Images of Eve: A Review
By Wendy Rolfe & Deborah DeWolf Emery

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The latest CD from Wendy Rolfe and Deborah DeWolf Emery, Images of Eve, is both lovely and powerful. Dr. Rolfe, professor of flute at Berklee College of Music, has curated a wide-ranging selection of works for flute and piano and sometimes additional instruments that explores the lives of women via a variety of musical colors and moods.

The title and the artwork adorning the CD convey a feminine presence; indeed, the composers and many of the performers are women. Although the music is accessible to all listeners, several of the compositions speak directly to female experiences and concerns. Some of the composers are Dr. Rolfe’s friends and colleagues; others lived in the mid-19th to early 20th century, a time of great social change. These composers witnessed the women’s suffrage movement, World Wars I and II, and the beginnings of women’s modern political agency and activism. The societal upheavals of those turbulent times touched the lives of many of these composers. Many experienced bias
against women: Rebecca Clarke’s Viola Sonata, for example, was initially assumed to have been composed by Maurice Ravel, while the Daily Telegraph assumed her name to be a pseudonym for Ernest Bloch (Curtis, Liane, 2005).

Frequent collaborators Wendy Rolfe and Deborah DeWolf Emery both have an interest in collecting, studying, and performing music by female composers. Ms. Emery and Dr. Rolfe note that female audience members appreciate this emphasis. Professor Rolfe and her Berklee colleague, composer Beth Denisch, strive to support and encourage young female composers, including several Berklee professors, students, and alumnae (Rolfe, telephone interview, February 24, 2014).

The repertoire on Images of Eve explores numerous genres and textures. The instrumentation varies from track to track; some selections do not call for Ms. Emery’s piano. On Francisca Edwiges Neves Gonzaga’s Radiante and I-Yun Chung’s 1, 2, 3, 4 and Recuerdos, Professor Rolfe chose guitar and percussion accompaniment, rather than piano, to provide variety and texture. Dr. Rolfe plays a variety of modern and historical flutes on Images of Eve, and also employs piccolo, alto flute, and bass flute to create diversity of timbre and range (Rolfe, personal communication, February 24, 2014).

A la Prokofiev, by contemporary American composer Gretchen Hewitt, opens with a lovely, soaring flute melody, sparingly and beautifully accompanied by the piano. A brief development section, featuring conversational interplay between Rolfe’s flute and Emery’s piano, is followed by a restatement of the opening motif. Ms. Hewitt was a classmate of Rolfe and Emery at Oberlin; after reconnecting at a reunion, the composer shared A la Prokofiev with the performers (Rolfe, personal communication, February 24, 2014.).

Radiante is the first of several Brazilian works on the disc. Such compositions by Chiquinha Gonzaga (Francisca Edwiges Neves Gonzaga: Birthname) may have been on the program when she played with flutist Joaquim da Silva Callado in Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th century. Radiante features lovely performances by guest artists Eduardo Mercuri (guitar and arranger) and Julio César Santos (percussion). The guitar and percussion accompaniment perfectly complements the lilting, colorful flute lines. Dr. Rolfe became familiar with Gonzaga’s music through her friendship with French-Brazilian flutist Odette Ernest Dias, and discovered this edition in Rio de Janeiro’s Biblioteca Nacional. Chiquinha Gonzaga composed choros, other popular music, and operettas. She was known for entertaining street musicians in her home, and for engaging in musical and political activities heretofore reserved for men. A controversial figure in late 19th-century Brazil, Gonzaga advocated for the abolition of slavery and for women’s suffrage. She was the first Brazilian woman to divorce, and the first woman to perform with da Silva Callado’s O Choro do Caladom ensemble (Fernandes, 2001; Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013).

