

David Claude Rogers's *Favorite Hymns, Fond Memories: A CD Review*

by Mary Munarin

David Claude Rogers's new CD, *Favorite Hymns, Fond Memories*, like his previous three offerings, is very personal, but with a difference. Where the others comprised music written by Rogers himself, the new CD brings to us his personal relationship with the hymns that he loves the most. And, personal they are. From the gorgeous Schubert "Ave Maria," through old familiars and lesser knowns, to Sibelius's "Be Still, My Soul" (immortalized in *Finlandia*), there is grace, clarity, and passion in Rogers's playing.

Rogers created this CD, as with all of his music, for use in his work as a music therapist. There is a nice variety in the pace of the songs, ranging between serious and playful, and it is easy to tell that some of the musical selections have significant personal importance to him. The music on *Favorite Hymns, Fond Memories* works on several levels, especially for those people who are involved with music therapy, whether with Hospice, in the hospital, or in the nursing home; those who perform in public and would like to respond positively to the question, "Can't you play something we know?"; and for anyone who enjoys faith music. For all of the above, and for all flute enthusiasts, I can wholeheartedly recommend this CD. Although I am not a hymnist by tradition, I can see myself sitting and listening to Rogers's *Favorite Hymns, Fond Memories* as a stress reliever or even for meditation purposes.

This CD is beautifully simple and simply beautiful. All solo flute, it exhibits Rogers's mastery of our instrument of choice. Anyone who has attempted to figure out a hymn of any sort on the Native American flute could probably attest to the frustration of trying to fit these mostly major-key songs onto the minor-key mode the flute. Many are rife with cross-fingerings, large interval jumps, and, in some cases, nearly a two-octave range. Just hum a little of "How Great Thou Art" and you will see what I mean. Having to put into TABlature a few of these hymns myself, I am somewhat in awe of Rogers's styling of 19 hymns, as well as by the strength and beauty of his playing.

The entire album is recorded on a six-hole, low *E* minor flute made by Charles Perdue. Low *E* minor, by the way, is perhaps the ideal flute key for music therapy, neither shrill on tender ears nor stodgy sounding. The Perdue flute certainly enhances Rogers's music, and the recording quality is very good.

I particularly like that Rogers' has included so many of the traditional hymns for which people ask. Since the playing is solo, it should not be too difficult for experienced players to learn the hymns by mimicking Rogers's versions. If you are relatively new to the Native American flute, and figuring out some of the nonstandard fingerings gives you trouble, just wait for the songbook which Rogers hopes to have finished by May of this year.

Rogers, who holds degrees from the University of Michigan in music education and performance studies, taught at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Ohio for 33 years. Prior to retiring from BGSU, he and a colleague founded a company whose purpose was the development of small-group and one-on-one music stimulation programs for dementia patients. A music therapist friend introduced him to the Native American flute. Rogers explains:

"She said it was a natural instrument for my work with the elderly and with persons diagnosed with dementia and other physical or mental disabilities. She was correct. I took to it like a duck to water. Its sound and freedom of expression were wonderful. I was inspired to learn as much as I could about the instrument and its performance traditions. I discovered that there could be no right or wrong way of playing the instrument. Its intent was to express the feelings and emotions of the heart. I was delighted with the discovery, and it launched my performance and compositional journey with the Native American flute. It not only enabled me to express my feelings, but now I had a means of expressing the feelings and life experiences of others, and communicating in general with all living things."

The songbook for *Favorite Hymns, Fond Memories* will be a nice addition to the literature for the Native American flute. A complete list of the included hymns:

"Ave Maria" (Schubert)
"Sweet Hour of Prayer"
"Amazing Grace"
"Lord of the Dance"
"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"
"Holy, Holy, Holy"
"Little Brown Church in the Vale"
"Jesus Loves Me"
"The Old Rugged Cross"
"Praise Him, Praise Him"
"I Need Thee Every Hour"
"His Eye is on the Sparrow"
"In the Garden"
"Shall We Gather at the River"
"Just a Closer Walk With Thee"
"He Touched Me"
"How Great Thou Art"
"Give Thanks"
"Be Still, My Soul" (Sibelius)

You can sample these songs and buy the CD at Rogers's Web site:

www.flutemusicfromtheheart.com