

## Women of Firsts

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Since the late nineteenth century, and throughout the twentieth century, the history of music is full of female figures of considerable thickness, whose reputation was not confined to country of birth, but reached around the world.

We are reminded of a CD Centaur Records, titled "Women of Firsts," which has given the tenor Daniel Weeks and pianist Naomi Oliphant four tracks, as many composers, who have distinguished themselves in an area considered a core competence male

The opening is dedicated to Vitezlava Kaprálová (Brno, 1915-Montpellier, 1940) that despite the very short life, cut short by tuberculosis, still remains a solid point of reference for the Czech music and holds several records.

It was, in fact, the first woman to graduate in composition and conducting, as well as the first female representative to conduct the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC, in the latter case during the Festival of Contemporary Music, held in London in 1938.

In the present disc is *Forever*, op. 12 (1936-37), three short pieces written in 1936-37 on lyrics of Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert, and Jan Carek (Nobel Prize for Literature in 1984), in which there is hardly a harbinger of an end that would have occurred far from home.

Second author on the program, Grazyna Bacewicz (1909-1969), the first ever Polish composer to achieve national and international awards, most remarkable, considering his musical style, very modern and therefore in direct conflict with the Stalinist regime.

To its production are owned by the *Three songs for tenor and orchestra*, dating back to 1938, with texts by an unknown Arab author, and then arranged in 1958 in the version for tenor and piano, recorded on the CD.

The U.S. Amy Cheney (1867-1944) deserves a separate article for her long career.

Piano prodigy, he interrupted his activities as a soloist after his marriage to the physicist Henry Beach, continuing to composer, to return to the concert stage after a widow.

She must, among other things, the first symphony written by an American woman (published under the pseudonym Mrs. HHA).

The disc highlights the *Centaur Three Browning Songs*, written between 1895 and 1900 by drawing on the poetic production of Britain's Robert Browning.

The closure of the incision is under the sign of Lili Boulanger (1893-1918), the first woman to win the prestigious *Prix de Rome* in 1913.

Sister of the legendary Nadia, teacher who trained generations of composers, had a bright career, interrupted prematurely because of Crohn's syndrome, a rare and devastating, diagnosticatale as a child, who accompanied her throughout her short life.

Excellent example of its production is represented by *Clairières dans le Ciel* (1913-14), which covers over half the CD, the cycle consists of thirteen pieces adapted from the French symbolist poet's collection Francis Jammes.

The origins of the collection, there would probably be a love story between Lili and David DeVries, tenor who premiered the composition in 1918, just a week before the death of Boulanger.

A look now, the two interpreters, tenor Daniel Weeks and pianist Naomi Oliphant. The first shows a very beautiful and expressive voice, while the second is equipped with a touch of refinement and elegance. Together, thanks to a perfect harmony and an innate sensitivity, can create an 'atmosphere that returns the full texts is often linked to intensive nostalgic and poignant.

In conclusion, a CD of great interest, produced through the efforts of the two performers, and joint financial contributions to the University of Louisville and the Kapralova Society, which adds another element to the knowledge of music by women.

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