

tic sounds. Benjamin Broening, a recipient of many honors and commissions, exploits the *cantabile* and lyrical character of Cheeseman's style in *Arioso/Doubles*. The electronic backdrop of the work transforms into a variety of beautiful textures, against which the player executes longing, aching lines.

Matthew McCabe's *Somewhere* begins with continuous, breath-like electronic clusters with a slowly evolving clarinet line. The piece develops like a succession of long breaths. Cheeseman executes beautifully-shaped long tones, which at times are echoed in the electronics. A largely static work, a languorous mood prevails with occasional flurries of rapid clarinet figuration. The piece closes with a kind of rain-like pattering. In contrast, Mark Snyder's *Messy* is anything but disorganized. The delicate electronic texture develops very gradually to a more intense climax and then subsides. It requires the player to sustain long tones, and in the climax area, to sustain long trills.

Kirsten Volness is a young Minnesota-born composer with an impressive resume including as co-founder/director and pianist of a new music ensemble/concert series, Verdant Vibes. *Ultraviolet*, a short work, opens slowly with Cheeseman inserting herself into the hazy and complex *timbres* with sustained tones, while the accompaniment becomes whimsical, intense, and unpredictable. Notably, the clarinet maintains a jazzy melodic line spanning the entire range of the instrument. While the intensity initially subsides in the middle third of the piece, the player is required to navigate complex melodic shapes until the piece gradually ebbs away.

Judith Shatin needs no introduction to *IAWM Journal* readers. She is an accomplished and renowned composer in many genres, not the least of which is electro-acoustic music. Her works are performed internationally, and her many commissions reflect the high regard in which her music is held in the contemporary music world. *Penelope's Song* is a tribute to Penelope, Queen of Ithaca and wife of Odysseus. She said she would take no suitor until she finished weaving a shroud for her father-in-law, Laertes. However, since she unraveled at night what she wove by day, she made no progress over the twenty years Odysseus abandoned her in his many wanderings. This piece sings of her and her loom.

The electronics were created from recordings Shatin made of weaver Jan Russell working on her wooden looms. She "processed and shaped these, weaving a new sonic fabric, and then treated the acoustic and digital elements as warp and weft of a new tapestry" (liner notes). *Penelope's Song* has been adapted for six other instruments as well as for the clarinet.

The electronic accompaniment begins with a relentless rhythm and imperceptibly shifts over the course of the continuous work, which is shaped into a fast-slow-fast progression. The opening pulses of the loom immediately grab the listener's attention. The clarinet responds with an athletic call and response figurations. The accompaniment thins out eventually into a whirring, high, metallic pattern with a gentle high melody in the clarinet. The clarinet is exposed in lengthy, tender tones and delicate multiphonics as the electronics emerge as more diffused clouds of sound. Gradually, when the highly panned and processed loom sounds return, the energy intensifies with the clarinet's disjunct melodies and drives to a climactic high *glissando*.

*Breath* by Joseph Harchanko returns to a languid calm. Tonal clusters contrast with more complex textures in the electronics with slow, meandering melodies in the clarinet. Harp-like flurries of notes in the accompaniment fail to ruffle the slow melodies of the soloist. Discordant chords soon give way to a triumphant tonal progression with a throbbing distortion of the live clarinet. The clarinet ultimately echoes the earlier harp-like *obbligato*.

The final work on the CD is composer and sound designer Mark Phillips' *Favorable Odds*, which begins in a lyrical and pastoral mood. The second section is introduced by a short, more discordant part and then settles into a pulsating pattern, accompanying a gently jazzy and repetitive melody in the clarinet. The piece modulates higher and higher until the clarinet settles on an extended tone. However, the ending is not as convincing as it might have been.

Certainly, this recording offers a fine and diverse assortment of concert compositions that will inspire audiences and challenge the artists.

