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CD REVIEWS

JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER: Suites for clarinet 1[1] & 1b[2]; String Quartets Nos 1–2[7]; Three Songs for soprano and clarinet[3,2]; *Bees*[4]; *The Federal Music Project*[8]; Movement for 2 pianos[4,5]; Movement for double-bass and piano[6,5]; *Ballad of the Star-Eater*[3,2]; Three Pieces for choir[6,8]; Piano Sonatina in C[4]. [1]Daniel Goode, [2]Craig Hill (cls), [3]Merlyn Quaife (sop), [4]Peter Dumsday, [5]Kim Bastin (pnos), [6]Nicholas Synot (db), [7]Astra String Quartet, [8]Astra Choir c. John McCaughey. New World 80678-2 (2CD-set).

BORISOVA-OLLAS: *Wings of the Wind*[5]; Symphony No. 1, *The Triumph of Heaven*[5]; *Roosters in Love*[4]; *… im Klosterhofe*[1–2]; *Silent Island*[3]. [1]Pia Segerstam (vlc), [2]Christophe Sirodeau (pno), [3]Eva Sidén (pno), [4]Rascher Saxophone Quartet, [5]Norrköping Symphony Orchestra c. Mats Rondin. Phono Suecia PSCD 171.

BROUWER: *Aurolucent Circles*[1]; *Mandala*; *Pulse*; *Remembrances*; *SIZZLE*. [1]Evelyn Glennie (perc), Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra c. Gerard Schwarz. Naxos 8.559250.

COATES: Symphonies Nos. 1, *Music on Open Strings*[1], 7[2] & 14, *Symphony in Microtones*[3]. [1]Raymond Curfs (timp), Munich CO c. Christoph Poppen; [2]Siegerland Orchestra c. Jorge Rotter; [3]Bavarian Radio SO c. Olaf Henzold. Naxos 8.559289.

FUCHS:16 Fantasy Etudes; *Sonata Pastorale*; 15 Characteristic Studies; 12 Caprices. Jeanne Mallow (vla). Naxos 8.557932-3.

LE BARON: *Pope Joan*[1,3,5–7,9,11–14]; *Transfiguration*[2,4,8,10,15]. [1]Kristin Norderval, [2]Lucy Shelton (sop), [3]Dorothy Stone (fl, alto fl, picc), [4]Camilla Hoitenga (fl), [5]Kevin Wilson (ob, Eng hn), [6]Jim Sullivan (cl, bass cl), [7]Lorna Elder (pno), [8]June Han (hp), [9]Nicholas Terry, [10]William Trigg (perc), [11]Eric Kim Clark (vln), [12]Andrew McIntosh (vla), [13]Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick (vlc), c. [14]Mark Menzies, [15]Rand Steiger. New World 80663-2.

HYO-SHIN NA: *Ocean/Shore 2*[1–4]; *All the Noises in the World*[6]; *Walking, Walking*[5]; *Ten Thousand Ugly Ink Blots*[7]; [1]John Anderson (cl), [2]Marieke Keser (vln), [3]Manuel Visser (vla), [4]Nina Hitz (vlc), [5]Thomas Schultz (pno), [6]Jeong Ga Ak Hoe, [7]Ives String Quartet. New World 80674-2.

PAVLOVA: *Monolog* for violin & string orchestra; Suite: *Old New York Nostalgia*; Suite from the ballet *Sulamith*. Yaroslav Krasnikov (vln), Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra c. Rossen Milanov. Naxos 8.557674.

VEULENS: 'Piano Cubano: De algunas zonas del alma'. *De algunas zonas del alma*; *Musica de los niños invisibles*; *Campanas consonantes*; *La musica de la No guerra*; *Desde la ventana (Devastacion)*; *Tambores de invierno*. Marietta Veulens (pno). Lorelt LNT123.

Since my last general round-up for *Tempo* (issue 236) of music by women composers (setting aside isolated reviews of Maconchy, Musgrave, Ker and Beamish in the past few issues), the number of releases has increased markedly. Established figures such as Saariaho and Gubaidulina have continued to extend their discographies as have up-and-coming figures such as Lena Auerbach (BIS) and Cecilia MacDowall (on Dutton), or long-forgotten ones like Melanie Bonis (Dabringhaus und Grimm). Elena Kats-Chernin has gained considerable exposure in Britain through the use of *Eliza Aria*, sung by Lucy Shelton, from her ballet *Wild Swans* in a long-running TV-ad campaign: the reprint of ABC Classics' recording (476 7639) uses an illustration from the advertisement as front cover. Saariaho, Gubaidulina and Judith Weir have received the most high-profile recordings of any women composers during this period, the Finn with a marvellously produced and atmospheric DG DVD of her first opera *L'Amour de Loin*, her Russian colleague with a 2-disc set devoted to her oratorios, *St John Passion* and *St John Easter* (Hänssler Classics; although I must confess to having been somewhat disappointed with this passionless diptych). Gubaidulina even has two rival accounts of as esoteric a piece as the Concerto for bassoon and low strings, from BIS and Chandos. BIS, indeed, have issued several discs devoted to the cult Russian, not least of her Flute Concerto *…The Deceitful Face of Hope and Despair*, coupled with *Sieben Worte* for cello, bayan (the Russian accordion) and strings (BIS-SACD-1449). Weir's highly-rated *The Welcome Arrival of Rain* was reviewed by Paul Conway last issue. Here I will concentrate on recordings that have not received much exposure.

Gubaidulina has her own devoted audience and critical following but even as marginal a figure as Johanna Magdalena Beyer (1888–1944) is gaining one, albeit on a smaller scale. Born in Leipzig, she settled in New York in 1924, gravitating into the circle around Henry Cowell (for whom she long bore an unrequited love) and Charles Seeger.

Though conservatoire-trained and an able pianist, nothing is known of her compositions pre-1930, so she emerges suddenly composing in an advanced, borderline atonal style using Cowell's 'tempo melody' and Seeger's 'dissonant counterpoint' as essential parts of the musical fabric.[1] The present 2-disc set from New World originates from a series of concerts given by the Melbourne-based Astra Ensemble (a chamber group and choir), whose advocacy here is a model of commitment. Each CD is structured very similarly, as if replicating the format of a concert, opening with one of the two interconnected suites for solo clarinet followed by a string quartet (Beyer composed five), songs for soprano and clarinet, and two instrumental miniatures framing a larger choral item. The relatively short playing times (49' 23" and 46' 20") must therefore be seen in the expressive context of the whole.

Beyer's 40-plus surviving works range from orchestral pieces to songs, piano miniatures to works for percussion ensembles (some predating Cage's and Harrison's), even an abandoned opera (the album's title 'Sticky Melodies' derives from a reference to material for an unfinished opera). The dozen works presented here give a remarkable overview of her style and output. At first hearing, some can seem severe and ungrateful, but once attuned to her idiom I found that there was much of beauty, and an occasional quirky humour, within. Larry Polansky's excellent and fulsome booklet note goes into considerable detail about the compositional subtleties of the two clarinet suites (both 1932), which share a fast-slow-moderate-fast format (also replicated in the two quartets here) with the expressive heart lying in the slow movement and the technical interest peaking in the finale. Suite Ib's finale is effectively impossible to play at the notionally given speed (an accumulating *accelerando* matching Suite I's *rallentando*), but probably not meant to be interpreted literally. Craig Hill despatches it with great skill, nonetheless, as does Daniel Goode in Suite I (the only piece not recorded in Australia). There is something of the feel of the study about the movements in both suites, although they make effective expressive wholes and clarinettists everywhere would do well to investigate this fascinating pair of works.

The two string quartets (No. 1, 1933–4; No. 2, 1935) are something else again. While Ruth Crawford's 1930 Quartet may have served as initial stimulus – formal template, even – Beyer's First Quartet is a remarkably individual, expressively coherent whole, the most impressive work on offer (and it is by some way, at just short of 20 minutes, the largest). The brief opening *Allegro* covers some complex and intricate textures before giving way to a long, haunting *Lento* that evolves into an utterance of real substance, deeper and wider-ranging in emotion than the equivalent movements in the clarinet suites, for example. Succeeded by a spectral, moderately-paced interlude and *Presto* finale, the latter looks forward stylistically to both post-war expressionism and post-modern New Simplicity. The compact Second Quartet is just as rewarding a listen though only half the length, the atonal outer movements (*Allegretto*, *Allegro quasi Presto*) based on Papageno's famous aria *Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen* from *The Magic Flute*. Beyer's musical idiom is that of the First but the Mozart quotation is not used purely as a surreal gimmick or joke, but serves a structural purpose and provides thematic material for the whole work, which runs in at less than 10 minutes in this nicely prepared and delivered performance. It is worth noting also Beyer's expressive use of glissandi in these quartets, not to the obsessive degree of Gloria Coates, but as one technical weapon amongst many in her arsenal.

The remaining instrumental works mostly feature the piano, Beyer's own instrument. Peter Dumsday leads the way, clearly relishing the virtuosity required in the delightful miniature *Bees* (of uncertain date but is known to have originated in a teaching primer) and the concluding Sonatina in C (1943), practically Beyer's last completed composition, written in a lighter, more tonal style which suggests to me that she was stylistically on the verge of a whole new phase in her career when Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis ended her life. The Sonatina's four epigrammatic sections form a quiet and enchanting piece, even with elements of pastiche. With Kim Bastin, Dumsday gives a fine account of the tough but exhilarating *Movement for 2 pianos* (1936), dedicated to Henry Cowell: a vivid variation-form study in several Cowellesque piano techniques (clusters, not least), where Beyer approaches the sound-world of Carl Ruggles. Bastin partners Nicholas Synot in the remarkable (and also quirky) *Movement for double-bass and piano* of the same year, a piece in which one can almost hear the liberation of the bulky string bass from the depths. In its also brief four-minute span, the string writing achieves some affecting lyricism, including in unaccompanied passages.

