Fire & Grace & Ash

Partita Americana

(Fireandgracemusic)

Invigorating mix of Baroque and bluegrass

In 2016, guitarist William Coulter and violinist Edwin Huizinga blended Bach and traditional Irish music with "The Liquid Gold Suite" on their self-titled debut as Fire & Grace. Now they deepen and expand their exploration into the Baroque and beyond with Fire & Grace & Ash's *Partita Americana*. Adding mandolinist Ashley Broder to the fold, the trio rearranges Bach's "E Major Partita" for violin, mandolin, and guitar. The titular partita is the album's centerpiece, interspersing six Baroque movements with American bluegrass and fiddle tunes.

Kicking off with a Bach "Prelude," Huizinga reels off spiraling 16th notes before segueing into a wavering siren's wail on Vassar Clements' "Lonesome Fiddle Blues." Concurrently, Coulter threads rattling locomotive strums through a textured tapestry of plucked and pirouetting guitar. Here and throughout, the ambitious partita holds together because Coulter's rhythmic and shape-shifting guitar is the springboard for Huizinga's swan-diving violin and Broder's icicle-sharp mandolin.

The set is fleshed out with a mix of covers and a Broder original. On the French-Canadian traditional tune "Waltz of the Little Girls," the guitarist takes the spotlight. While delicate mandolin and swooning violin carry the haunting melody, Coulter's plaintive cross-picking surges to the fore before dissolving into strums as delicate as mist.

Listening to *Partita Americana* is like jumping down a wormhole where linear time vanishes. Centuries and cultural barriers melt away as old-world bourées and minuets spiral seamlessly into all-American waltzes and folk dances. *—Pat Moran*