*Anna Rubin has composed for small and large ensembles as well as electronic media since the late 1970s. An upcoming commission from New Music USA features the narrative of women immigrants from Central America and will premiere in the spring of 2021.*

## Carol Ann Weaver:

### *Songs for My Mother*

Mary-Catherine Pazzano, vocals; Willem Moolenbeek, soprano and alto saxophone; Ben Bolt-Martin, cello; Andrew Chung, violin; Jana Skarecky, didgeridoo; Carol Anne Weaver, piano. LORAC Productions LOR-027, SOCAN, Canadian Music Centre (2018)

#### KATHLEEN SHIMETA

Carol Ann Weaver's *Songs for My Mother* honors her mother's life in rural Kentucky and their family trips to the African wilderness with all its compositional inspiration. Six of the songs are settings of her mother's early journal entries from her life in Kentucky. Weaver's music reveals a daughter's admiration, love, and understanding. Incorporating elements of jazz and blues in her vibrant, supportive accompaniments, the composer writes short vocal phrases that make strong statements about her mother's character and sense of humor. The songs are vocally approachable because of Weaver's compositional poise, which skillfully balances texts with instruments and piano accompaniment.

Opening with a cello and piano pedal tone, "Grant Us Peace" begins the song cycle in a solemn, hymn-like fashion. Weaver layers the instruments adding the saxophone on a sustained note, followed a few measures later with the singer entering on a sustained note, and then invoking a plea with the words "thy peace." Between the seven pleas for peace, the saxophone, piano, and cello have counter melody interludes with extended key changes and melodic development.

Miriam Weaver's newfound Kentucky experiences are depicted in the next three songs. "Feedsack Curtains" consists of non-stop physical activity. The singer's short, *staccato* phrases are supported by a brisk, folk-like accompaniment that paints for the listener the rugged dirt roads, the house without running water, and neighbors too far away to say hello. When the feedsack curtains are made and pictures hung, the *legato* vocal line tenderly expresses "this is our home," with the phrase sung as a duet expressing that family makes a home. "Hard Shell Baptists" has a syncopated, jazzy accompaniment, while the singer, with repeated words and phrases, reveals her mother's amazement and apparent humor as she observes her neighbors' outdoor service. The Baptists' extended improvisatory singing

and the two preachers' loud, long sermons are captured by Pazzano's colorful singing and crisp diction. A routine household task proceeds with an eighth-note relentless accompaniment, which leads the singer into describing her "Flat Irons" with wooden handles brought from home. Heated on the fire, used very quickly, then switching to another iron and another, even on hot days. As the intensity of ironing continues, the voice and piano conclude that Miriam Weaver was quite pleased with her flat irons.

Rejoicing at the birth of a new granddaughter, who has sprung from the womb into light, the child is assured that no matter the hunger, longing, sorrows, or joy, she will be loved by the father and her angel mother. Weaver's "Lately Sprung" lullaby gently moves through harmonic changes building to each part of life's journey with excitement and delight. Pazzano embraces the emotion of the song with delicate phrasing and simple expressivity.

From her mother's final thoughts and words, while surrounded by family, the last two songs, "Crossing Over" and "To the End," have soothing melodies and harmonies that move between consonance and dissonance defining the conflict of experiencing life to the end and crossing over. Pazzano performs these emotional songs without being overly sentimental.

Weaver's family trips to Africa inspired her three wordless songs. Utilizing her field recordings from Kruger National Park and Imfolozi Game Reserve in South Africa, she overlays nature's sounds with voice, piano, and instruments. Birds, crickets, and frogs begin "Soaring Bateleur." Without interrupting nature's music, the cello and piano softly enter supporting a simple melody for the voice that soars like the eagle over the acacia savannah. Weaver captures a musical picture in "Leaping Impala" with a four-measure, *staccato* quarter-note pattern in the piano; fast *staccati* eighth notes played on the violin; and upward and downward leaps in the vocal part. That impala is directly in front of the listener. Completing the set of songs is an African night soundscape of crickets and birds; the piano plays rippling triplets; the cello, in an octave pattern, interrupts with a short melody; and the singers hover above in a soft duet lullaby.

Love of nature and our planet are the songs that complete the CD. Pazzano radiates delight and pleasure for the joy the ocean's currents and sands bring to our lives

in the song "Sea and Sound." John Weier's poem "Blue Green Planet" is set in ethereal, short, chant-like phrases that develop into a melody. The didgeridoo, a wind instrument made of tree bark, adds a velvety earthy sound in this tribute to our planet. With an upbeat and pop song quality, "Rising," with text by the composer, contains a catchy sung melody and lively improvisation for the piano, voice, and saxophone.