Beyer adopted a noticeably different approach when setting words, the musical lines clearer, more overtly dialogues between the participants, wheth-

[1] Indeed, she named an early piano suite *Dissonant Counterpoint*; this was the first work of hers I encountered in Sara Cahill's pioneering 1999 recording, along with the very un-Hindemithian *Gebrauchs-Musik* suite and piano music by another crucial influence, Ruth Crawford (New Albion NA114).

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er a duo or a choir. The solo songs – performed with passion and skill by soprano Merlyn Quaife, accompanied by clarinettist Craig Hill – date from 1934; the group of three on disc 1 set Beyer's own texts in her idiosyncratic English. *Total Eclipse* is a mini-tone poem opening calmly but rising to a powerful climax. *To Be* is a scherzo by comparison, simple and immediate in effect, preceding the transcendent *Universal—Local*, which reminded me of Ives. *Ballad of the Star-Eater* (1934), again for soprano and clarinet, uses a poem by one of Beyer's friends, Bonario Wilkinson Overstreet. The *Lento* of the First Quartet aside, this is the longest single span on either CD and incorporates the main elements of her atonal idiom. The a cappella chorus *The Federal Music Project* is another high point of the programme, its repeated major-second refrain 'I know' providing an anchor for Beyer's free-form lines. This is another forward-looking piece, reminding me of the general style of post-war Nordic choral music, which of course post-dates it by some 20 or 30 years, something repeated in the Three Pieces for Choir (1937). The opening *The Main Deep* is a remarkable setting of a text by James Stephens, full of susurrations and slides, almost entirely *pianissimo*. Again the central piece of the group is a scherzando inspiration, *The Composers Forum Laboratory*, a joyous invocation (with Kim Bastin accompanying) on being a composer: the text is Beyer's own. The final *The People, Yes!* is more complex, taken from a Carl Sandburg poem. The Astra Choir's performances are committed and well prepared. New World's sound is splendid and the fulsome booklet (only in English but with complete texts) invaluable.

Mention of Gloria Coates is apt given the wider dissemination of her music, perhaps somewhat surprisingly of late, for a composer at one of the cutting edges of modern composition, on Naxos. The latest instalment to have come my way in that label's series features Coates's First (1972–3) and – I believe still – most recent symphonies, the Fourteenth (2003), coupled with one of the finest of them, No 7 (1990–1). Her obsessive use of glissandi and portamenti has effectively marginalized her works to the fringes of the repertoire, too much for regular concert-going audiences to handle and the preserve of new music die-hards and critics. Her First Symphony, presented originally as *Music on Open Strings*, remains a revelation and one of most-played works. The use of slides had not become all-pervasive, but was indicative of what could be used in the course of a single piece rather than as the basis of a whole corpus of work. Based on a Chinese scale from her former teacher Tcherepnin, which is then slowly transformed over the four movements towards a conventional Western scale and beyond, the work is not particularly symphonic and was only numbered so much later. This 1980 performance by the Siegerland Orchestra under Jorge Rotter is well-prepared, but sonically rather rough with a deal of tape hiss.

The other two performances (from 1997 and 2003) are much better, though as a work No 14 – which opens the disc – is a disappointment, in no way remotely symphonic (at least not in the conventional, developmental sense of the word). The Munich Chamber Orchestra do their best with it but this is not their finest hour, nor Coates's. Subtitled 'Symphony in Microtones', No 14 consists of three homages, to two early New England hymn composers, Supply Belcher and William Billings, plus – for reasons unexplained in the booklet – to Otto Luening. The appearance in the first two movements of hymn tunes by Belcher and Billings is surreal to say the least, and unconvincing structurally. The Seventh Symphony, though, is a more rounded structure, employing a wider range of techniques than in the other works (in the central 'Glass of Time' there is even a tune that could have come straight out of the *Sinfonia antartica*) and some real development and symphonic rhetoric (the work is dedicated 'to those who brought down the Wall IN PEACE' – Coates's capitals). The Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra's strong account is firmly propelled by Olaf Henzold. I do not particularly count myself as an admirer but this Naxos disc does present a reasonably well-balanced overview of Coates's symphonic output.

Lilian Fuchs (1902–95) was a most accomplished viola-player and teacher. The sister of violinist Joseph Fuchs (another brother, Harry, played cello in the Cleveland Orchestra for much of his professional life), Lilian was the recipient of many important viola pieces, chief amongst them Martinů's *Madrigals* for violin & viola and Viola Sonata, as well as works by Rieti and Quincy Porter amongst others. Fuchs also composed, and her granddaughter Jeanne Mallow has recorded her complete music for unaccompanied viola as a Naxos twofer using Fuchs' own rich-sounding Gasparo da Salò instrument. Very pleasant listening it makes, too. Fuchs (whose birth year is sometimes incorrectly stated as 1901) made several recordings with the instrument; that of the Bach Cello Suites in viola transcriptions in the 1950s was particularly influential and much praised by Casals, who invited her to perform at Prades. Fuchs was a renowned teacher as well as performer and her three sets of studies were written as much with a didactic purpose as for musical expression. However, in all of them she married the two aims satisfactorily, producing works that

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have considerable interest for the general listener as well as challenges for the player.

The *12 Caprices* (1950) are the hardest technically, and drew much praise from critics and teachers alike at the time. The musical style is fluent and tonal, neo-classical in its frequent reminiscences of Bach – especially in the unhurried (but irresistible) momentum – although harmonically more late-19th century than early 18th. Yet there is a mid-20th century sensibility audibly at work in the music so that it does not sound outmoded in the way that, for example, the late works of Saint-Saëns tend to do. The middle-difficulty *16 Fantasy Etudes* (1959) tend to be slightly larger (their mean timespan is almost 2' 40" whereas the *Caprices* average out at 2' 20" and the *Characteristic Studies* at just over 2') and the best of them are of equal musical weight to the Caprices. As a set for continuous concert/domestic listening there are perhaps one or two too many (12 is the optimum for a good reason) but the calm and beautiful sound-world they inhabit is a delight to encounter. The *15 Characteristic Studies* (1965) present the fewest technical challenges and play like a set of variations of miniatures. Only the three-movement *Sonata Pastorale* (whose date of composition is given on the cover as 1956, though Mallow's note states it was premièred three years before that!) was intended for full concert use and occupies an expressive and harmonic world somewhere between Reger and Ysaÿe, but without a trace of Hindemith, whose own unaccompanied viola sonatas follow different models. Fuchs's is a fine work that deserves attention and receives a reverential but finely-honed performance from her granddaughter. Naxos's sound is first rate.

Naxos, as much as New World, have been in the forefront of issues of music by women composers as their discs devoted to Coates and Fuchs as well as Joan Tower, Ellen Taafe Zwilich, Nicola Lefanu, Alla Pavlova and Margaret Brouwer – to pluck a few names out of the air – bear witness. Russian-born Pavlova is a New York resident, as were Beyer and Fuchs before her, and her first four symphonies feature on two Naxos discs (8.557157 and 8.557566). I found those disappointing; for all their craftsmanship and orchestral resource, Pavlova's style is not really suited to the cut and thrust of symphonic argument. Naxos's latest release features a substantial 45-minute suite from her ballet *Sulamith* (2003–4) and two other orchestral works, a brief *Monolog* for violin and strings (sweetly played by Yaroslav Krasnikov) and the suite *Old New York Nostalgia* (1994–5), originally written for piano but orchestrated in 1999. Pavlova revised the scoring in 2002 for 2 saxophones, trumpet, percussion and strings. To be blunt, I doubt the music merits such repeated care. At best, it is pleasant light music with a curiously Carl Davis-like sound that would not be out of place as the soundtrack to an old movie. As a concert work occupying the forefront of one's attention it is just not strong enough. The music drifts along in generally moderately paced tempi (even when slower or quicker they still feel moderate) with several nice tunes but no really engaging incidents. *Monolog* is the same, though much shorter, and both share a rather saccharine musical atmosphere. The romantic plot of *Sulamith* concerns King Solomon's love for the peasant girl Sulamith, the machinations of his queen, Astis, to either win back his love or usurp him from the throne, and Sulamith's final sacrifice to save the King. A dramatic tale reflected not at all in Pavlova's refined score. It does not strike me as particularly danceable, either. The Moscow Philharmonic play well without sounding in any way stretched.

Margaret Brouwer's music (subject of a New World release which I reviewed several years back in these pages) is another matter, and full of dramatic and musical events that seem to elude Pavlova. Her percussion concerto, *Aurolucent Circles* (2002), was written for and premièred by Evelyn Glennie, who is the soloist on Naxos's vibrant recording of it with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic conducted by Gerard Schwarz. According to the composer, the title is intended to evoke the Aurora Borealis as well as the 'sparkling and lucent sound of so many of the percussion instruments used in the concerto'. The atmospheric opening of the first movement, *Floating in Dark Space*, gives way to alternating passages of slow- and fast-paced music culminating in a swift coda based (according to Brouwer) on the Fibonacci Sequence. The central *Stardance* is an iridescent fantasia full of delicate sonorities and interplay between Glennie and soloists within the orchestra. The concluding *Cycles and Currents* again starts quietly but builds into a toccata-like movement that brings the concerto to a rousing close.

The couplings demonstrate that the concerto's instrumental verve is no one-off. *Mandala* (2001) is a short diptych inspired by a sand painting of a mandala created by Tibetan monks in Peterborough, New Hampshire, near the MacDowell Artists Colony where Brouwer happened to be staying. The work opens with a trombone melody based on an old Dutch psalm-setting (the brass are placed antiphonally in concert) which is the source material for the whole work. The developments of this tune evoke the circles of the mandala and in the second part are offset by whispered chanting from the orchestral members. On

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a larger scale is *Remembrances*, composed in 1996 as a memorial to the musician Robert Stewart. Rather Coplandesque in places, this 15-minute tone poem is much more than a simple elegy and its positive ending make it a most uplifting piece. So, in very different ways, are *SIZZLE* (2000) and *Pulse* (2003), two orchestral fanfares – the one commissioned as part of the Fanfares Project, a massive commissioning programme for women composers, the other to mark the 50th anniversary of the Roanaoke Symphony Orchestra. Both are intriguing, rhythmically vital and assertive pieces that would make hugely effective concert openers. These invigorating live performances, recorded in the wonderful Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, in 2004 are captured in superb sound and are thoroughly recommended.

