

## **In The Shadow Of The Glen**

**by Nancy Van de Vate**

**Reviewed by Monique Chandra**

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I'd like to alert those who enjoy modern opera to a wonderful one-act work by Nancy Van de Vate, "In the Shadow of the Glen" (Vienna Modern Masters VMM-4003). It's a very strange, dark work, based on a controversial play by Irish poet John Millington Synge. A husband who's dead but isn't. Two different views of who's the evil one. A sympathetic tramp. But, as usual, it's the woman who loses out in the end. I suppose there weren't any inexpensive places a woman could live in at that time until she got her head together. The music is alternately dark and quite beautiful, the scenes etched musically like acid on a sheet of metal. It's very easy to hear traces here of her later operatic masterpiece, "All Quiet on the Western Front." Though written in 1960 when she was still living in America, it was not performed until many years later, which so upset her that she abandoned opera for another 29 years, when she began work on "All Quiet." The score of "Shadow" was revised by the composer in 1994 and received its world premiere in 1999—ironically, not in Austria, where she now lives, but in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Especially fine in this performance are the two tenors, Jack Delmore as the tramp who stumbles across the woman's cottage on a dark, stormy night, and Dominic Natoli as the "dead" husband who plays possum until he hears his wife (who thinks he's dead) discussing marriage with a local shepherd. Natoli, who studied with the great Afro Poli, has a particularly bright tone and strong, clear focus. I believe that any listener who hears this disc will enjoy his singing. Delmore's voice is more lyrical, very ingratiating to the ear.

Also on the same CD is another early one-act opera, "The Death of the Hired Man," based on a Robert Frost poem. The music in this work is more conventionally lyrical, but also quite melancholy. What makes it unusual is the chamber ensemble that accompanies it, consisting of only flute, cello, piano and percussion. (This is a 1998 revision of the original score.)