*Kathleen Shimeta is a leading authority on Canadian-American composer Gena Branscombe. Her CD, Ah! Love, I Shall Find Thee: Songs of Gena Branscombe, is on the Albany Records label (Troy599). She has performed her one-woman show, "Life! Love! Song! A Visit with Gena Branscombe" throughout the United States. The newly-formed, non-profit Gena Branscombe Project has awarded scholarships to students in the areas of arts administration, conducting, and composition. The Library of Congress interviewed Ms. Shimeta for their blog featuring her work reconstructing Miss Branscombe's dramatic oratorio, Pilgrims of Destiny. The work was performed at Clark University in April 2019. Kathleen has had articles published in the Association of Canadian Women Composers Journal, Sigma Alpha Iota Pan Pipes, the WNYC blog, and WomenArts Journal.*

## Recent Compact Disc Releases

### **Beth Anderson: *Namely***

The composer uses the names of creative figures who are important in the composer's life as source material. In these 65 new text-sound compositions, from John Adams to Pamela Z, Anderson takes the names of influential artists and twists them into musical works of their own with the help of her formidable vocal techniques. She makes use of a "magic square," which generates the text material that is spoken by the performer. Other Minds OM 1027-2. Available from Amazon and Other Minds (2020).

### **Elizabeth R. Austin: *Window Panes***

*Window Panes* is a compilation of five works composed by Elizabeth R. Austin over the years and recorded between 1991 and 2019. There is great diversity in style, complexity, and structure among the compositions. The disc includes the following: Symphony No. 1, "Wilderness," for two reciters and orchestra, on a text by Carl Sandburg. Symphony No. 2, "Light-house." *An American Triptych*, for piano; the work incorporates elements of jazz and blues. Five *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, for soprano and piano, on a text by Eliz-

abeth Barrett Browning. *Puzzle Preludes*, for piano; each prelude includes music by a well-known composer: Brahms, Bach, Chopin, Beethoven, Mendelssohn. *Three Rilke Lieder*, for soprano, baritone, and piano (played by Austin) on a text by Rainer Maria Rilke. Navona NV6304 (2020).

### **Centennial**

The disc, subtitled "Amplifying the Connections between History, Music, and Social Issues," presents solo and chamber music performed by José Antonio Zayas Cabán, saxophone. The recording features works by four women composers: Shelley Washington, Gemma Peacocke, **Amanda Feery**, and Fanny Mendelssohn to mark the 100-year anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which prohibits denying the vote to anyone based on sex. The album is not a celebration of the amendment; it urges listeners to recognize that much work remains to be done. Navona NV6309 (2020).

### **Juliana Hall: *Bold Beauty: Songs by Juliana Hall***

The CD presents four song cycles that include 27 songs: *Cameos*; *Letters from Edna*; *Syllables of Velvet*, *Sentences of Plush*; and *Theme in Yellow*, performed by soprano Molly Fillmore and pianist Elvia Puccinelli. Blue Griffin Records (2020).

### **Lil Lacy: *Windborne***

Lil Lacy's *Windborne* for solo accordion is performed by Bjarke Mogensen. Orchid Classics (2020). See <https://www.orchidclassics.com/eps/> for details.

### **Jacqueline Leclair: *Music for English Horn Alone***

The CD features works by women composers ranging in age from 27 to 72; their music for solo English horn spans an extremely wide stylistic range. The disc includes the world premiere of *Layered Lament* by **Faye-Ellen Silverman** plus works by Meera Gudipati, Hannah Kendall (world premiere), Jenni Brandon, Karola Obermüller (world premiere, commissioned by Leclair), Lisa Bielawa, and Cecilia Arditto (world premiere). New Focus (2020).

### **Erin K. Murphy: *Day & Night: Modern Flute & Piano Duos by Women Composers***

Flutist Erin K. Murphy and pianist Kirstin Ihde perform six 20th- and 21st-century flute and piano duos by women composers: Melanie Bonis' Sonata for flute and piano (1902), Lili Boulanger's *Nocturne* (1911), Germaine Tailleferre's *Pastorale* (1942) and *Forlane* (1972), Lita Grier's So-