

is particularly effective. The third movement, “Calypso,” features the traditional rhythms of the Afro-Caribbean steel band played by the pizzicato strings and is a light and playful diversion before the final movement, a rushing finale that is both the most dissonant and the most rhythmically and texturally complex movement of the work. Marked “very fast and intense,” the movement contains moments of repose in which ideas from earlier movements are recalled; there is also a lengthy, improvised violin cadenza by Monroe.

The final work on the recording is a compact, exuberant encore piece by the ensemble’s own Fritz Gearhardt, entitled *Geizezoid (a jazz encore)*. The jazz/rock influence is overt in this work, with the quartet acting as a rhythm section (complete with percussive effects and glissandos) for Monroe’s solo improvisations.

This recording is a strongly conceived and beautifully presented journey through the varied influences that are shaping a new genre of music that is confined neither to the “art music” venue nor to the jazz/pop category. It is thoughtful and intellectual, but still fresh and inviting, and some of these works (especially those by Baker and Lee) are likely to become staples of the twenty-first-century chamber repertoire. The versatility of the musicians on this recording is admirable and sets the bar high for other string quartets to expand their horizons into this new, more inclusive genre of jazz-influenced contemporary music.

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George Crumb: Complete Crumb Edition, Vol. 11. Bridge Records CD 9253. 2008.

Since its inception in 1981, Bridge Records has become the industry standard in twentieth-century and contemporary classical music. It is a testament to the label’s success (as well as the public’s growing appetite for contemporary classical music) that Bridge, in the words of the company’s founder David Starobin, has continued to experience “a steady growth of interest.”¹ George Crumb has been a staple in Bridge’s twentieth-century inventory since the early 1990s. Although thoroughly adventurous from a compositional standpoint, Crumb’s music is infused with a familiar lyricism and never strikes the listener as dispassionately abstract or hyper-intellectual. Crumb categorizes himself as a “colorist” and is known for his graphic scores, nontraditional performance techniques, instrumental effects, and unmetered rhythms.² His influences range from turn-of-the-century European composers, such as Debussy, Mahler, and Bartók, to the folk music and echoing

¹ Joseph Dalton, “On Record—An Overview of the State of Contemporary Music Recording (Part 1): Still Spinning.” *Newmusicbox* (July 8, 2009), <http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=6057>.

² Thomas Riis, “A Conversation with George Crumb,” *American Music Research Center Journal* 3 (1993): 41.

valleys of his native West Virginia. Despite the similarity of the overall look and feel of Crumb's intricately crafted manuscripts, the music he has written over the course of his long and distinguished career is not all cut from the same cloth, and the collection of pieces featured on the *Complete Crumb Edition*, Vol. 11, alone demonstrates this eclecticism.

The volume is the most recent release in a collection that will ultimately include all of Crumb's published output. (He wrote a few works in his teens that he does not acknowledge.) More than a mere collection of works, the album promises to be an important historical resource; it includes recordings made as long ago as 1974 (*Night of the Four Moons*) along with works written over a nearly sixty-year span from 1947 to 2005. Although historical in scope, the album is not organized chronologically. Instead it traces a dramatic arch between expressive intensity and breezy airiness. Hence, the earliest work, *Three Early Songs for Voice and Piano* (1947) with mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani and pianist Gilbert Kalish, occurs last on the album, whereas the twenty-four-minute *Variazioni* (1959) for large orchestra occurs first.³

Although the sparse textures and muted orchestral colors of the *Variazioni* foreshadow to some degree Crumb's later compositions, the work also represents Crumb at his most formalistic. As such, it incorporates numerous modernistic elements, including a twelve-tone row and two musical mottos, one based on Crumb's own name (G, E, G, E, B-natural, C, B-flat) and the other on that of Rolf Gelewsky (F, G, E, E, E-flat), to whom the work is dedicated. (Although the work has a twelve-note theme, the theme is not subjected to traditional "serial" techniques.) The recording itself, with Paul Mann (conductor) and the Odense Symphony Orchestra, is a superbly accurate rendition of the piece and not to be missed.

Variazioni, Crumb's D.M.A. dissertation piece, was written at a turning point in his career. Shortly after completing it, he began to have serious doubts about the direction his music was taking. In recalling this period, Crumb remarks, "I can remember quite literally waking up one night in a cold sweat with the realization that I had thus far simply been rewriting the music of other composers."⁴ The crisis ultimately set Crumb on the path to discovering his own voice, and the early 1960s witnessed the production of the first uniquely and elegantly structured coloristic pieces that were to become the hallmark of his mature style. All but the last of the remaining recordings on the compact disc are drawn from this late period.

The most recent of these newer works is *Otherworldly Resonances (Tableaux, Book II) for Two Amplified Pianos* (2005). The present version is a revision of an earlier work, completed in 2002, with two added movements.⁵ Crumb's music often incorporates spiritual imagery, and this piece is no exception: It contains a reference to Zen Buddhism in the performance directions for the first movement (a reference highlighted by Crumb in the program notes), while quoting the hymn tune

³ The *Three Early Songs* are the only "juvenilia" that Crumb revisited and eventually had published. He unearthed them at the request of Jan DeGaetani.