American composer Beth Denisch adapted Three Women from her song cycle One Blazing Glance, which describes a woman’s life journey. Dr. Denisch, a Berklee College of Music colleague of flutist Rolfe, drew inspiration for Three Women from poems by Rosie Rosenzweig, Kim Nam-Jo, and Allison Joseph. The opening movement, the haunting Miriam’s Ballad (suggested by Rosenzweig’s Miriam’s Dance), is crisp choreography between the flute and piano. Rachel’s Song, inspired by Kim’s My Baby Has No Name Yet, has a leaping, fluttering quality reminiscent of a bird’s song. When Rolfe’s piccolo is joined by Emery’s persistently pecking piano, the sound painting is glorious! The lyrical Ruth’s Dance (based on Joseph’s Facial) charms the listener with a fast waltz that presents some unexpected, yet utterly flowing, metric interest. Ruth’s Dance is a perfect closing movement to Denisch’s enchanting suite (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013).

I-Yun Chung contributes two works to Images of Eve: her new arrangement, penned for these artists, of her 2008 guitar duo Recuerdos; and 1, 2, 3, 4, written for this CD. Chung is a young composer, educated in Taiwan and the United States, who has an interest in the music of Brazil and Argentina (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013). Her Images of Eve tracks feature lovely interplay between Rolfe’s flute and Mercuri’s guitar, subtly colored and propelled forward by Santos’ gentle percussion syncopation. Recuerdos is a soft, sweet ballad, while the up-tempo 1, 2, 3, 4 presents some wonderful interplay between guitar and flute, with all three artists demonstrating precise articulation and ensemble phrasing in a sunny, cheerful Latin context.
When music educators discuss female composers, the name of Clara Wieck Schumann is inevitably mentioned. One of the most admired and influential pianists and teachers of the Romantic period, Schumann saw herself more as a performer than a composer. Schumann wrote *Romance, Op. 22* for herself and frequent collaborator violinist Joseph Joaquim (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013). This transcription, by Carolyn Brown, allows pianist Emery’s wonderful tone and expression to shine.

Cecile Chaminade, best known today for her *Concertino for Flute*, composed over 400 works (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013). On this CD, Wendy Rolfe and Deborah DeWolf Emery play a lovely version of Chaminade’s *Pastorale Enfantine, Op. 12*.

Like Clara Wieck Schumann, Amy Beach is often mentioned among the foremost female musicians. An American pianist and composer, Beach’s first major work, the *Mass in Eb Major*, was premiered by Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society. Mrs. Beach is the only woman among the eighty seven composers whose names are inscribed on the granite wall of Boston’s Hatch Shell (Meyer, 1999). Her late Romantic period style is represented here by three works: the graceful, chromatic *Invocation, Op. 15*; the evocative *Mazurka, Op. 40, No. 3*; and the passionate *Romance, Op. 23*, all transcribed by Carolyn Brown. In all of these pieces, Rolfe and Emery demonstrate a broad range of timbre, dynamic contrast, and sensitive and elegant duo phrasing.

Flutist and composer Kazuyo Kuriya grew up in Japan, and has studied and performed throughout Japan, Europe, and the United States, including a jazz composition degree from Berklee College of Music. Her interest in Western art music, Brazilian dance music, and jazz are evident in her *Green Tree House*, which was inspired by the composer’s visit to the Japanese island of Yakushima with her mother (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013). *Green Tree House* is presented here by Rolfe, Emery, and guest percussionist Anne (Néghah) Silva (a student of Julio César Santos).