Folk culture suffuses the music of Hyo-Shin-Na (b. 1959), a Korean-born composer resident in the US. Like the Chinese-born Chen Yi or Cambodian-American Chinary Ung (both of whom I have written about in previous issues), Na's output encompasses works for Western and Oriental (normally Korean, but occasionally Japanese) instruments, or ensembles combining both. However, there is no separation here into cosy, neat pigeonholes: all the pieces in some measure mix Western music-making or instruments with Korean performance techniques (or vice versa) while the expressive impetus may come (as on this disc) from the Arctic, Chinese paintings, a Chilean song or the landscapes and people of America. This global cross-pollination can be heard explicitly in her *Ocean/Shore* series, the first number in which was composed in 2002, pitting the Korean oboe (the *piri*) with a Western chamber orchestra. The second dates from a year later and is scored for clarinet and string trio. Yet this staple of European chamber music is made to sound in a most un-European way, producing a truly integrated yet alien soundscape inspired by North American Indian songs and the vistas of coastal California. The ensemble is used mostly as a single entity, with little interplay between the instruments in the conventional sense, although the clarinet does assume, at length, a dominant position. More tellingly, approximately half-way through the cellist (here Nina Hitz, clearly possessed of a fine speaking voice) is required to recite a poem from Charles Reznikoff's *By the Well of Living and Seeing*, the subject of which is blind intolerance. This kind of juxtaposition of unrelated elements is typical of Na's work and she brings it off rather stylishly.

From evocation one then encounters the real thing, a work written for a Korean ensemble of

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komungo (a 6-string zither), *piri*, *taegeum* (a bamboo flute), *haegeum* (a 2-string fiddle), *kayageum* (a 12-string zither) and *changgu* (a drum). Musically, *All the Noises in the World* (2006) is entirely original, however, and while precisely notated bears an improvisational character (as well as requiring the musicians to make sounds without their instruments) that needs acute co-ordination from each player to get right. The piece takes its name and expressive profile from an Inuit folk legend about a place where noises gather to be heard, and the result is remarkably serene and atmospheric. There is serenity of a sort in the largest item here, the piano solo *Walking, Walking* (2004) which takes its 'inspiration and basic musical materials', according to the composer, from a song by the Chilean composer Victor Jara, particularly its final lines:

> For how long have I been arriving
> How long ago did I leave
> How long have I walked
> Since when have I been walking?

Its Zen-like precept is the notion of movement, of walking between points, with no essential destination in view. Here the journey is of paramount interest and the work – which is in no way aleatoric – could end at any time. It so happens Na has mapped it out across 25 eventful yet somehow sometimes eventless minutes; as with any trip the landscape and the emotional response to it is varied, sometimes busy, sometimes not. It is occasionally said of monothematic works that they risk monotony if they continue too long, but attain monumentality if they persist: *Walking, Walking* is neither monothematic, although all its lines derive from Jara's song not unlike free variations, nor monotonous, although expressively single-minded. If the work is perhaps a touch too long, it does not stretch out to the epic, remaining a piece that is beguiling in its even tread and often gentle expression. Its manner, not too far removed from the 'New Simplicity', needs determined attention to avoid becoming the background accompaniment to a reverie. Thomas Schultz plays it nicely indeed.

The string quartet *Ten Thousand Ugly Ink Blots* (2006) is again in a single-span, fantasia-like form where West and East meet, yet this time do not merge. Perhaps it is due to the medium of strings alone, but I have to say I warmed much less to it than its companions. The often quiet, slow writing seems less evocative than in, say, *Ocean/Shore 2*, and in places a touch dreary. Only in the final section (roughly the final quarter) does anything memorable occur, when the pace picks up for a time. This is not to deny the accomplishment of the Ives Quartet's performance which, as with all the performances on the disc, is excellent, but this piece just did not communicate to me.

Anne LeBaron (b. 1953) hails from Baton Rouge in Louisiana and early on aligned herself with the progressive trends in modern American music, the roots of which stretch back to Beyer and the group around Cowell (even to including their interest in American 'vernacular' musics); Harry Partch is another formative influence, as was Ligeti, with whom she studied in the 1970s. LeBaron is something of a magpie of a composer, mixing styles and genres as she sees fit for each work. Scored for solo soprano and an ensemble of nine players (who also have to double as singers), *Pope Joan* (2000) is a mix of chamber opera and dance suite, commissioned by Dance Alloy and the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble, who premièred it in October 2000 with choreography by Mark Taylor. Kristin Norderval (herself a composer) created the part and revives it in this concert version with a group of instrumentalists, many of whom belong to California's pioneering E.A.R. Unit. *Pope Joan* is divided into five unequal sections, each based on a poem sequence by award-winning author Enid Shomer (published in *This Close to the Earth*, Arkansas University Press, 1992). Collectively they reinterpret the shadowy medieval legend of Pope Joan, a Spanish woman who – allegedly – masqueraded (at the behest of a lover) as a cleric in the mid-9th century and was elected Pope (supposedly as John VIII, although the official pope of this designation ruled some decades later). Giving birth in the streets of Rome during a Church procession, she was unmasked and promptly stoned to death by the outraged populace.[2]

The poems in the sequence are the basis for the opera's five-section structure, the first being 'To Those Who Shall Discover Me' in which the female pontiff sets out on her autobiographical sketch – this is a work expressed defiantly in the first person – and of her hopes for the future, primarily for her unborn child. The second section, 'After Love' is the most sunlit and positive. LeBaron's style here employs a species of New Simplicity with post-modern tonality and some chugging wind writing reminiscent of Michael Nyman. The bright mood persists into the longest section, the central (and somewhat misnamed) 'Hymn', a highly complex piece of writing drawing a suitably subtle response from the composer.

[2] Her existence is highly contentious: most scholars refute the story out of hand, although it may merely be historically misplaced (the time of the anti-popes in the 12th century is more likely) and might indeed have evolved from satirical anti-papal street theatre (much as, in England, the tale of Robin Hood took root from anti-Norman entertainments amongst oppressed Saxons).

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Roughly at the half-way point, Joan's gaze turns outward, and towards the close of 'Hymn', forebodings cloud the music, finding expression in the ensuing 'Elegy' through fears for her child. The finale, 'Sestina of Visions', moves into highly contrasted musical territory; the singer reverts to speech for the main part (depicting some nightmarish dreams) and the musical flow is disrupted by a recurring, brash jig-like passage with pop drum beat that may perhaps represent the mindless Roman mob. At first, my reaction to this was very negative, but on repeated hearings I have understood LeBaron's intention here. I do not like it, but I think expressively she is right. I am less comfortable with the words put into Joan's mouth by Enid Shomer at the close, that at the end she could embrace the Black Mass; however questionable Joan's motives may have been in her masquerade and elevation to the pontificate, that seems to me a step too far.[3]

The performance is splendid if a little rough-and-ready in places; that of the cantata *Transfiguration* (2003) even better. This concert work does have its theatrical elements – ideally the singer should be led on stage blindfold and she plays additional percussion while the three instrumentalists again become impromptu singers in the central section, 'Deconstruction'. The text was assembled by LeBaron from re-ordered verses from a poem by the influential modernist writer Djuna Barnes (1892–1982), into which are interspersed phrases by Picasso, the Bible, Margery of Kempe and Dante Alighieri. The three sections – Prologue, Deconstruction, Reconstruction – treat the texts differently, with a Picasso phrase in the Prologue, the full range including the re-sequenced Barnes poem in 'Deconstruction' and the Barnes poem alone, in the correct sequence in 'Reconstruction'. Together they form an epic entity for a quartet of soprano, flute, harp and percussion, played here by Lucy Shelton (whose recording of Kats-Chernin's *Eliza Aria* has become so pervasive), Camilla Hoitenga (whose Saariaho recordings have earned deserved critical plaudits) June Han and William Trigg. The performance is thrilling and the delivery of the overlapping texts compelling; it completes a remarkable slow-burner of a disc.

[3] In an e-mail to the author of 1 June 2008, Enid Shomer commented: 'The Black Mass is Joan's last resort, for she, like Satan, has been expelled from her own heaven, that is, the church. Anyway, the choice seemed obvious to me … the final poem, is a sestina and the form is crucial to the completion of the suite and the poem and the Black Mass idea. It is her last utterance, a poem of hallucination and desperation. While I spent much time on research, my goal was to create an authentic voice for Pope Joan, so that was the challenge of it, and the beauty of it, I think, to give this woman (whose story I believe is more than simply myth, probably based in fact) a voice'.

Victoria Borisova-Ollas (b. 1969) first came to international prominence when her short symphonic poem *Wings of the Wind* (1997) took 2nd Prize in the 1998 International Masterprize competition. At the time the work (which as a finalist was recorded by the LSO under Daniel Harding on CD and distributed for public vote with the *BBC Music Magazine*) was described, I think misleadingly, as 'minimalist-influenced'. There is far more Sibelius in the score than Adams, Reich or Riley put together; the use of tonality is really the only compositional feature that it shares with minimalism. The 'minimalist influenced' tag has, curiously, stuck with her, and is repeated in the notes (written by Sofia Nyblom in conjunction with the composer) to Phono Suecia's disc devoted entirely to her work. Here Borisova-Ollas manifestly shows herself to be a maximalist, rather: her scores – often visually inspired (as with Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakov and Skryabin she is a synaesthete) – are piled high with incident. In *Wings of the Wind* the impetus was also literary, from Psalm 104 ('He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind'), making this one of many works in her oeuvre bearing a religious connexion. Rondin's new account shaves well over a minute off Harding's version, the gain mostly in the central section which is taken at quite a lick.

