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Schubert: *Variations on "Trockene Blumen" D. 802*. Frank: *Sonata for Flute and Piano*. Jeanne Baxtresser, flute: Paul Helmer, piano. McGill University Records 77005

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This attractive disc marks my personal introduction to McGill University Records, a Montreal firm apparently committed to augmenting—or exceeding—the contribution made by CBC Records, which has largely moved away from recording Canadian music recently. Donald Patriquin's *Hangman's Reel* is a loosely plotted ballet based on an orchestration of typically Eastern Canadian music—largely airs and dances reflective of Quebec and Maritime-Provinces cultural blendings. The plot itself—which need not concern us here—comes from Quebec folklore, and has been imposed upon an earlier version of these materials in the form of a suite written for the soloist, a folk fiddler of considerable power and virtuosity. About half of Side 2 of this disc, moreover, is given over to fiddle-piano performances of more traditional material—reels, strathspeys, the air “Will Ye No Come Back Again,” and the sweet “Un Canadien errant.” However light, this is infectious stuff, and can be readily recommended both to balletomanes and to fans of Canadian music, “serious” or traditional. The performances are very fine, and the recording ambience warm and nicely balanced. The thin pressing is, but for a trace of warp and a bit of surface static, better than I might have expected.

John Ditsky
[FANFARE, V/4 (1982), 215]

SCHUBERT: *Variations on “Trockene Blumen,”* D. 802. FRANCK: *Sonata for Flute and Piano.* Jeanne Baxtresser, flute; Paul Helmer, piano. MCGILL UNIVERSITY RECORDS 77005.

Eureka! A university production that offers excellently competitive music-making just like any regular record company, merely pointing out that both the fine artists are on its faculty and letting the listener draw his or her own conclusions therefrom. Baxtresser is the solo flutist with the Montreal Symphony. She is a superb musician, playing with no signs of preciousness, and phrasing with exquisite care. Helmer has concertized in Canada, and is obviously an excellent pianist. The two, furthermore, work very smoothly together. Schubert's piece receives about as fine a performance as is currently available, but the piece itself is overlong and unconvincing. The Franck is his famous Violin Sonata transcribed for flute. Here, the competition is overwhelming: Galway and Argerich give one of the finest performances ever recorded (of anything) on RCA. The piece works for flute, but requires less heroic pianism (except when Galway is the soloist) than the part calls for when violin is used, since the piano will otherwise cover the flute. Helmer adjusts perfectly, but the work loses in scope. The recording, packaging, and Helmer's excellent liner notes are thoroughly professional.

Paul Turok
[FANFARE, V/4 (1982), 249]