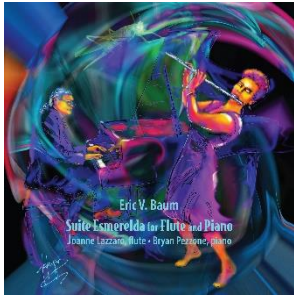


Joanne Lazzaro and Bryan Pezzone
Suite Esmerelda for Flute and Piano



Three easy pieces along with variations on a theme do make a suite. **Suite Esmerelda for Flute and Piano** by flutist **Joanne Lazzaro** and pianist **Bryan Pezzone** is a great pairing of talented performers. Lazzaro and Pezzone offer up a tarantella, a ballad, and a jazzy rag with some entertaining time signature variations making their six-track feel good album fresh and fun. After a few listenings, it came across as a Peter and the Wolf undertaking with its light hearted themes and dynamic presentations. There are three original tracks, each track having a complementary jazz variation.

The first cut is called, and you're going to love this label, **Dance of the Snowbound Grasshopper**. The very title conjures up a quivering little insect during a blizzard as Lazzaro and Penzonne try to warm up the surroundings with their cheerful execution. There is a lot of polyphony to be had which is sometimes playful and other times seems fantastic in the original sense of the word. Joanne Lazzaro's Rampal-esque rendition has a noteworthy precision.

The tune **Shabbat** offers a more serious tone, but the music's spiritual emotionalism does not rest. It flows evocatively with a Middle Eastern vibe. Lazzaro and Penzonne's melodic, reverent phrasing honors the "shomer Sabbat", the Shabbat observer. The flute lead is softly mesmerizing as piano accents the solemnity of the performance.

The third tune is **Stone Ridge Rag** and it is right out of a turn of the century Broadway musical. It's fun, it's quirky, and it gets your toe tapping. Bryan Pezzone really shines with his deft, amusing keyboard work. In this one, it is the flute that cavorts about, with a catch-me-if-you-can whimsical sense.

When it comes to the jazz variations of each tune, someone snuck in a drummer and a bass player and the additions gave the music a fuller dimension, particularly the Shabbat Jazz Mix, which made it suitable to a ballroom routine.

This is the kind of music you would want to hear in a live setting. The musicians are surely having fun on the record. Lazzaro is noted for her fastidiousness and it appears that Pezzone feels the same way. Put this one on and have a fun time. I could use another five or six songs. Recommended. – R J Lannan, Artisan Music Reviews