The largest work on the disc is her First Symphony, which bears the subtitle *The Triumph of Heaven* (2001), and has a colourific origin by virtue of the colour yellow – which to the composer bears a 'latent menace' – and references to it in an Osip Mandelstam poem of 1917 ('… the yellowness of heaven is alarming') as well as a painting by Kasimir Malevich from ten years earlier. What results is a dynamic, tripartite symphony with texturally varied outer movements embodying the conflict between mechanical evil and the human soul's yearning to survive. The highly restrained, funereal central adagio (the movements have no titles or tempo indications) in part derives its character from a passage in the Book of Ezekiel and partly to the destruction of the World Trade Centre; the time-frame of reference of the work as a whole, which is more overtly Russian in tone than most of her pieces, plays out from Revolutionary Russia to 9/11. The volatile saxophone quartet *Roosters in Love* (1999) derives from a set of paintings by Chagall, with klezmer resonances echoing the rural Jewish culture that suffused his art. Each painting (*Rooster in Love*; *Grandfather Clock with Blue Wing* and *Solitude*) inspired one section of the quartet. The opening is showy and brash, the conclusion a quiet, reflective conversation; in between the picture of the grandfather clock sparked off a fantasy of

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'reminiscences of the past that were shattered in the Revolution'. The Rascher Quartet play it with élan.

Borisova-Ollas is audibly a thinker in sound, who hears (sees) the tonal and textural elements of her orchestral music in her head before setting pen to paper. This is manifest in every page of the orchestral scores, but curiously, when writing chamber and instrumental music she tends to adopt a different approach, not using colour as a starting point. *Roosters in Love*, despite its origin in some of Chagall's vivid art, does not possess quite the same compositional verve. *Im Klosterhofe* (1999; to give it the full title … *im Klosterhofe* – both forms are given, confusingly, in the booklet) is an unusual duet (or double duet, rather) for cello, piano and tape, each instrument duetting with their tape *alter egos* as much as each other. The title translates as 'in cloister yards' and was suggested by a verse of Rilke (from his *Book of Pilgrimages*) after the poet's trip to Russia. It is given a compelling performance by Leif Segerstam's daughter Pia and Christophe Sirodeau. Only the brief final item, *Silent Island* (2000), eschews any obvious Russian connexion. It was written for Thalia Myers's 'Spectrum' series and is played here by Eva Sidén. Together the works present a fascinating portrait of one of the most accomplished composers working in Northern Europe – and she is not yet 40.

Of all the labels currently operating, Lorelt is at the leading edge of music-making by women, with the majority of its releases featuring female composers. London-based Marietta Veulens, despite the Netherlandish/Belgian-sounding name, is a Cuban pianist composer, writing fusion/crossover music infused with Afro-Caribbean rhythms and Cuban popular song built on a solid European classical base, rooted in the best of the 19th-century salon tradition. Unlike the music of some of her contemporaries, Veulens's is rooted in traditional harmony (both classical and jazz) and direct in appeal to, I would imagine, a very broad audience, although I think lovers of classical music will warm to her pieces a little more than those of jazz. The title track, *De algunas zonas del alma*, translated here as 'From Passages of the Soul') is a soulful and evocative diptych based on the Cuban song form, the Son. Both pieces sound extemporized, a quality of much else of Veulens' music.

Pairs of pieces, or works in two parts, are another common feature, with three of the six compositions on offer structured in this way. *Musica de los niños invisibles* ('Music of the Invisible Children'; no dates are given for any of the items) is one such, according to the composer's brief booklet note descriptive of 'the resonant memory of childhood … expressing an inner innocence, tangible and invisible … an appeal to the sincere wisdom of Innocence'. Veulens notes additionally the use of 'conceptual elements of "naïve" visual art and minimalism' and the latter has undoubtedly had an impact on her style overall (much more so than is claimed for Borisova-Ollas). For all the directness and simplicity of utterance in her music Veulens also has a view on the value of conceptual art and all these works clearly have extra-musical associations, whether the meditative depiction of church bells in *Campanas consonantes* ('Consonant Bells'), the intimacy of loneliness in *Desde la ventana (Devastacion)* ('From the Window – Devastation') or the more philosophically minded *La musica de la No guerra* ('Music of No War'), about which she writes in the booklet to greater (but still not great) length than all the other pieces bar the barnstorming final *Tambores de invierno* ('Winter Drums') in which Afro-Caribbean elements resurface to thrilling effect. The performances compel attention and, as usual, Lorelt's recording is first-rate.

Guy Rickards

HARRI VUORI: Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2. Hyvinkää Orchestra c. Tuomas Pirilä. TOCC 0087.

The Finnish contemporary music scene is thriving. Saariaho, Lindberg, Rautavaara and Salonen, amongst many others, ensure that fingers continue to point to Finland on the musical map, and have rendered any once-inevitable comparisons with Sibelius no longer the sole necessity for understanding the national music. Despite this, Lahti-born Harri Vuori felt unable to escape Sibelius's legacy on his first foray into that most Sibelian of genres, the symphony. Initially reluctant to write a symphony, Vuori confesses that 'in perhaps a somewhat Sibelian Romantic way, I have always considered a symphony to be something of a musical credo, a synthesis into which a composer pours his most sacred of thoughts and all of his technical competence, avoiding any hint of shallowness'.[4] Indeed, Vuori's First and Second Symphonies (2003 and 2007 respectively) became inevitabilities as the composer refined his technique in the orchestral works from *Kri* (1988) to *Myyttisiä kuvia* (2002). Orchestral music, as noted by Kimmo Korhonen, is the medium by which Vuori's rich sonorities are best revealed. Vuori's

[4] Harri Vuori, quoted in Martin Anderson, 'Harri Vuori: A Profile', *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2* [CD Booklet] (London: Toccata Classics, 2008).

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particular soundworld began to absorb modernist influences while he studied at the Sibelius Academy under Heininen, Hämeeniemi and Rautavaara. Further study at IRCAM allowed him to develop his musical language that, while not spectral as such, is influenced by the French spectralists in terms of a reliance on harmonies derived from the overtone series, and a concern for colour, timbre and texture, all of which are intoxicating ingredients of both symphonies.

Elsewhere, Vuori has declared of his music that 'the texture is consciously created, but the overall form is a mystery'.[5] Although the dense textures steal the focus in the First Symphony, the work, more unusually for Vuori, adheres to conventional symphonic architecture: a sonata-form first movement, a *lento* ternary second, a scherzo and trio, and a synthetic coda. While it is perhaps too simplistic to say that the lengthy first movement provides the source from which the rest of the symphony's material is derived, one is certainly left with this impression thanks to the pervasive colouristic devices it introduces to form the themes and unify the movements. Vuori's predilection for falling *portamenti*, which finds its full realization in the second theme of the first movement, permeates the entire work, while swelling pedal tones, overtone flourishes, repeated notes passing between instruments and bubbling accompaniments are equally omnipresent. Motivic 'hints' throughout the texture pre-empt the full statement of a new theme in almost every case: for example, the syncopated rhythms of the third movement culminate in the Karelian shamanic dance of the fourth, which alternates between 5/8 and 4/4. The sense that the thematic material is not so much unfolded as caught up in an elaborate, multi-layered system of hinting, results in an often overwhelming textural density. For all the exciting orchestral effects and vivid colours, there seems to be little reward in terms of substance for the disproportionately large effort required of the listener.

The thematic material is developed much more convincingly in the Second Symphony: Vuori is seemingly more comfortable with the less formal architecture of five continuous movements. The entire work is based around two themes and a 'polyrhythmic figure' (conductor Tuomas Pirilä's term) that frequently interrupts the music. Both themes – the first of which is a *non legato*, rhythmically regular series of gentle attacks, and the second a more lyrical melody – evolve in character and shape as they intertwine throughout the piece, until their dissolution in the fifth movement: a mirror of the first movement as the piece ends with the repeated E heard in the introduction. The brighter harmonies, though still based on the overtone series, and generally more sparse textures that allow for instrumental solos as well as occasional bursts of the multi-layered tumult that forms the First Symphony, make Vuori's Second a less demanding, enjoyable listen.

Performed by the Hyvinkää Orchestra, for which the Second Symphony was commissioned and where Vuori is currently composer in residence, one can assume this is an exemplary first recording. The force and energy of Vuori's 'reconciliation between analytical Modernism and intuitive Romanticism' is handled confidently and dynamically by Pirilä, and the contrasting colours of Vuori's sonic palette and range of instrumental timbres translate superbly in this recording.[6] One final point of note, the accompanying CD booklet to this Toccata Classics recording is characteristically comprehensive, with invaluable contributions from Martin Anderson, Vuori and Pirilä to guide the listening.

Emma Gallon

GEORGE CRUMB: 'Complete Crumb Edition, Vol. 11'. *Variazioni* for orchestra; *Otherworldly Resonances* (rev. 2005); *Night of the Four Moons*; *The Sleeper*; Three Early Songs (1947). Odense SO c. Paul Mann; Susan Grace and Alice Rybak (pnos); Jan DeGaetani (mezzo), The Aeolian Chamber Players, Gilbert Kalish (pno). Bridge 9253.

'American Orchestral Song'. VIRGIL THOMSON: *The Feast of Love*. JOHN ALDEN CARPENTER: *Water-Colors*. ROY HARRIS: *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun*. CHARLES T. GRIFFES: *Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan*, op. 10. HORATIO PARKER: *Cahál Mór of the Wine-Red Hand*. Patrick Mason (bar), Odense SO c. Paul Mann. Bridge 9254.

Outside the USA George Crumb is probably best known for two works composed in 1970, *Ancient Voices of Children* and *Black Angels*. With Crumb's 80th birthday impending (autumn 2009), the 'Complete Crumb Edition' should alert the wider world to the full extent of his output. The pieces in volume 11 reflect a typical blend of tradition and innovation.

