

**JOHAN FRANCO:**

**THE VIRGIN QUEEN'S DREAM MONOLOGUE**

*for Dramatic Soprano and Orchestra*

**PAULA LENCHNER, *Soprano***

**FANTASY FOR CELLO AND ORCHESTRA**

**SAMUEL BRILL, *Cello***

**Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra**

**EDUARD FLIPSE, *Conductor***

**MARY HOWE:**

**CASTELLANA**

*for Two Pianos and Orchestra*

**CELIUS DOUGHERTY - VINCENZ RUZICKA**

**STARS; SAND**

**The Vienna Orchestra**

**WILLIAM STRICKLAND, *Conductor***

JOHAN FRANCO, born in the Netherlands in 1908, studied composition and its affiliates, harmony, counterpoint and orchestration, with Holland's foremost composer and pedagogue, Willem Pijper (1894-1947). At the age of 26 he came to the United States, serving in the U.S. Air Force during World War II, and becoming an American citizen in 1942. He now resides in Virginia Beach, Virginia. His major works include five *Symphonies*, a violin *Concerto Lirico*, a *Christmas Oratorio* for soloists, boys, mixed chorus and orchestra, and an *Easter Cantata* for chorus, brass and carillon. Among his many chamber works are five *String Quartets*, and he has also written for piano, harp, and carillon.

Franco's music is always seriously conceived, and realized in terms of solid craftsmanship. The two works offered in this recording furnish well contrasted examples of his mature musical style, the *Aria* dramatic and almost improvisational in effect, the *Fantasy* a formally constructed work growing out of a brief motif or "germ-cell." In both cases, however, a fluid melodic line occupies the

foreground throughout, supported by an essentially polyphonic orchestral accompaniment that is always imaginative and individual in timbre and resonance.

The *Aria*, *The Virgin Queen's Dream Monologue*, is the only existing portion of a planned opera about Sir Francis Bacon. The subject was of special interest to Franco, a convinced Baconian, who has found time when not composing to publish various pamphlets pertaining to the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. The *Aria* was composed in 1947, and orchestrated in 1952. It had its first performance the following year at the University of Alabama's Composers Forum. The text is taken from "*The Tragical Historie of our Late Brother, Earl of Essex*," and construed by the late Dr. Orville Owen from Shakespearean texts by means of his "wheel-cipher," an apparatus constructed for the purpose of discovering hidden plays within the Shakespearean plays. The *Aria* depicts a nightmare of Queen Elizabeth I who, according to the Baconian conception revealed by this cipher, was secretly married to the Earl of Leicester, and the mother of Sir Francis Bacon and the Earl of Essex.

The *Aria* is completely free in form, following the demands of the text. An ominous atmosphere prevails, created by a colorful orchestral background in which the Francis Bacon theme,



plays a prominent role. The dreamlike atmosphere of the *Aria* owes much to Franco's individual scoring, especially in the impressionistic use of the vibraphone in conjunction with the voice, or in combination with celesta and muted brass. As for the text, it is for Shakespeare scholars to identify the passages which compose the following script.

Queen Elizabeth:

What noise is that? Ha! Who calls Elizabeth?

Bid every noise be still! Peace! Yet again!

Who is it in the press that calls on me?

I hear a tongue shriller than all the music

Cry to me. Speak! I am turn'd to hear:

Were he a king of velvet I would talk with him.

O agony of death! O wash his wounds

And bid him come to take his last farewell!

O God! Hark! See, see! O heavens forbend!

Nay, stare not masters,—know ye not I am

A mother mocked with two fair babes?  
Nay, too long have I liv'd, when as my son  
Thinks to abridge my days. Go seek him out  
Is he so hasty that he doth suppose  
My sleep my death? In God' name what art thou?  
Fell banning hag, enchantress, hold thy tongue!  
A plaguing mischief light on him, and thee.  
My soul is heavy, and I fain would sleep.

Leicester is dead! Mary is dead!  
God's secret judgment! I did dream to-night  
The Earl was dumb, and could not speak a word.  
O I have lov'd thee well, many a time  
Have danc'd thee on my knee, sung thee asleep,  
And made my loving breast thy pillow soft.  
Dead, dead, I know thou art! This night hath been  
So full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights,  
That as I am a faithful Christian Queen,  
I would not spend another such a night,  
Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days,  
So full of dismal terror was the time.  
This house is haunted with such fearful ghosts,  
Spirits of the dead, who again may walk  
And tell their secrets base to those asleep;  
My mother unto me this night appeared,  
And did cry out kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!  
Methought the Earl then 'gan to rage and rail,  
Cursing himself and God, and damning deep;  
Then saw I fast the red blood rayl adown,  
From head to foot and all his body steep.  
O it is monstrous, monstrous! My dear son  
In the ground is bedded, and I'll seek him  
Deeper than ere the plummet sounded, and I'll  
Lie with him there.

