at the Shobi Institute of Music (Tokyo) and the Nagoya University of Art. His works include two oratorios and compositions for symphony orchestra and for band. The short *Four Old Dances*, most likely an arrangement of Jan Van Der Roost's suite for band, is wonderfully played on this disc. Written in a kind of neo-Renaissance style, Sergio Brusca's version for three B's and bass clarinet makes an excellent clarinet ensemble work. This sonorous arrangement also has pedagogical value and could be played by younger performers.

Rossini's *Largo al factotum* (*Barber of Seville*), with its tongue-twisting patter, is familiar to most everyone, opera buff or not. This arrangement by the Stark Quartet, a tonguing *tour de force* for clarinet ensemble, cleverly incorporates both accompaniment and solo lines. Opera enthusiasts will enjoy this totally charming rendition too.

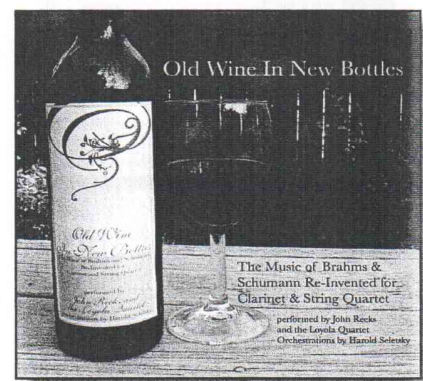
Art Marshall's fine arrangement of George Gershwin's *Summertime* concludes the disc. A professional bass clarinet, clarinet and basset horn player for 25 years, Marshall has arranged a number of works for clarinet and saxophone quartet, many of which are published in Amsterdam. The short *Summertime* is beautifully played by the ensemble, demonstrating lyricism and a keen sense of jazz style.

Congratulations to this outstanding professional quartet in their debut record-

ing. Their highly appealing program attests to their versatility and the viability of the combination of three B's and bass clarinet. The recorded sound is excellent and engineering first rate. Brief French language notes are included. [See music review by Alice Meyer. Ed]

by Gail Lehto Zuger

Old Wine in New Bottles. John Reeks, clarinet and the Loyola Quartet: Amy Thiaville and Elizabeth Overweg, violins, Bruce Owen, viola and Allen Nisbet, cello. All transcriptions by Harold Seletsky. Robert Schumann: *Fantasy Pieces*, Opus 73; Johannes Brahms: *Sonata No. 1 in F Minor*, and *Sonata No. 2 in E-flat Major*. HAROLD SELETSKY PUBLISHING. Total time 59:36. (available from: <www.cdbaby.com/cd/reeksjohn>, and as a download from iTunes, Napster, Verizon, and SNOCAP)



This recording presents three masterpieces for clarinet and piano that have achieved elite status in the standard clarinet repertoire in a new way. Harold Seletsky, composer, clarinetist and klezmer specialist, has arranged the piano part in these venerable works for string quartet. John Reeks, New Orleans native, plays clarinet, bass clarinet and saxophone in the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra. He has been clarinet instructor at Loyola University College of Music for 15 years and is joined by his colleagues, the Loyola Quartet, in this recording that was done in March of 2007. An orchestral performer for over 30 years, Reeks notably in 2005 gave the U.S. premiere of Dietrich Erdmann's *Concerto for Bass Clarinet* with the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and the world premiere of Stephen Dankner's *Adagio Appassionata*.