[5] Tapio Nevanlinna, *Harri Vuori in Profile*, Finnish Music Information Centre, http://www.fimic.fi, retrieved on 1 September 2008.

[6] Harri Vuori, 'My First and Second Symphonies', *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2* [CD Booklet].

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Crumb has written several works exploiting the antiphonal resources of two pianos. *Otherworldly Resonances*, sub-titled 'Tableaux, Book II', comprises three movements in its enlarged version of 2005. The first movement, dating from 2002, is built on the analogy of the double helix. A four-note musical axis, which Crumb calls his 'ostinato mistico', describes a circular motion around E flat. The adroitness with which he manipulates the four-note figure is capped by its transposition at the tritone. Imitation plays an atmospheric part in the outer sections of the second movement ('Celebration and Ritual') – testimony to Crumb's fondness of bell music. A metallic tapping on the piano crossbeams drives the middle section's bolero rhythms. The short finale ('Palimpsest') is made up of three superimposed musical layers, the first a shadowy series of bass chords, the second evoking fragments of the hymn 'Bringing in the Sheaves'. Crumb's highest layer is the most clear-cut of the three. Not only technical accomplishment but also a pervading sense of mystery is displayed by the amplified piano duo Quattro Mani, for whom *Resonances* was written.

Crumb has composed mainly for voice and small instrumental ensembles. The full orchestra is used sparingly in his early *Variazioni*, performed here in a welcome new recording by the Odense Symphony Orchestra under Paul Mann. A masterpiece in the original sense of the term, the work consists of an 'Introduction e Tema', six variation movements and three fantasias, the last of these incorporating a final coda. The orchestral devices of the Second Viennese School are obvious influences – although the first variation's antiphonal strings have a model in Reger. Steven Bruns' booklet notes include some comments Crumb made during the recording. Thus a high E in the violins was identified with the 'mad note' in Smetana's E minor Quartet. Of a quote from Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite,* Crumb drily remarked: 'Suddenly the music gets very good here!' Stravinsky, Bartók and Dallapiccola are further influences. Fantasia II features record producer David Starobin in his other incarnation as a mandolin virtuoso.

The complementary works on this disc introduce the celebrated voice of the late Jan DeGaetani. Two – *The Sleeper*, after Edgar Allan Poe, and Three Early Songs – are heard in concert renditions given with Gilbert Kalish in 1987, two years before DeGaetani's death. The Lorca settings that make up *Night of the Four Moons*, with their electric cello, banjo, alto flute and exotic percussion, offer an elegiac response to the 1969 space mission. The Crumb Edition is the richer for these classic performances.

The American orchestral songs unearthed by baritone Patrick Mason have received few if any performances down the years. Three of the five pieces could be classed as one-movement cantatas. The most recent, Virgil Thomson's *The Feast of Love* (1964), sets the composer's translation of anonymous Latin verses from the second or fourth century AD. The style is the last word in cool, with its elastic rhythms and its diaphanous scoring for woodwind, strings, harp, glockenspiel and cymbal.

Roy Harris devised vocal melodies to match Walt Whitman's declamatory text in *Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun*, composed in 1959. The words are deeply ambiguous. For much of the first section, Whitman expresses a yearning for the 'primal sanities' of Nature and a 'rural domestic life'. But this, he eventually reveals, is the quest of a city-dweller 'rack'd by the war-strife'. The second section turns the sentiment on its head, Whitman now rejecting the 'silent sun' and 'blossoming buckwheat fields' in favour of noisy Manhattan crowds. Harris's music recognizes the poem's complexity.

Although remembered primarily as an organist and teacher, the late-Romantic composer Horatio Parker contributed an oratorio to the 1899 Three Choirs Festival and won a New York Met prize for an opera. His *Cahál Mór of the Wine-Red Hand* (1893) – described as a rhapsody for baritone and orchestra – exploits the lurid imagery of the 19th-century Irish versifier James Clarence Mangan to impressive effect.

Sets of songs by John Alden Carpenter and Charles T. Griffes date from the time of the First World War. Both sets illustrate that period's fascination with the exotic, Griffes's *Five Poems of Ancient China and Japan* displaying his affinity with French musical contemporaries. Carpenter's at times positively jazzy *Water-Colors* draws on four Chinese poems translated by Herbert Giles. The present version with chamber forces is a 1918 reworking of the original piano accompaniments. Here as elsewhere on the CD, Patrick Mason's persuasive singing is well supported by the Odense Symphony under their British chief conductor.

Peter Palmer

GIBBS: *Odysseus* Symphony. DYSON: *Four Songs for Sailors*. Susan Gritton (sop), Mark Stone (bar), London Oriana Choir, BBC Concert Orchestra c. David Drummond. Dutton Digital CDLX 7201.

Cecil Armstrong Gibbs (1889–1960) championed the spirit of amateur music-making in England in the inter-war years, not only by pro-

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viding a prodigious stream of performable (if sometimes unspectacular) new works for choral societies, schools and ensembles, but also by his indefatigable energy as an adjudicator, educator and organizer of many festivals, concerts and events. It was in many ways a golden age: the final flowering of home-made talent and artistic enterprise in an unhurried world on the eve of the television era and the birth of instant mass entertainment and celebrity culture. Gibbs is fondly remembered in his native Essex, and the Gibbs Society maintains an attractive website[7] and recently (September 2008) held a three-day festival of his music in Danbury church. There are many songs and much church music, some of which remains in parish choir repertoires. Gibbs's natural facility as a composer was the catalyst for the fine balance he struck between satisfying the demands of popular and aesthetic tastes, and the hour-long *Odysseus* Symphony (1938) is a perfect blend of each.

Despite its outward lightness of touch this is a serious, dramatic work drawing on several episodes from the Homeric story of Odysseus and his return from the Trojan war as told through the poetry of Morduant Currie (1894–1978), a friend of the Gibbs family. It is not a 'Merrie England' piece, but draws on many influences: Stanford, Vaughan Williams, Boughton, and Dyson too. Despite the length of each of the four movements, Gibbs presents much contrast and variety. The long scherzo section, predominantly for male chorus, is like an extended sea-shanty, such as Roger Quilter might have written. It is clearly great fun to sing; a slight pity, therefore, that Dutton decided not to print the text, since although the narrative is reasonably well-chronicled in the sleeve notes, it isn't always easy to keep abreast of the finer points. But the music's directness and listenable qualities more than compensate, and the text can be downloaded from the website. The final movement, 'The Return', is on the grand scale. The Dyson songs display all of his serious and measured qualities.

This CD is a mid-price bargain. The very able performers give a heartfelt account of themselves and Michael Dutton's usual high engineering standards prevail. Lewis Foreman's comment on the Gibbs in his sleevenotes – 'they don't make 'em like that any more' – sums it up. For this is quite a nostalgic CD. Hurrah for that! We need more, not less nostalgia, and devoid of sentimentality too, please, which this music most thankfully is. Indeed it has all the qualities of an open-top Alvis motor car, complete with walnut dashboard, leather seats and wind in your hair. Ah, they don't make 'em like that any more!

Bret Johnson

[7] see: www.armstronggibbs.com/festival. The website lists all recordings and there is a concert diary, a complete list of works and details of events. Click on the link to download the text of *Odysseus*.

AHMED ADNAN SAYGUN: Sonata for violin and piano, op. 20; *Demet*, suite for violin and piano, op. 33. ÖZKAN MANAV*: Face-to-Face with Saygun: Proliferations on Five Pieces from 'Modal Music'* **.** BABÜR TONGUR*:* Sonata for Solo Violin 'In Memorian: Resat Nuri Iyicil'. Hande Özyürek (vln), Uwe Brandt (pno). Kalan Music.

Hande Özyürek's album, entitled *Face to Face with Saygun*, by Kalan Music stands out as one of the rare but important activities commemorating Ahmed Adnan Saygun in the 100th anniversary of his birth, 2007. The album, in which German pianist Uwe Brandt accompanies Özyürek, also has a significance as the first album which records both of Saygun's works written for violin and piano. Besides, the album has an importance as a collection of Saygun's works along with solo violin pieces by the contemporary Turkish composers Özkan Manav and Babür Tongur, who were his former students. Generally speaking, what attracts attention most in Özyürek's interpretation is – apart from her high technical capability – her sophisticated expression of musical sentences by separating them masterfully. It should be stated that the interpretation of the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1940), which has a wide French influence, is played with a clear tone and firm intonation.

In comparison with the Sonata for Violin and Piano, *Demet* (1956) seems to have an influence of folk music, more than European concert music, which helps performers with its interpretation. In the opening Prelude, the violinist manages to separate the musical sentences, which the composer wrote in order to display the performer's ability to improvise without losing intonation, playing the rhythms intricately and with a good tone. Reminiscent of an *'uzunhava'* and with a feeling of improvisation, this movement occasionally requires *rubato* where the music needs an expansion. In 'Horon', which is the most dynamic, lively and primitive moment of the suitet, the violinist presents this liveliness without losing dynamism from the beginning to the end of the moment. Hence the virtuosity of the violinist is perceived effectively here.

Besides being a composer of the 20th century, Saygun's musical approach does not break its connexions with the approach of previous periods. Thus it needs an intensively dramatic perform-

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ance, and this characteristic is strengthened in such works with increased influence of folk music. Furthermore, the rhythmically monotonous minimalism which became more pervasive in the second half of the last century makes it hard to interpret music that requires more drastic and sharp accents, almost a Romantic/Post-Romantic dramatic effect, as Saygun's music does. This is highlighted particularly in the second movement of *Demet*, 'Horon', and the second half of the Sonata – which is a horon as well. In these moments, playing the accents of the 7/8 measure at the beginning creates a minimalist effect. However, not only the beginning of the triplet, which is the only *aksak* (odd) section of the measure, but all the groups, should be played with more accent. Thus the rhythmical expression could come forward.