The *Fantasy for Cello and Orchestra* was composed in 1951. Of it the composer has this to say: "The *Fantasy* is in free rondo form, built in the true spirit of the so-called "germ-cell" theory of which Willem Pijper was a confirmed champion and to which D'Indy had already drawn attention. A short motif serves as the germ for a complete composition and all the innate energy in such a motif is developed by the composer according to the vital laws of music. In the *Fantasy*, the "germ-cell" motif is heard first in the violins (pizzicato) and in the second measure in the English horn, in the third measure in the solo-cello:



It appears in all possible contrapuntal combinations, also in reverse. This "germ-cell" is also the foundation of the contrasting scherzando sections and the coda. Franco's *Fantasy* is admirably condensed in form, and proceeds always logically toward an effective climax.

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MARY HOWE is of Scots-Welsh ancestry, born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1882. After studying piano in Europe with Richard Burmeister, and later with Ernest Hutcheson and Harold Randolph at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, she began her musical career as concert pianist. She was especially drawn to the field of two pianos and, with Anne Hull as partner, appeared both in recitals and with major symphony orchestras. As a composer, her career dates from the early 20's, after she had worked under the German-born composer and conductor, Gustave Strube, a pupil of Reger and at the time head of composition at the Peabody Conservatory. I myself played what must have been among Mary Howe's earliest compositions, three *Preludes* for piano, at a Manuscript Evening in the Conservatory in 1920. Since then, Mrs. Howe has been continually active as a composer. She has written for full orchestra and for smaller ensembles, as well as for chorus, voice, and piano. Noteworthy among her works are the sensitive two-piano arrangements of *Chorales* from the Bach Cantatas.

With her special interest in the resonance and interplay of the two-piano combination, it is not surprising to find one of Mary Howe's major works, *Castellana*, included on this disc, taking the form of a brilliant concert-piece for two pianos and orchestra. Originally for two pianos alone, the work was composed in 1930, and introduced in 1931 at the Friday Morning Music Club in Washington, D.C. A few years later Mrs. Howe, making certain changes in the work and enlarging its frame, transformed it into the present version with orchestral accompaniment. In this form it had its first performance in 1935 with the National Symphony of Washington, under Hans Kindler. Effectively scored, and of unabashed popular appeal in its virtuoso passage work for the two pianos, the work is an out-and-out show-piece, and has had many performances by leading orchestras and duo-pianists.

Of *Castellana* Mary Howe has this to say: “The work is built on four Spanish folk-tunes which I have never seen in any collection but which as a child I heard sung by some delightful Spanish cousins of my father. Although in character the piece is a free tone-poem, it is composed in four definite sections, which give it somewhat the air of a self-containing symphony. A free introduction leads into the first folk-tone, whose gay village character is indicated by the words: ‘From the market-place to the green cross there she goes—and she doesn’t care at all.’ (Chorus) ‘Come see me tomorrow, early rose; come and see me tomorrow.’ There follows the slow movement, based on the love-song: ‘Love grows as a shadow—distance only makes it greater.’ A linking passage deriving from a typical Spanish guitar figure leads through a cadenza for both pianos into the scherzo, based on the song of the guava-jelly woman peddling her wares: ‘Please inform me if you like them! See, here comes the guayabera.’ The final section is based on a catchy tune of which the words were naughty enough to be kept from me, although my father sang them with glee. The coda combines bits of all four tunes, and winds up with a flourish.”

The two miniature tone-poems, *Stars* and *Sand*, while usually played together, were composed some eight years apart. *Sand*, chronologically the first, was written in 1926, and first performed by The Barrère Little Symphony in Town Hall, 1927. *Stars* was composed in 1934 as a piano piece, and later orchestrated. In each case the scoring is surprisingly light for the resulting resonance—one of each woodwind, one percussion, and strings which can be multiplied or reduced as needed. In *Stars*, two horns, trumpet and harp are added. Let the composer again speak for these two orchestral impressions: “*Stars* was inspired by the gradually overwhelming effect of the dome of a starry night—its beauty, peace and space . . . *Sand* is an imaginative piece on the substance itself, its granular consistency and grittiness and its potential scattering quality; more or less what it appears to be when sifting through your fingers on the shore.”

On the occasion of a Town Hall concert of her music in 1953, the *N.Y. Times* defined Mary Howe as “a traditionalist who pays her respects to the past without, at the same time, being ignorant of what is going on today. Dissonances of the more hair-raising sort are used sparingly, and the musical structure has clarity and sound design throughout.”

—Colin McPhee

*(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)*