

In *Quarto Estratto* (1974) Donatoni makes two interesting moves, increasing the ensemble size to a septet, including piccolo and violin, and once again distilling the material to its essence, bringing the duration back down to a little less than three minutes. This is the first recording of the piece, and the ensemble mentions in the liner notes that they had a difficult choice to make. The parts have no bar lines or metric symbols; the only indication is 'play as fast as possible'. Donatoni didn't indicate whether that meant strict coordination of the parts, playing fast as possible throughout, or instead to allow for a certain measure of independence, of quasi-aleatory. Adapter, mindful that their rendition will be a benchmark of sorts, considered both approaches, but ended up opting for more independence between parts. Observing the snippet of score that is included in the liner notes, this appears to be both a pragmatic and logical decision based on the information that is shared. The resulting music is a dizzying shimmer. Even amid the hurly burly of the instruments' individual sprints, the limited pitch material in each part allows for a sense of harmonic coordination. Each of *Quattro's* iterations takes on a different character. It is to Donatoni's credit that it is hard to pick a favourite among them.

Christian Carey  
10.1017/S004029821700136X

---

LONGLEASH: *Passage* (Trapani, Iannotta, Watanabe, Filidei). New Focus Recordings fcr180

Despite public and governmental hostility toward the avant-garde in the McCarthy era, the American Central Intelligence Agency was willing to try anything in its propaganda war with the Soviet Union. This included sponsoring the Congress for Cultural Freedom to use American literature, painting, poetry and music to demonstrate the USA's creative, intellectual and cultural superiority, and to subvert the rigid Soviet system's censorship and control. The CIA saw Abstract Expressionism as an opportunity, and acted as covert patron to painters such as Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko and others, many of whom were ex-communists. For security reasons, and to preserve the integrity of the programme, there had to be enough distance between the agency and the artists, who had little respect for the government, and no knowledge of their role in Operation Long Leash. In its heyday, the Congress for Cultural Freedom ran two dozen

magazines, had offices in 35 countries, and funded touring exhibitions of American painting that visited every large European City.

Jump ahead more than 60 years, and the ideological wrangling persists, albeit using different tools and provocations. In 2015, American investment in the National Endowment for the Arts budget was \$146 million, while the 2017 annual cost of security for the current President is budgeted at \$120 million. Today's CIA, with a 2013 fiscal budget of \$14.7 billion, uses the *Barney and Friends* theme, the *Meow Mix* commercial and Metallica in its 'psychological operations', while classical music is functionally relegated to dispersing loitering teens outside 7–11s. The American string trio, Longleash, however, took the recently declassified fab name from the CIA's project, cast away the agency's aspersions, and embarked on the more noble venture of fostering new music for violin, cello and piano.

All of the pieces on the *Passage* recording exhibit traits of the title, in the transit from one condition or process to another, in dislocated segments, via the wandering lapse of time, or more generally in the ongoing redefinition of the string trio. *Passing Through* is Christopher Trapani's peripatetic beeline through a long path of chords guided by computer-assisted voice-leading procedures. While the piano performs its tetrachordal manoeuvres on a bristling rhythmic surface, the strings exchange dynamic sliding and bolting patterns overtop. By contrast, the related second section, *Staying Put*, is a more focused exercise in ensemble virtuosity. While more stable harmonically, it is equally accomplished in its compositional technique. Juan de Dios Magdaleno's *Strange Attractor* articulates its fractally generated characters using extremes of register in the piano part, with the strings frequently pulling resonances from its harmonic vocabulary. With its strident, scattered, yet related piano gestures, the piece is somehow simultaneously inevitable and chaotic in its fragmentary behaviours. All things considered, more than a handful of other pieces share the same title and fractal apparatus as Magdaleno's, and it's not apparent what unique contribution this adds to the batch.