'Zeybek', which is a slow dance, seems to be the hardest for the violinist. Although small musical ideas are performed, the successful integrity seen in the other works are less. In the 'Kastamonian Dance' movement, based on 'Sepetçiolu', a folk song and dance of Kastamonu, Özyürek improvises more successfully, unlike his *rubatos* of the Prelude. Özyürek's performance of this movement is masterly, with a pleasant, mild and naive expression, beautifully phrased. Considering the suite as a whole – not only the *parlando rubato* passages – the pianist seems to play the musical sentences with additional beats and interprets the transitions in a way that does not support the violinist's musicality.

The Sonata for violin and piano was written by Saygun at an earlier period, and french influence is more pronounced than in *Demet*. In the modal organization throughout the work, the overlapping usage of Greek modes and chromaticism are used intensely, beside Turkish *makams* (modes) and pentatonicism. The opening Andante, in form a sonata-allegro, is the longest moment of the Sonata. Its French influence probably helped the pianist to comprehend the music better. Thus, violin and piano display a harmonic synergy in this movement which is hard to express: the Andante is played with a more exquisite musical expression and wider dynamics – required in Saygun's music– than *Demet*. Hence, though relatively long and hard to listen to, this moment becomes more attractive and comprehensible for the audience. Like *Demet*'s second movement, the second movement of the sonata (*molto vivo*) is also a horon, and is here performed in a similar manner. The pianist's behavior in playing the 7/8 *aksak* in the piano solo almost 2/4 – Özyürek's virtuosity stands out here – harms the duo's synergy and hinders the performance. However, at this point, it should be emphasized that Özyürek's musical and instrumental skill is so efficient that she performs well even when the synergy becomes disturbed. The Largo, a romantic song, is the best-performed movement of the Saygun works in the album, the clear melody of the violin well interpreted by Özyürek. The pianist and the violinist's synergy, crescendos and rich dynamics, opening from *pianissimo* are more effective than the first moment. The last moment, which is another sonata-allegro, is performed successfully, maintaining dynamism and energy from the beginning to the end.

Özkan Manav harmonizes his teacher Saygun's music in the work which shares its name with the album. He separates pieces from Saygun's manual on modal music, *Töresel Musiki* – in his own words he 'opens brackets' round them – and achieves this by putting the modernist writing style into a form which is acceptable for Saygun. In this work Manav abandons the effective and sustained dramatic expression – especially intense at points of cadence – that he used in orchestral works and the piano piece *Bölümler*, and prefers a more simple expression that maintains the same effectiveness. That Saygun gave an opus number (op. 40) to *Töresel Musiki* shows that he ranked this book as a musical work – not a textbook. Manav's approach to/assessment of *Töresel Musiki* is also important in giving rise to its usage in his instrumental music. Özyürek seems to play all the fragments without creating any feeling of congestion or superficiality. On the contrary, she maintains clarity, narration and integrity.

Babür Tongur's Sonata for Solo Violin, which he first dedicated to Hande Özyürek but then to Prof. Nuri Iyicil after his death, is a work of two movements, highlighting virtuosity. Occasionally displaying atonality and chromaticism, it mostly has a modal character. In the first moment, which is slow, the violinist plays long sentences with a bright tone. In the second, 'Chacona', Tongur gives the violinist an opportunity to display her virtuosity by using the instrument's wide range of technique, and Özyürek performs the movement most successfully.

Working with many contemporary composers and performers and recently giving the impression to work with more, Kalan Music / Hasan Saltık are among those deserving gratitude. Apart from the wish to hear such a dynamic violinist as Hande Özyürek, who has such high instrumental skills and wide, clear musical perception, accompanied by a pianist (such as Metin Ülkü) who has more acquaintance with Saygun's music, Özyürek's interpretation of Saygun's violin and piano works is an entirely praiseworthy one.

Zeynep Gülçin Özkişi

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TANSMAN: Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3; *Quatre Mouvements pour orchestre*. Chandos Super Audio CHSA 5065.

TANSMAN: Symphonies Nos. 4, 5 and 6 (*In Memoriam*)[1]. Chandos Super Audio CHSA 5041.

TANSMAN: Symphonies Nos. 7 (*Lyrique*), 8 (*Musique pour orchestre*), 9. Chandos Super Audio CHSA 5054. All discs by Melbourne Symphony Orchestra c. Oleg Caetani, with [1]Melbourne Chorale. Each disc available separately.

A new symphonic cycle devoted to the Pole Alexandre Tansman (1897–1986) casts welcome light on a crucial figure of the central European neo-classical revival. At least five symphonies are world première recordings and all nine of them span the years from the Paris of the 1920s, when Ravel, Stravinsky, Milhaud and *Les Six* reigned supreme, until the late 1950s. Tansman had an eventful and productive life as a musician. A greatly talented son of a prosperous and artistic Jewish family born in Lodz in the later years of Tsarist Russia, he emigrated to Paris at the age of 22. A natural networker, he quickly forged professional links with composers (Ravel, Stravinsky and Milhaud) as well as conductors (Koussevitsky and Vladimir Goldschmann) and instrumentalists. A brilliant pianist and a prodigiously prolific composer all his life (recently Gerald Hugon of the publisher Max Eschig has compiled a list of his works: the published items alone number over 260), Tansman's career enjoyed a meteoric rise in the 1920s. He visited the USA, and it was he who welcomed and introduced Gershwin to Paris. He became part of a group called *L'École de Paris*, a sort of counterpoint to *Les Six* in that it consisted of foreign musicians living in Paris, including Alexander Tcherepnin and Martinů as well as the Romanian Mihalovici. He became friendly with Charlie Chaplin who was amongst those who helped him into exile in the USA in 1941.

Tansman's Symphony No. 2 (1927: No. 1 dates from 1917, and will hopefully feature on a later recording) was premièred in Paris by Koussevitsky, who then took it to the USA for his opening season as music director of the Boston Symphony. Technically assured it most certainly is but, apart from allusions to *Petrushka*, it casts its eye backward. The Gershwinesque Symphony No. 3, for piano quartet and orchestra (1931), is Tansman's tribute to the popular culture of the jazz age.

Tansman's years in the USA (1941–46) undoubtedly influenced the music he wrote there. Three symphonies, No. 5 (1942) and Nos. 6 and 7 (both 1944) are notable for their much greater expressive breadth. No. 5 in particular is a high point. Tansman's music never quite escaped the shadow of his mentor Stravinsky (they met again in Hollywood in 1945) but the feeling of expansiveness, even in the Stravinskian scherzo, is strongly evident. The piercingly dissonant brass fanfares which open the final movement are amazing. The Sixth, too, is a lament for the suffering of his beloved France under the Nazi yoke, with a choral last movement set to the composer's own text. The Seventh, subtitled *Lyrique* and premièred in St Louis under Goldschmann in 1947, is yet another grave elegy, punctuated with bittersweet percussive interludes in which the struggle between the romantic and classic tendencies act as a metaphor for the deep conflicts within Tansman's own life.

By the time of the Eighth Symphony (subtitled *Musique pour Orchestre*) in 1948, Tansman had returned permanently to Paris. Again Stravinsky stalks its pages (Tansman had written a monograph on the composer in the same year), but there is a greater intensity of feeling, especially in the slow movement (another elegy, again rather open-textured and American, which reminded me a little of Piston and Schuman). The piece enjoyed considerable European success following its première under Kubelik in Venice in 1949. Tansman never forsook the classical symphonic model. His final symphonic essay, the Ninth of 1958, lay unperformed for nearly 50 years until this recording. Although he was by no means finished with the orchestra (another 20 years of composing lay ahead of him) this may be the piece that most truly encapsulates his musical personality: neo-baroque formats, Scriabinesque chromaticism and percussive rhythms. The *Quatre Mouvements pour Orchestre* (1968) is an especially strong example of the late Tansman style, containing many harmonic innovations and impressionistic traits.

Some of Tansman's other orchestral music has been recorded, on the defunct Koch Schwann label for example – the ballet *Bric-a-Brac*, the Cello Concerto and *Les Dix Commandements* (1979, one of his last works) – while the Violin Concerto (Olympia) may be out of print. He wrote several operas, some of which sound mouthwateringly exotic, such as *Kurdish Night* (1927) *and Sabbatai Levi, le faux messie* (1957), which he considered one of his best works; there is also an oratorio, *Isaiah le Prophète*. Naxos have recently released a CD of chamber music with clarinet (8.570235). On the strength of the other works I have heard, the symphonies are certainly not the last word, but they make up a good cross-section of Tansman's output. Well worth while exploring, with good sleeve notes and very competent performances.

Bret Johnson

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GOLDENWEISER: Piano Music, Volume I. *Skazka*, op. 39; *Sonata-Fantasia*, op. 37; *Contrapuntal Sketches*, op. 12. Jonathan Powell (pno). Toccata Classics TOCC 0044.

GALYNIN: Piano Music, Volume I. *Sonata Triad*; Suite; *Four Preludes*; *Waltz*; *Dance*; *Scherzo*; *Spanish Fantasy*; 3 Pieces from *The Tamer Tamed*; *At the Zoo*. Olga Solovieva (pno). Toccata Classics TOCC 0076.

Following on from where the Russian-oriented Olympia label stopped dead in its tracks, Martin Anderson's Toccata Classics leaves us indebted for the opportunity to discover some minor masters. Polish-born, Moscow trained Alexander Goldenweiser (1875–1961), like so many of his Russian contemporaries, combined the roles of pianist, teacher and composer – and in that order of priority, as the first volume of Jonathan Powell's survey goes to prove. Even the most substantial and surely most enduring work on the disc, Op. 12, was intended by the distinguished professor as 'a kind of textbook for the theoretical study of the contrapuntal forms'. In fact, it is much more than that. As Powell, a distinguished scholar, outlines in his splendidly detailed booklet note, its putative date of 1932 sets it down as 'the first extant twentieth-century Russian polyphonic cycle embracing all the keys'.

