

John Ditsky, in Fanfare magazine, July/August, 1988, Vol. 11, no. 6

A FRENCH-AMERICAN SALUTE. Ensemble Josquin Des Pres¹; Gregg Smith Singers². MOSS MUSIC GROUP MCD 10052 (compact disc [DDD]; 69:51).

DUFAY: *Gloria*^{1,2}. DES PRES: *Milles Regretz*^{1,2}. LE JEUNE: *Revécy venir du printans*^{1,2}. ATTAIGNANT: *Dancieries* (6)¹. FAURÉ: *Pavane*^{1,2}. ANON.: *The Battle of Stonington*¹. LAW: *Bunker Hill*². BILLINGS: *Chester*^{1,2}. FOSTER: *Old Folks at Home*². *The Old Folks Quadrille*¹. IVES: *Serenade. Waltz*^{1,2}. HAWLEY: *Two Motets*. SMITH: *Scherzo and Blues*. REYNOLDS: *Acadian Mass*^{1,2}. SMITH, arr.: *Shenandoah*². ANON.: *My Lady*¹. *L'Amour de moy*¹. SWINGLE, arr.: *L'Amour de moy*^{1,2}.

This is another one of those good ideas nicely brought off. The notion to combine the well-known American chorus The Gregg Smith Singers with a recently founded but patently skillful brass ensemble from Amiens in a concert of French and American music of various periods has paid off handsomely here. We begin with three French Renaissance vocal-instrumental numbers, sample the instrumental *Dancieries* collected by Attaignant, and bring the purely French portion of the program into the more recent past with a rendition of Fauré's *Pavane* that is surprising in this guise—brass and voices—but no less pleasing for being so. A parallel American section begins with three numbers from Revolutionary times, including the classic *Chester*, surveys the 19th century via two versions of a famous Stephen Foster song followed by two views of Charles Ives (an early, Brahmsian setting of Longfellow and one of his more characteristic "quoting" pieces), and represents the present era both by William Hawley's suave Motets on Classic secular Latin texts, and also by Gregg Smith's own wordless exercises in jazz forms—deliciously executed by various Singers. The Third and final section of this generous concert features Charles H. Reynolds's *Acadian Mass*, which of course represents a mingling of the two cultures; this Mass, though based on traditional Cajun tunes, is reverentially suited for liturgical use, and it includes accompaniment by an unidentified organist. Lastly, folk tunes from each nation are used as farewell pieces, one of the French items being both played instrumentally and sung and played in a Ward Swingle arrangement. The sound is very full, though I could have used a bit more definition; you may have to do some control-twiddling. The notes are all right, and full lyrics and translations are included. In sum, a commendable Vox Cum Laude release. J.D.