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Various Artists. *The Music of William C. Wright: Solo Piano and Vocal Works, 1847–1893*. Permelia Records 010225, 2013.

This attractively produced and meticulously documented disc of the music of William Carey Wright (1825–1904), father of the noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright, is unusual in several regards. The brainchild of musicologist David Patterson, the CD was produced, in part, with the help of the online crowd-funding website Kickstarter. Better known for serving as a vehicle through which contemporary music, art, film, and video have been subsidized, here the website has been used to support a musicological project. After presenting a video about his project on Kickstarter, Patterson received donations of over seven thousand dollars from 170 generous individuals, many of whom are listed in the acknowledgements. Perhaps in the future the use of Kickstarter or similar funding websites will be so prevalent as not to merit any comment, but to my knowledge very few works based in musicological scholarship have been produced in this manner. Kickstarter allowed Patterson to create the outgrowth of his interdisciplinary research; donors included music scholars as well as people interested in Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural influences. The architect frequently made references to music in his discussions of design, so it is natural to look to the composer's father for the roots of his son's musical knowledge. Patterson's CD, which includes twenty-one never-before-recorded compositions by William Wright, is thus of interest to historians of both music and architecture. Its very existence forces us to ask fundamental aesthetic questions about the relationships between differing art forms.

Patterson traces William Wright's checkered professional and personal life in great detail in the engaging essay that accompanies the recording. William's musical interests overtook his initial training in law and medicine, to the despair of his mother, who had intended him for the ministry and lamented that her son was "all Music, Music." By 1848, Wright had received two degrees from Madison (later Colgate) University in Hamilton, New York. He went on to a long career in which he taught music, played the piano, violin, and organ, and composed. However, to support himself and his family, he also worked as a lawyer, revenue collector, school superintendent, and pastor; consequently, music frequently took a backseat to these activities. Indeed, in one instance Wright left his ministerial position at First Baptist Church of Weymouth, Massachusetts, when the congregation objected to his promotion of musical entertainments. Patterson's task of documenting Wright's life and works is made more complicated by his subject matter's seemingly itinerant nature, though perhaps the situations that led Wright across the United States are indicative of the difficulties of a nineteenth-century musician trying to eke out a livelihood. Wright worked in New York, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, and Kansas, and died during a visit to Pennsylvania in 1904. Wright's personal life was also complicated. His first wife, Permelia Holcomb, died in 1864 after the stillbirth of their fourth child; his 1866 marriage to Anna Lloyd

Jones, which produced Frank Lloyd Wright and two other children, was deeply troubled and ended in divorce in 1883.

Patterson's chronicle of Wright's life is accompanied by a critical apparatus that documents the extensive research he has done. The eye-catching brochure is enhanced by photos of William, Frank, and Permelia Wright; it includes the lyrics for the five songs on the disc, as well as two "prologue" poems printed before Wright's *Reveries poetiques* for piano. The essay concludes with a brief examination of William's intellectual legacy to Frank and the way that musical ideas shaped his architectural thinking. Patterson writes that Frank believed that the "modular 'unit' or 'grid' system that served as the skeletal template of any of his designs . . . was the equivalent of 'the musician's systematic staff and intervals'"; he might have referred to the physical realities of the architect's work, however, to expand our understanding of this concept. Regardless, Frank Lloyd Wright frequently espoused his belief in a Beethovenian organicism that may have shaped his notion of "how to develop physical ideas in space as well" (19).

There is far more evidence of modular design than Beethovenian organicism in Wright's father's music, however. The works, heard roughly in chronological order, show some increase in complexity between 1847 and 1893, the period in which they were published, but as a whole, they are formally regular in their construction. Wright's compositions for piano typically feature an introduction, sometimes quite substantial, which precedes fundamentally sectional forms with repeated strains and/or an overall ternary form. There are three marches (incorporating fanfares) and several dances: waltzes, a polka, a mazurka, and a schottish. Wright's parlor songs are strophic, and they sometimes contrast a solo verse with a four-part chorus. Harmonically, the works are largely diatonic with occasional chromatic twists or a brief foray into the minor mode. At its best the music has the agreeable lilt and charm needed to make it successful as parlor music. On the rare occasions in which Wright attempts a larger structure—as in *L'Agréable reverie or Floating on the Bay*—the music engages in conventional large-scale variation of entire passages, not motivic manipulation.

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of Wright's music is the composer's continuing interest in birds. Their names appear in several titles of the piano works: *Robin Waltz*, *Nightingale's Serenade*, and *Robin's Morning Song*. The latter two works feature motives that imitate bird sounds, sometimes made more obvious by repetition up an octave or in sequence. Some of the compositions from later in Wright's life show additional evidence of extramusical references or programmaticism. *Fallen Hero's Triumph* introduces a tragic Verdi-esque melody and closes with heroic march-like music. Of the longer works, the heartfelt "Hour of Melancholy" from *Reveries poetiques*, composed in 1893, with its expressively descending melody and tragic chordal ending evoking the funereal bells of the accompanying poem, deserves special mention.

The performers on the disc are professional musicians from the Chicago area. The vocal soloists, soprano Laura Lynch and tenor Matthew Dean, occasionally face a difficult task: Wright's songs are somewhat less melodious than his piano works. The verse of "O Linger Not Love" centers on one note, though the song features more memorable Italianate melodic turns in its chorus. Both soloists are capable of

abandoning modern restraint in order to give the settings of the highly moralistic and religious texts their most convincing reading, though perhaps they could have done more so in this regard. In addition to its small chorus made up of members of the Oriana Singers and the Rookery, “The Sunny Side of Life” also includes violin soloist Marie Wang, who brings welcome variety to the album. Pianists Kuang-Hao Huang and Daniel Schlosberg sensitively handle the tuneful sentimentality of Wright’s piano music without letting it become cloying. Huang’s treatment of the dance numbers are appropriately light and sparkling, such as in *Lillie’s Invitation Waltz* and the “Sympathy Schottish” from *Musical Ripples* (1885).

That Frank Lloyd Wright’s knowledge of music comes from the influence of William Wright is indisputable; however, if his father exposed him to the developmental complexities of European Romantic music, it is not immediately apparent from these compositions. The historic significance of this recording may perhaps be better understood as presenting the sound of domestic music in late nineteenth-century U.S. parlors. The nature of Wright’s parental influence is nonetheless a profound question, and as Patterson acknowledges that his liner notes do not allow for a full exploration of this issue, it is hoped he will follow this initial recording with additional consideration of the topic. He is to be highly commended for his investigations into William Wright’s music and for this unusual and interesting recording.

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