Goldenweiser's quirky but consistent alternation of preludes with fugues and canons sets the Bach-derived pairing of major and minor pieces in each key out of kilter, offering a rainbow of variety, though it is surely when the duo of Prelude and Fugue comes round for the fourth time, in A major and minor, that Goldenweiser strikes the most distinctive contrast between a brilliant and surprising journey around the major and the most searching minor-key fugue. The latter is indeed, as Powell clams for several of the pieces, the equal of the best in Shostakovich's op. 87 cycle. Elsewhere, much slightly furtive pleasure is to be had from Goldenweiser's roving tonalities (especially in the E flat Prelude and the capricious G major Canon) and the incorporation of Russian folk-melodic outlines adds piquancy to Nos. 5 and 16.

Toccata would have done best to start the disc with the biggest work, for neither the easy-going *Skazka* or 'Fairy Tale' of 1961, a far cry from Medtner's more inventive examples in the genre, nor the Scriabinesque chromaticism of the 1959 *Sonata-fantaziya* sound much of an individual note. Goldenweiser was no more to be blamed than Glière, though, for writing in an outmoded idiom in Soviet Russia; both, after all, reached artistic maturity at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. It has to be said, though, that Powell's somewhat dour and occasionally rather muddy piano tone does little to shed light either on these works nor on the more effervescent of the op. 12 pieces. He never puts a foot wrong note-wise, though, as far as I can tell, and he is too modest to boast of his one degree of separation from the master: Sulamita Aronovsky, one of his teachers, was in turn one of Goldenweiser's many distinguished pupils.

A sprightlier sensibility, both in the music and in the performance, is instantly to be detected as Olga Solovieva plunges into the first of Herman Galynin's sonata movements from 1939–41, reworked in the substantial *Triad* of 1963. Too chameleonic to be entirely derivative either of his teacher Shostakovich – Myaskovsky was his other mentor – or of Prokofiev, an obvious influence, this engaging music shares the lively youthfulness of both those composers' earlier pieces (Prokofiev's wartime sonatas are noted as a model, but Galynin is always closer to the Second and Third). The semitonal clashes and the wrong notes are usually kept within neoclassical bounds, though the second sonata, for all its French finesse, does seem to run out of steam at the two-thirds mark. I liked the dreamy second theme of the last, B major, Allegro, and the way Galynin integrates it into his overall scheme. All three pieces, however much overhauled, are amazing for a young man still in his teens; but that seems very much in keeping with the Russian stable of precociously talented composers.

Shades of darker things to come – Galynin underwent 're-education' after Shostakovich was outlawed in 1948, and may have suffered mental health problems for the rest of his short life – are maintained throughout the course of the 1945 Suite. While the Toccata is a more elliptical homage to Prokofiev's early specimen, there is Miaskovskyan lugubriousness in what follows, and Solovieva yokes the obsessive Aria to a hair-raisingly difficult but brilliantly despatched Finale. Hereafter the repertoire runs out of real substance – I hope there is more to come in Volume Two – with a mixed bag of juvenilia and slighter later works. The concluding Lento of the *Four Preludes* starts like one of Prokofiev's *Visions fugitives* but grows to grandiose size; the *Dance* and *Scherzo* of 1939 are perfect encore material, but the *Spanish Fantasy* is undistinguished. It's encouraging to find Galynin following in the footsteps of Prokofiev, Kabalevsky and other Soviet composers in adding to the repertoire of music for children with his zoo pieces (a collaboration, says the note but not the track listings, with Mikhail Ziv). To judge from this evidence, Galynin was yet another victim of the Soviet Union's lost generation, his early prom-

ise all too precipitately crushed. We are certainly the richer, even so, for hearing what Solovieva has to say with this music.

David Nice

WLADIMIR VOGEL: The Piano Works. Kolja Lessing (pno). Gramola 98821/22.

Chopin and Scriabin on the one hand, Busoni and Berg on the other – the chief influences on the keyboard writing of Wladimir Vogel (1896–1984) are an accurate reflection of his personal history. The Moscow-born son of a German businessman and a Russian mother, Vogel spent formative years in the Russian capital and the Urals. He moved to Berlin with his parents at the end of the First World War. By then he had already begun the 'Six Pièces expressionistes' for keyboard that were eventually published under the title *Nature vivante*. (Not included in the present 2-CD album of solo piano works is his pre-war *Prélude* in E major, op. 1, now lost.) In 1919 Vogel wrote a fetching *Trepak* in late-Romantic vein.

By far the most extended keyboard work Wladimir Vogel was soon to produce as Busoni's composition pupil was his *Komposition für ein und zwei Klaviere* (1923, revised in 1977). But several miniatures for solo piano from the Berlin period are ample proof of his originality. Kolja Lessing says that the parodistic *Micro-Suite* is considered to be Vogel's only humorous piano piece – although the late *Entledigung* seems to cast off the cares of the world. A 'study of the augmented and diminished intervals' produced in 1923 has the poetic animation of a Debussy étude. Octaves and seconds play a pivotal role in the virtuosic *Etude-Toccata* of 1926, dedicated to Claudio Arrau. Of similar dimensions is Vogel's *Variétude (Chaconne)*, in which his Swiss friend Walter Labhart sees a possible link with the Berlin Dadaist movement.

As a Jew, Vogel was obliged to seek refuge in Switzerland from 1933, eventually settling in Ascona and later Zurich. His principal composition for solo piano before the Second World War, the *Epitaffio per Alban Berg* (1936), was sparked off by Hermann Scherchen. Here the dedication 'Alban Berg aufs Grab: Friede' is ingeniously turned into a serial *soggetto musicale*. The trans-muted bell sounds to be found in numerous Vogel pieces are exploited to poignant effect. Vogel also makes constructive use of the Bach chorale featured in Busoni's *Fantasia contrappuntistica* and Berg's own elegiac Violin Concerto.

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The *Epitaffio* represents a culminating-point in this phase of Vogel's career. Several more miniatures apart, he then abandoned the solo piano for over three decades. It was the Swiss pianist Margrit Weber who revived his creative interest in the medium, resulting in the *Klaviereigene Interpretationsstudie einer variierten Zwölftonfolge* (1972) and *Vier Versionen einer Zwölftonfolge* (1973). They were followed in 1978 by *Russische Glocken*, sub-titled '12töniger Carillon', and two years later by *Varianten* and *Intervalle*. Vogel summed up his later approach as a departure from a linear-polyphonic style and a re-focusing on the intrinsic character of piano registers and overtones. The ostinato devices already prominent in Vogel's earlier music were now employed in a new expressive context.

The matter-of-fact titles that Vogel often favoured belie his protean imaginative powers. Kolja Lessing is marvellously alive to the spirit of this estimable piano œuvre in recent recordings from the Klein Saal of the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg.

Peter Palmer

ARNOLD BAX: Piano Sonatas 1–4. JOHN IRELAND: Piano Sonata. FRANK BRIDGE: Piano Sonata. Malcolm Binns (pno). British Music Society BMS 434-435.

The British Music Society is committed to recording music 'considered to be unjustly neglected', although the piano sonatas of Arnold Bax, John Ireland and Frank Bridge have each been recorded several times, in some cases quite recently.[8] Together this collection offers an interesting snapshot of the English piano sonata in the 1920s, a form eschewed by the more celebrated names of the day. The shadow of the First World War looms over most of these pieces, in which there is a seriousness and weight indicating that the genre was considered a medium for the expression of large ideas, in contrast with the contemporaneous piano music of, for example, Stravinsky, Ravel or Schoenberg.

This CD's release marks the fiftieth anniversary of Malcolm Binns's London recital debut, and he is still a formidable pianist, very much at home in the repertoire. The project has a personal element. Once a student of Arthur Alexander, who premièred the original version of Bax's Second Sonata, Binns seeks, where possible, to reconstruct the earliest versions of these much-revised pieces, using manuscript sources and early editions. (He takes the opposite approach with the Ireland, preferring the little-known 1951 edition.) This has mixed results. It is unarguably welcome that Binns corrects a number of wrong notes in published scores – he suggests Bax 'wasn't the world's greatest proof-reader'. But he also reinstates notes and even whole passages which Bax omitted from the published scores, including two longer sections as separate tracks, even though he suggests Bax 'just realised the material was not quite good enough'. On this point of quality control the composer's wishes should probably have been respected.

Bax's working procedure was to score all his music for piano, often without deciding until later if it would be orchestrated or not. Binns acknowledges that Bax's sonatas are 'orchestral works in disguise' and, for all their virtues, the sonatas suffer in comparison with the symphonies. Without orchestral timbres the music can sound manufactured, and Bax too easily falls back on Scriabin-esque figuration. That said, there are some wonderfully realized piano textures, such as the sinister low opening of the Second Sonata, or the enchanting slow movement of the Third. At other times the ideas can feel stretched and the structures indulgent, although always elegantly expressed.

Malcolm Binns is a committed advocate for the Bax sonatas and these are authoritative performances but, whilst enjoyable, the sonatas lack the spark of individuality to make them memorable. I felt, by the end, that I had had a surfeit of Bax.

Ireland's sonata was generously described in 1951 as 'one of the finest, if *the* finest modern piano sonata' – albeit by the composer himself. Malcolm Binns is more equivocal, describing it as 'rather unpianistic'. Stylistically Ireland's is the most conservative item on the menu; it is also fluent, appealing and well-constructed, if a little bit over-extended. Ireland's piano music largely consists of pictorially-titled miniatures and the sonata shares with them familiar fingerprints such as folk-inspired melodies, modal harmony and richly textured inner parts. But there is also a clear intention to go beyond the salon piece and work on a large scale, notably in the grandly imagined slow movement. However, at times the physical difficulty of playing the notes is too apparent, undermining the performance.

Bridge's Sonata marked a turning-point in his output, as he embraced a progressive aesthetic in sharp contrast to his pre-war salon pieces, with

[8] The Ireland sonata, especially, benefitted in mid-2008 from new recordings by John Lenehan (Naxos 8.570461) and Mark Bebbington (Somm SOMMCD 074) and the reissue of Eric Parkin's 1977 recording as part of a 3-CD set of Ireland's piano music (Lyrita SRCD.2277).

