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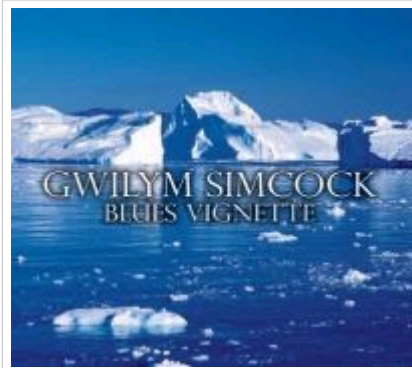
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STEP TEMPEST

JAZZ PIQUES MY INTEREST AND TOUCHES NEARLY EVERY ASPECT OF MY LIFE. AFTER YEARS OF REVIEWING FOR CADENCE MAGAZINE AND THE HARTFORD COURANT, I'M ON MY OWN.

TUESDAY, JULY 6, 2010

Cool and Hot Sounds



As I write this column, the thermometer is nudging 100 degrees and the humidity/dew point is rising. Looking upon the cover of pianist's **Gwilym Simcock's** 2-CD project, "**Blues Vignette**" (Basho), it's hard not to cool down a bit. (Of course, the cynics among us might turn their minds

towards global warming - but I digress.)

This is his 2nd release and it's quite an ambitious project. Disc 1 features 8 solo piano pieces and a 2-part "**Suite for Cello and Piano**" featuring cellist **Cara Berridge**. Disc 2 features Simcock's working Trio composed of bassist **Yuri Goloubev** and drummer **James Maddren**. Taken as a whole (130+ minutes of music), this is quite formidable but never boring.

The solo pieces reveal Simcock's flowing lines, sense of humor and adventure. "**Little People**" jumps out with its majestic phrases, fulsome melody and little bluesy asides. Following that, the "**Exploration of Mvt II of Grieg Piano Concerto**" sounds and is quite formal at the onset yet the pianist moves the work slowly but steadily forward. Somber, sober and lovely, the piece is the perfect set-up for the rhythmic and sonic adventure of "**On Broadway**." Here, the left hand creates a roiling rhythm while the right hand dances out the melody and solo lines.

The remainder of the solo pieces show Simcock's restless creative mind and technical (but not overtly showy) prowess. The "Suite" introduces Berridge's lovely cello and, together, the musicians move through the various melodic, rhythmic and harmonic variations Simcock created for them.

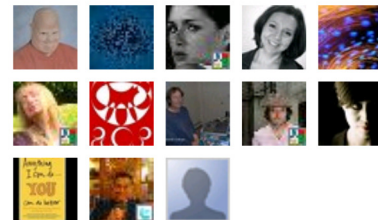
The Trio CD introduces the audience to Simcock's excellent Trio. Bassist Goloubev's displays his sweet arco (bowed) bass tone on "**Introduction**" - it's easy to tell he spent years as a classical bassist. Drummer Maddren shows up on the second piece,

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