*ver\_flies\_sen*, by Yukiko Watanabe, features exquisitely orchestrated plays of timbre blurring into one another. The piece projects both segmentation and liquidity, with sonic distortions akin to the visual morphing of tiles in a pool as seen through the rippling water in Adriana Varejão's *O Hungaro*, the painting that inspired the piece. Longleash's interpretation subtly navigates the balance between the feel of Varejão's painting, and the passing, elapsing, and

fracturing reflected in Watanabe's German title. Francesco Filidei's *Corde Vuote* (Open Strings) differs from the other pieces on the recording in its concentration on the violin and cello (the piano enters for the first time halfway through the piece), and its more constrained approach to materials and development. The placid flow of the work, along with the ringing sustains of the open strings and harmonics, appears to animate and anthropomorphize the strings into a set of gently respiring lungs. Notwithstanding its consistency, the piece also contains several deftly handled harmonic twists, particularly two-thirds of the way through, prior to its gradual, semi-retrograde exhalation.

Where the strength of Filidei's piece rests in his effortless and restrained application of open string spectra, in *Il colore dell'ombra*, Clara Iannotta delves further into spectrality via colour theory. Iannotta's powerful work can partially be heard through the filter of French impressionist painters, who adopted Eugène Chevreul's research into separating effects of light, and chiaroscuro. From Chevreul, Renoir gleaned that 'No shadow is black. It always has a colour. Nature knows only colours'. Subsequently, shadow colour was no longer considered primary tone plus darkness, but a fine composite of pigments and their opposites. Similarly, Monet's 20 paintings of the Rouen Cathedral (1892–94) investigate the fleeting, changing light, colour and shadow on the structure at different times of day, different times of year, and in different weather conditions. Music, on the other hand, has the advantage of uninterrupted mobility through time, which is fundamental to *Il colore dell'ombra*'s achievement. In the first section, 'Passage com un velo', the loosened strings offer a dark, guttural quality to the transitory tone colourings of the cello, supported by the radiant cyclic rumbling of low piano harmonics. 'D'un fiato' (in one breath) continues the muscular deployment of extreme registers from the first movement, receding to calm, whistling harmonics in the strings. The brief final movement shimmies along like shifting colour filters, crossing, accumulating, and separating back in a mysterious continuity that quickly accelerates to its conclusion.

Overlooking the awkward, under-edited liner notes, *Passage* is an inspired debut album, on which Longleash is tethered to tight playing and bound together in lucid interpretations of the music.

Paul Steenhuisen

10.1017/S0040298217001371

DUO IMAGINAIRE: Japanese Echoes, Hommage à Claude Debussy. Chromart Classics, TYXart TXA17099

In the midst of the Japonisme-craze that overtook the Paris art scene in the years around 1900, Claude Debussy insisted on having Hokusai's iconic *Under the Wave off Kanagawa* as the cover of the first edition of *La Mer* in 1905. The composer himself possessed a print, which hung in his living room.

That being said, the influence of Japanese art is often described as being subtler in Debussy's oeuvre compared to his more exoticism-oriented contemporaries such as Saint-Saëns and Sullivan. His entry is more abstract, through relating to the way space and timbre are treated in Japanese music. 'Music is the space between notes' Debussy declared. Whether or not he knowingly echoed the Japanese culture of 'ma', or 'sensitivity for the space between', the parallel is attractive. This didn't of course prevent eastern pentatonic scales from making multiple cameo appearances.

Duo Imaginaire wanted to give six Japanese composers the opportunity to return the favour. To bring out the Japanese in Debussy, as well as Debussy in the expression of the cosmopolitan Japanese composers. Many of them have studied at key institutions of Central European modernism or with prestigious teachers of the same vein. In the global village, Debussy should self-evidently be considered part of their heritage. The 50–50 gender balance of the commissions is laudable.

Each composer chose one of the *préludes* to precede their work in a call and answer. A literary twin of this kind of programming principle is 'Waka' or Japanese respondent poetry, where a tanka-metre poem is written in response to another – perhaps as an exchange of love-letters or a political debate. These six preludes were then arranged by Duo Imaginaire's harpist Simone Seiler and clarinetist John Corbett.

The rapport is very clear in all the pieces, which is not always a virtue. In the last pair, Asako Miyaki's response *The garden of afterimage II – butterfly pattern* starts from the second chord of *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* and attempts to gather momentum through pinning onto Debussy's contour. Unfortunately, Miyaki's work never manages to catch wind. The unambitious fragments follow each other without audible reason, and so remain introverted and insular.

Satoshi Minami's *Soundprint No.4* manages better to keep the characteristic drive and flow of *La danse de Puck*, mirroring its abundant use