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their relaxed, melodic charm. The Sonata bears the scars of the First World War openly in its dedication to the composer Ernest Farrar, killed in action. It is not an easy piece, either technically or aesthetically, but it is enthralling and affecting. It is haunted by a sense of quiet grief interrupted by dramatic, muscular outbursts.

The cool reception Bridge's new direction received in Britain may be partly to do with its 'advanced' style, perceived as continental in origin. The Sonata's motivic construction nods to Berg's exquisite Piano Sonata of 1910, although Bridge's is the more profound work, ambitious in scope, wide-ranging in its pianism and tinged with a distinctively English sensibility. The harmony is not tonal, but not atonal either, somewhat in the manner of Hindemith: there are bitonal aggregates, shifting tonal centres and, most characteristically, bare fifth chords, hollow and stark.

Malcolm Binns gives an accurate performance, notably closer to the marked tempos than the other recordings I know. His reading lasts 28 minutes, shaving nearly five minutes off Ashley Wass's recent recording on Naxos. But Binns's respect for the composer's markings here seems to be at the music's expense. Wass makes a strong case for overruling the composer and embracing a greater spaciousness, especially in the wonderful pastoral second movement. Binns, perhaps anxious to avoid sentimentality, underdoes the *rubato* and the result can feel hurried. Nonetheless there is some fine playing, in particular his weighting of melodic lines in the darkly grim last movement.

This recording is a worthwhile project, comprehensive and well-recorded. It is a must for devotees of Bax, especially for the 'bonus tracks'. The Ireland and Bridge have more musical substance – indeed the latter has a good claim to be the greatest British piano sonata of the 20th century – but the playing, though generally excellent, is not flawless in the Ireland and I prefer other interpretations of Bridge's masterpiece.

Bernard Hughes

LAWRENCE CRANE: *20th Century Music*; *Three Preludes*; *Blue Blue Blue*; *Kiekegaards*; *Birthday Piece for Michael Finnissy*; *Derridas*; *Gorm Busk*; *James Duke son of John Duke*; *Looking for Michael Bracewell*; *Andrew Renton becomes an international art critic*; *Chorale for Howard Skempton*; *Three Pieces for James Clapperton*. Michael Finnissy (pno). Metier MSV 28506.

Lawrence Crane (born 1961) studied at Nottingham University with Peter Nelson and Nigel Osborne. His music is internationally recognized, although he is closely associated with the British ensemble Apartment House. This disc (titled overall '20th Century Music') contains 20 short pieces, some grouped as parts of larger sets, adding up to a playing time of a full 80 minutes. Most of the music comes from early on in the composer's career. Christopher Fox, in his perceptive accompanying note, states that 'things have to have names and the names of these pieces are very specific since they relate to real people, but they actually tell us nothing about the music itself'.

Crane's own commentaries can be maddeningly brief and noncommittal – part of his general outlook, one supposes. Thus, the note for *20th Century Music* tells that the work was composed on 31 December 1999, tells the circumstances of the first performance and then identifies the dedicatees (in this case, everyone involved in 20th-century music) but refuses to comment on the work's slowly moving chordal basis. Similarly, but even more obliquely, the notes for the *Three Preludes* only reveal circumstances of commission, date of première and what would have been the work's opus number, if the composer used such things. This sort of commentary can lead to surprises – the facts presented as leading to the genesis of *Birthday Piece for Michael Finnissy* totally belie the exquisite tenderness of the composition.

There is a Satie-esque terseness of utterance here. Satie himself is most nearly quoted in the second *Prelude* and in the first of the *Three Pieces for James Clapperton* of 1989. Finnissy, in the booklet, makes a fascinating parallel between Crane's music and Satie's: 'Like Satie it has a masterful actuality, transcending local styles but in a reservedly melancholy way it's also saturated in history'. *Blue Blue Blue*, by contrast, is slowed-down minimalism and, at 7'03", is the longest piece on the disc.

The two Kierkegaard pieces were written as incidental music for a play centering around the philosopher. The second in particular is hypnotic ('Kirkegaard his walk around Copenhagen'). The *Birthday Piece for Michael Finnissy*, quietly spoken and gentle, separates the Kierkegaard pieces from the four *Derridas*. Humour is another important part of Crane's make-up – each of the four pieces puts Derrida in different situations (a nightclub, a massage parlour, a supermarket and a beach). The pieces do not differ significantly in expression. Again, this is music to a staged event, a performance piece called *Dériva* by Andrew Renton and Michael Bracewell. The four pieces heard here are the four solo piano works from that play. The première of *Derridas* (BMIC, 1989) was, incidentally, the first time Finnissy had played Crane's

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music in public. The final *Derrida* works its way through obsessive chord repetition towards a surprisingly intense climax.

Gorm Busk (1991) takes its title from a Scandinavian musicologist and sometime contributor to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (Crane worked at the offices of that publication for a short time). Crane was fascinated by the musicologist's name, and this (once more, hypnotically obsessive) piece was the result. The next three are presented as an implied group, as, according to the composer, 'All three dedicatees of these pieces are close friends who had creative involvement in the theatre and performance works in the mid 1980's that spawned some of my other piano music (*Derridas*, *Kierkegaards*)'. *Looking for Michael Bracewell* is an example of just how tender Crane's music can be. It is the *Chorale for Howard Skempton*, though, that points out a fundamental feature of Crane's music: in just 1'15", Crane opens out a feeling of massive, eternal space. Here, brevity seems irrelevant as massive vistas are invoked in the tiniest of gestures.

Crane's music has a strange fascination. Its effect is far greater that the sum of its seemingly simple parts, perhaps because of the composer's re-framing of the familiar. This re-framing would also account, perhaps, for the slightly disturbing element the music carries with it, almost without exception. Thought-provoking, unbalancing and refreshing at the same time, Crane's music is a curious yet stimulating mix.

Colin Clarke

PERSICHETTI: Complete Piano Sonatas. Geoffrey Burleson (pno). New World Records 80677-2 (2 CD set).

'It is difficult to overestimate the extent of Vincent Persichetti's influence over America's musical landscape', says Geoffrey Burleson in the sleeve notes. During his lifetime Persichetti was primarily seen as an educator. Virgil Thomson, whilst recognizing his talents, did not consider him a strong composer. That is an unflattering assessment of someone who produced nearly 170 works, including nine symphonies, concertos for English horn and piano, many pieces for wind band and chorus, several major organ works and twelve piano sonatas. In the years since his death in 1987 his reputation as a composer has grown markedly, thanks largely to the release of a number of important recordings, including the Fifth Symphony and Piano Concerto (New World 370-2) and, most recently, Symphonies 3, 4 and 7 (Albany Troy 771-2) which I reviewed in *Tempo* (vol. No. 236). We can also look forward to the release next year of a new book by Walter Simmons of extensive studies of Persichetti, Peter Mennin and William Schuman.

It is clear that Persichetti was a master technician, and his music takes in a vast range of influences, from Copland and American 'aspirationalism' to more mainstream 20th-century influences such as Bartók and Hindemith, as well as modernism and to some extent atonality. But as Burleson says, Persichetti's music is markedly diverse, and that can be perplexing for critics who like their arguments and value judgements to run in straight lines. Unlike Burleson, though, I think Persichetti's piano music is more demanding and elusive than his orchestral and wind music, because the composer exploits the fluidity of the keyboard to such a dazzling extent that the tonal anchors seem to break free and the music can feel shapeless. And yet the structures are all clearly there: although the epigrammatic natures of many of these sonatas (averaging about 8–10 minutes each at most, with four longer ones) inevitably means that thematic material is germinal and fragmentary, rather than lyrical and ruminative.

Burleson plays them in strict chronological order, starting with No. 1, op 3 from 1939. In fact the first ten sonatas appeared by the time he reached 40 in 1955, with the final two appearing in 1965 and 1982 respectively. Every single one is dedicated to his wife Dorothea, a concert pianist. It is sometimes quite a task to elicit on first hearing a strong individual personality to each of the first nine sonatas, and Burleson (a persuasive advocate, which is why I keep quoting his notes) says they synthesize a number of styles and idioms: 'the voices of Schoenberg, Hindemith, Copland, Bartók and jazz are variously combined and distilled'. He believes that by the time of the Fourth Sonata (1949, at 17 minutes one of the longest), Persichetti had begun to develop a distinctive personal style. I tended to enjoy the longer sonatas most, because there seems more to latch on to. That is especially so with the Tenth, the longest by far at 21 minutes (I discovered I had the score, which provided an extra outline for what I was hearing). I also had other scores, and the short Seventh Sonata (1950, 6 minutes), was ingratiatingly straightforward, clear and largely diatonic.

From about 1965 (around the opus 100 mark), over several years Persichetti produced a number of pieces in a compressed, dissonant style. Some of these were large scale and included the big oratorio *The Creation*, the *Sinfonia Janiculum* (Symphony No. 9) (both 1970) and the *Parable* for

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band, op. 121 (1973). Up to this point the larger-scale pieces had been largely diatonic (listen to the earlier symphonies and the Piano Concerto, for example). Piano Sonata No. 11 (1965) belongs to this 'dissonant' period, but like the other pieces from that time there is a more impressionistic feel, due to a greater emphasis on sustained harmonies and coloristic effect. The final Sonata (No. 12, 1982) seems like a synthesis of what has gone before, and so is a summing-up of sorts, although it uses a new 'mirror' technique in which notes and intervals are reflected from one hand to the other simultaneously.

If I do not yet appear completely convinced by this music, I should say that I have admired and enjoyed Persichetti's orchestral, organ and band music for many years. The piano music is growing on me: each hearing reveals more detail as the landscapes flash past. The scores are now published in one budget volume (available from United Music Publishers at £26.00). These are generously-filled discs, exceptionally well-played and recorded by a fervent and committed champion. I am readily converted to his cause: these pieces convincingly confirm Persichetti's versatility and genius.

Bret Johnson

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