



The Birds Dream in the Trees

Atoll ACD416

Bill Dowdall - Personal Notes

The idea for this album came from a flute I acquired about 20 years ago in New York City, an instrument made in the 19th century by the French flute-maker Louis Lot. Lot had acquired a licence from Theobald Boehm to make flutes in France, and worked in Paris through the mid to late 19th century. I felt very lucky to acquire this instrument. It was initially in bad condition but was expertly restored by Richard Mattingly in London. We made no attempt to “improve” it in any way, restoring it to its original condition; it has not, over the years, been altered at all.

This beautiful instrument is made of silver, and every key is hallmarked. I assume it could have been made for a player in the Paris Opera, on the grounds that the pitch is a little higher than the modern standard.

Until the mid 19th century flutes were predominantly made from wood, with about 10% silver. By the end of the century the opposite was the case. This type of flute was the instrument loved by Debussy and Ravel, and other especially continental composers. Its existence and popularity generated an awful lot of flute music.

The composers recorded on this album personify the growth of a new interest in the ancient instrument, the flute. Indeed there was a flowering of new works in a very European genre. The flute in the early 19th century had been virtually consigned to gentlemen’s clubs, but was now emancipated by composers such as those recorded here.

William Dowdall