⁴ Robert Shuffett, "Interview: Crumb/Shuffett," in *George Crumb: Profile of a Composer*, ed. Don Gillespie (New York: C. F. Peters, 1986), 35.

⁵ *Tableaux, Book I* is the subtitle of *Zeitgeist*, another piece for two pianos.

“Bringing in the Sheaves” in the third.⁶ Another of Crumb’s favorite techniques is the use of motifs to represent cosmic and natural phenomena. These motifs often migrate from piece to piece. The first movement of *Otherworldly Resonances for Two Pianos* provides an example of this practice by including a brief section recalling the “Galactic Bells” heard at the beginning of Crumb’s *Makrokosmos II*, completed in 1973. The work is performed by the duo piano team *Quattro Mani* and shows Susan Grace and Alice Rybak at their best.⁷ Although the piece is technically demanding, the performers do not allow virtuosity to overshadow elegance, and their performance beautifully treads the fine line between relentless precision and overt sentimentality.

The last three works on the album feature mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, who is well known for her sensitive renditions of Crumb’s music as well as that of many other twentieth-century composers. The idiosyncratic notation one finds in Crumb’s graphic scores, along with the frequent treatment of the vocal part as a musical instrument, might cause some performers to overemphasize the innovative aspects of his music. DeGaetani never gave in to such temptations, choosing instead to exercise the restraint required to communicate the warm intimacy of Crumb’s music. Her recordings have undoubtedly influenced the many performers who have followed her, leaving an indelible mark on Crumb’s music and its reception.

The first piece in which we hear DeGaetani is *Night of the Four Moons*. This work is also important to the historical trajectory of the album because it incorporates the poetry of Federico García Lorca. Lorca’s poetry was featured in many of the early works written after Crumb’s 1962–63 epiphany and is a central part of his aesthetic. The piece oscillates between moments of disquiet and serenity and employs motifs representing, among other things, a child admonishing the moon to run away and the moon’s playful retorts. The piece explores a wide range of emotions and dynamics, and DeGaetani, as always, is able to get to the heart of this haunting and deeply profound music despite her occasional mispronunciation of the Spanish text. It is sometimes difficult to duplicate the effect of offstage parts in recordings. It is worth noting, then, that here the remastered recording emulates the reverberation of the hall, imparting an eerie sense of distance to the offstage parts near the end of the last movement.

Jan DeGaetani’s long-time collaborator, Gilbert Kalish, joins her for the final two works on the album, *The Sleeper* and *Three Early Songs for Voice and Piano*. Both of these recordings are taken from a concert on 25 February 1987. *The Sleeper*, with its “tenuous textures and extremely soft dynamic,” beautifully conveys the dark horror of Poe’s “eerie images.”⁸ The twelve equally timed piano harmonics tolling the midnight hour at the beginning of the composition are followed by numerous rising and falling statements of a multi-aggregate cycle consisting of a minor third

⁶ George Crumb, *Otherworldly Resonances for Two Amplified Pianos* (New York: C. F. Peters, 2005).

⁷ The premier performance of the earlier version of *Otherworldly Resonances* with *Quattro Mani*, for whom it was written, is featured on Bridge Records Compact Disc 9155.

⁸ The quotes are from Crumb’s program notes. See George Crumb, *The Sleeper* (New York: C. F. Peters, 1984).

and two major thirds.⁹ These undulating statements alternate with descending chromatic fragments, producing a sense of heightened tension throughout the song. The final work on the album, *Three Early Songs for Voice and Piano*, loosens the tension and brings the album to a serene close. These songs come from Crumb's early period and have traditional meters and key signatures, but they also contain hints of the "atmospheric" quality characteristic of Crumb's later works and incorporate impressionistic parallels, ostinati, and the nontraditional use of conventional triads and seventh chords.

Bridge Records has allowed ample room for the particularly insightful liner notes by Steven Bruns, who is a close associate of Crumb and one of his most prolific advocates. Bruns's observations include anecdotal information of the sort that only someone with his considerable knowledge of Crumb and his music could provide, and the analyses are replete with references to the composer's own comments and observations.

In a recent interview, Crumb referred to himself as a "postmodernist" composer, and this compact disc, with its expansive scope, demonstrates how apt this description is.¹⁰ Crumb's music enfolds folk elements and structural elegance within a thoroughly modern, yet intimately expressive, exterior. With Vol. 11 of the *Complete Crumb Edition*, Bridge Records has captured the essence of Crumb's oeuvre and, in the process, made an outstanding contribution to the understanding of contemporary U.S. music.

Edward Pearsall

⁹ Multi-aggregate cycles are defined by Edward Gollin as "compound interval cycles that run through, or cover, the tones of more than one aggregate." See Edward Gollin, "Multi-aggregate Cycles and Multi-aggregate Serial Techniques in the Music of Béla Bartók," *Music Theory Spectrum* 29/2 (2007): 143.

¹⁰ From an interview with Anna Sale, "Outlook," *West Virginia Public Broadcasting* (21 December 2007), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xo8SHjTxc>.