Written in 1985 for soprano saxophone, *Windhover* is a relatively early piece by Hilary Tann, a Welsh-born composer now working in New York State. *Windhover* is the first in Tann’s series of such solos, including *The Cresset Stone* for violin, *Like Lightnings* for oboe, *Kilvert’s Hills* for bassoon, and others. *Windhover* is based on the idea of flight, from a falcon’s point of view (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013; Tann, personal communication, August 14, 2014). Jeffrey Bishop of Oxford University Press introduced Dr. Rolfe to Hilary Tann’s music (Rolfe & DeWolf Emery, 2013). This demanding work showcases Rolfe’s impeccable intonation and superb tone across the flute’s range. Wendy Rolfe’s performance of this colorful unaccompanied solo soars, dives, and bends, displaying expressive range and masterful technique. There have been four previous recordings of *Windhover* released: on soprano saxophone by Susan Fancher; alto saxophone by William Perconti; and flute (one by Christiane Meininger and one by Gregorz Olkiewicz) (Tann, personal communication, August 14, 2014). Having performed *Windhover* many times, Rolfe is pleased to now release her interpretation of this unusual piece (Rolfe, personal communication, February 24, 2014). Of this recording, Hilary Tann says, “Indeed, I am delighted with Wendy Rolfe’s performance and I’m happy she is receiving praise. … When I wrote *Windhover* I had just started learning to play the Japanese bamboo flute (the shakuhachi) and I was fascinated by the depth one could achieve with just one flowing line. Wendy Rolfe performed this piece relatively early and I was so pleased with her interpretation. I am delighted that she’s chosen to record it” (Tann, personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Rebecca Clarke’s *Midsummer Moon* begins with a dissonant note of mystery. Deborah DeWolf Emery’s piano figuration, sometimes gentle and sometimes insistent, perfectly underscores Wendy Rolfe’s lyrical flute, crafting a gauzy texture that is both ethereal and powerful.

*Images of Eve* concludes with the seven short movements of Francisca Aquino’s *Música Brasileira para o Iniciante* (*Brazilian Music for Beginners*). These predominantly up-tempo dance pieces, some including percussion by Silva, provide a cheerful finish to this remarkable CD. *Images of Eve* frequently changes moods – whimsical one moment, passionate the next, moving from Western art music to Brazilian dance to jazz and back again – in a way that flows easily from one genre to the next. The CD moves gracefully through its many different rhythms, colors, textures, and styles. *Images*
of Eve is a richly satisfying work that engages and delights the listener!

With the completion of Images of Eve, Professor Rolfe continues to champion works by female composers. She is particularly interested in orchestral and chamber works written by women during the Baroque period, and looks forward to further research in this area. Dr. Rolfe is interested in promoting human rights through music education and performance, and actively supports music education programs that serve students without regard to their social and economic status. She supports the National Flute Association’s cultural outreach activities, and encourages individuals and organizations to help fund music programs (Rolfe, personal communication, August 14, 2014).

Wendy Rolfe, Professor of Flute at Berklee College of Music, is one of America’s leading performers on modern and historical flutes. She has played with the Handel and Haydn Society, Boston Baroque, New York’s Concert Royal, Toronto’s Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, and others. Professor Rolfe has been a National Endowment for the Arts recitalist, Tanglewood Fellow, and a Fulbright Senior Specialist. She has presented recitals and master classes for the National Flute Association, San Francisco Conservatory, Louisiana State University, University of Alabama, University of Michigan, and others. Professor Rolfe has performed at the Waterloo, Monadnock, Buzzards Bay, Boston Early Music, and Connecticut Early Music Festivals, as well as at London’s Royal Albert Hall. She has recorded J. S. Bach’s Magnificat with the Boston Baroque for Telarc, and may be heard on various other recordings, film soundtracks, and television broadcasts, including Ken Burns’ PBS documentary, Thomas Jefferson. Dr. Rolfe frequently performs and teaches in Brazil and Ecuador. Her previous CD, Images of Brazil, with pianist Marie José Carrasqueira, is available at CD Baby, CD Universe, and Amazon.com.

Deborah DeWolf Emery is the consummate chamber pianist. Her ability to create spare webs or lush textures brings a pleasantly varied timbral palette to Images of Eve. Emery’s context sensitive playing perfectly complements Rolfe’s supple and expressive sound. Ms. Emery has played with Doriot Anthony Dwyer, the first female flutist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; with other members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and with the Boston Flute Choir. Dr. Rolfe and Ms. Emery’s musical partnership began at Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, and was renewed years later when both artists found themselves in Boston (Rolfe, personal communication, August 14, 2014).

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References


Windhover program notes. In Instrumental solos.