

## The Duplets "Tree of Strings"

*Label: Pond Chicken Music; CHIK001; 2008; 12 tracks;  
46 min*

Gillian Fleetwood and Fraya Thomsen play harps in the modern style: silken melodies, brazen arrangements and gutsy accompaniments. It's hard to tell exactly what their strings are made of, but they certainly produce good vibrations. In seven instrumental sets, these talented young ladies span traditions from Scandinavia to Canada, melodies from the 17th century to the 21st. The five songs are led by Gillian in a low dusky voice. *Ca' the Yowes*, *Twa Corbies* and *Rigs of Rye* come from the heart of the folk song tradition. Andy M Stewart's *Queen of All Argyll* is only a couple of decades old, and *Love* by Claire Campbell is a mere toddler.

Starting with a tune I know as *Lord Mayo*, the harp duets sparkle and stir by turns. There are eight of Gillian and Fraya's own compositions here, ranging from the frankly funky *Bendy Tune* to the straight strathspey *Lillian Ross of Inverness*: all are well worth hearing, *The Boys* groups three of them into a rich and varied medley. The Duplets also have a good ear for other people's compositions: Steve Cooney, Diarmuid Moynihan, Jarlath Henderson and Angus MacDonald are among the contemporary composers credited. Gillian and Fraya are joined on a few tracks by Duncan Lyall and Donald Hay on bass and drums, and on a couple of sets by the fiddle of Gabe McVarish and the banjo of Tam Kinsella.

The strength of this CD is definitely in the instrumental tracks. My favourites are *Donald Blue*, *The Up Downey*, *Good Man in the Kitchen* and that bendy tune. *Tree of Strings* is not a highly-polished or over-produced album, and it's all the more refreshing as a result. The atmosphere is more like a small informal concert than a studio recording, full of spirit and spontaneity. A very creditable first album, and a great name for a record label.

[www.theduplets.com](http://www.theduplets.com)

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