

HAMMER HEADS
A HAMMERED DULCIMER SOCIETY OF SOUTHEASTERN VIRGINIA
*Enjoying, learning, and promoting hammered dulcimer music
throughout the Hampton Roads area*

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CD Review: “*Inventio* -Transcriptions for Two Hammered Dulcimers”

Inventio, a new recording by Martha Giles and Robert Wadsworth, is a CD of classical compositions from the Baroque period. I have known Martha and Bob for several years and delighted in their playing at various gatherings. On my first playing of their recording, I was struck with how different just the material is from most other recordings of dulcimer music. This is not a collection of traditional tunes but some fine selections of classical music. Next I noticed the intricate melodies and countermelodies weaving their ways around each other. Martha informed me that one of them would play what the right hand on the keyboard would normally play and the other would play the part designated for the left hand. I can only imagine how much time and serious study of the material it took to create this recording. Upon further listening, I was amazed at the timing of each strike of the hammers as Martha and Bob played their separate parts as though one person sat at a keyboard. The timing is so critical here because each note of the right hand part relies so much on each note of the left hand part, and vice versa. If the timing is not dead on, the arrangements do not work, and I am pleased to say both the timing and the arrangements work very well. Those of you who have attempted to play a separate part from another person in an arrangement will be able to greatly appreciate the effort and the result of this recording.

Another bit of information worth mentioning is that Martha and Bob recorded this project themselves, learning how to use the equipment, set the microphones and balance the sound levels, demonstrating not only their artistic abilities, but also their technical talents. I have listened to *Inventio* several times in various settings, from the surround sound at home to the sound system in my vehicle while traveling, with good results each time. One of my favorite ways to enjoy this CD is with headphones, for the listener really gets a feel for the separate parts being played, the subtle use of switching from wooden hammers to padded hammers, the use of the dampers to change the sound of the instrument and the ever-present amazing sense of timing.

In today's HD market, there are numerous selections of recordings available. Most are fiddle tunes either done solo or with a string band ensemble, some focus on Celtic traditions and yet others are more New Age with some original compositions. *Inventio* falls into none of those categories. This recording, as is listed on the back cover, is “Four hands, four hammers and one hundred fifty-six strings” playing selections of the Baroque Era. Musical pieces include works by Handel and Scarlatti, along with over a dozen pieces by Bach. The artists set their project and themselves apart from most others simply by their choice of material, for few musicians playing traditionally folk instruments have the training, background or familiarity with classical music to attempt such an endeavor. *Inventio* is a good collection of classical material done with sensitive artistry and an amazing sense of timing and coordination by Martha Giles and Bob Wadsworth. I congratulate them both on their effort, I applaud them on their dedication and commitment to their project, and I look forward to their next recording.

- Bob Clark