

SOUNDBOARD, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4

Arc Duo has produced a very fine disc here, with two major works in their entirety and a wonderful work—new to me, at least—by American composer Joan Tower. The program begins with excerpts from Robert Beaser's *Mountain Songs*, a wondrously inventive piece based (mostly) on American folk songs. Colten and Holden do not yield a bit to the definitive premier recording by Eliot Fisk and Paula Robison, so it is very disappointing that they did not do the entire work. Boo hoo! Ned Rorem is perhaps best known as one of the finest American composers of art songs. He has one substantial guitar solo piece in his output, the *1980 Suite*, and with *Romeo and Juliet* makes another significant contribution to our repertoire. Liner notes for the CD give a perfectly apt description of the music: "From movement to movement, the work displays emotions ranging from the most poignant and intimate to the overtly hostile and vicious." Each movement has a text from the play as title, but Rorem's music is in no way programmatic, but rather a series of musical impressions inspired by the words. This is a very fine piece which may be expected to enter the canon for guitar and flute. The same is almost certain to be true of Joan Tower's *Snow Dreams*, a work of amazing invention posing formidable challenges to the ensemble skills of the performers. Arc Duo meet these challenges handily, delivering an often astonishingly well synchronized performance. Piazzolla's *Histoire du tango*, very well performed, rounds off another indispensable addition to the guitar's discography. - Albert Kunze