

instrumental parts. *I Have a Young Sister* is another duet for cello and voice, containing text from the English folk song “She sente me a cherry withouten any stone.” The last song, and the only one of the five that contains attributed text, includes excerpts from Dante’s *Paradiso*, sung in the original Italian. It is absolutely stunning, with more prominent piano and an almost impressionist nature in parts. This was an appealing and intriguing set.

My only criticism of the CD is the lack of program notes for the individual pieces. The composer biographies are detailed and tremendously helpful, but background information about the poets and pieces is limited. Kati Agócs was able to include program notes for her piece; a small inconsistency. Overall, this is an extremely well-produced recording and a fascinating introduction to the exquisite vocal music of leading Canadian women composers.

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Cekam Te! Janackovske Inspirace (I Am Waiting for You! Janacek Inspirations)

Works by Hudbaby. Lucie Slepánková, mezzo-soprano; Martin Oprsal, vibraphone, xylophone; with the Kapralova Quartet featuring Veronika Panochova (violin), Simona Hurnikova (violin), Karolina Strasilova (viola), and Simona Hecova (cello).

Studio I, Czech Radio in Brno, Radioservis, Prague (2009).

MICHELLE LATOUR

If music for string quartet could ever be defined as hip, then the CD *Cekam Te!* (I Am Waiting for You) would be the exemplary barometer of cool to which all others would aspire. From the CD’s thematic concept to the inclusion of mezzo-soprano and percussion along with the string quartet, this recording exudes stylish and thought-provoking music.

The CD features the compositions of Hudbaby (Musicrones), women composers who founded the group in 1997 at the Janacek Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno, Czech Republic, where the majority of the members had studied. The central theme of this recording takes inspiration from one of Leos Janacek’s miniatures from the 1928 piano cycle, *The Album for Kamila Stosslova*. The particular miniature used here is largely regarded by scholars to be Janacek’s last composition, and further, the words “I am waiting for you!” were written in the score and were meant for Stosslova, Janacek’s muse and love of the last decade of his life.

Hudbaby took inspiration from this very personal message from Janacek to Stosslova, transforming the concept into a contemporary commentary on music, love, and life reinterpreted for voice, string quartet, and percussion. Each of the five members of Hudbaby took the subject matter and made it her own while also paying tribute to Janacek. The result takes the listener on a clever and interesting thematic journey as the individual tracks expound upon the concept of waiting for a loved one, which runs the gamut of emotions: breathless expectation, desire, impatience, and even apprehension.

The expedition begins with Marketa Dvorakova’s composition for string quartet, *Cekam Te*. Masterfully executed by the Kapralova Quartet, the opening phrases are a remarkable way to begin. The listener is jolted to attention with a wall of dissonant, yet fragile, sound. This sparse and intense piece, although largely dissonant coupled with extended technique, is highly effective. Katerina Ruzickova’s version of *Cekam Te!* is a single-movement work scored for mezzo-soprano, xylophone, and string quartet. This appealing combination yields fascinating textures of sound, beginning with the haunting pairing of cello and voice, and ending with mezzo-soprano Lucie Slepánková quietly whispering and chanting repetitions of “Cekam Te!”

My favorite among the compositions is Petra Gavlasova’s *Mezi cekanim* (Between waiting) for string quartet and electronics. The composer interweaves beautiful, lush and tonal melodies with electronic and dissonant textures. Her utilization of electronics is understated and subtle. One difficulty in recording this work is that it cannot capture the entire experience of the performance, which is enhanced with choreography and visual elements. According to Gavlasova, in a live performance, “the players find themselves in a gradually illuminated dark space which they enter as they start playing. The composition is divided internally into four parts that are bridged by electronics, with all four players finally playing together in the fourth part. The electronics transform the recorded sounds of the players’ instruments and several motives from Janacek’s compositions for strings. It reflects and connects the musical material performed live by the players, sometimes providing answers to their ‘waiting.’”

The lack of visual components in no way diminished my thorough enjoyment of this multi-layered psychological journey about waiting and expectation. This voyage begins with a lonely and poignant cello melody, with punctuated silences becoming as important as the sounds. The music soon grows in intensity, marked by rhythmic outbursts, forte pizzicato, accelerando, and truncated phrases. This melody continues as electronics enter unobtrusively, quietly adding commentary to the “journey” of waiting, even blurring the distinction between instrumental sounds and electronic sounds. Slowly the texture becomes denser, with one instrument added at a time. The haunting opening melody is periodically re-visited, and the electronic sounds continue to add commentary.

This interesting dialogue and counterpoint between the parts escalates about two-thirds of the way into the work, as if waiting becomes frustrating and perhaps futile, if only for a brief moment. All the parts come together as one towards the end, ultimately dissolving into electronic music combined with the re-emergence of the opening melody. Both elements quietly fade into silence. The piece concludes with wonderful ambiguity, leaving it up to the listener to decide if the waiting ends in disappointment or fulfillment.

The journey continues with Jana Barinkova’s *...a ja vim, ze prijdes...* (...and I know you will come...) for vibraphone and string quartet. It represents a minimalist passage of time featuring repetition and gradual development of chord se-

quences. Waiting for something now becomes a tense combination of hope and fear.

The final composition, by Lenka Kilic, is a six-movement work for mezzo-soprano, xylophone, and string quartet entitled *Nejpeknejsí* (The Fairest of Angels). This piece is dedicated to Janacek's wife, Zdenka, with the middle movements representing the women who affected her life. The initial movement is a musical reflection of Zdenka as a young bride, and the final movement comes full circle, depicting Zdenka after Janacek's death. This moving and widely varied musical tribute is indeed an effective way of ending the CD, of providing a modern commentary about the women in Janacek's life, and of concluding the mission of waiting. In

fact, I will have much to ponder the next time I find myself waiting for a loved one. Hudbaby's hip and thought-provoking journey would not have been nearly as enjoyable without the superb playing of the Kapralova Quartet, the masterful execution by percussionist Martin Oprsal, and the beautiful, lyrical singing by mezzo-soprano Lucie Slepankova.

Dr. Michelle Latour, soprano, is active as a performer, teacher, author, and adjudicator; in addition to being a member of the full-time voice faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. She frequently performs the music of women composers, especially those of Vitezslava Kapralova. She recently had the honor of presenting the world premiere of On the Green Trail, a song cycle composed by Lori Laitman for Latour.

CONCERT AND OPERA REVIEWS

William Schuman Award Concert Honoring Pauline Oliveros

Columbia University, Miller Theatre, New York City, March 27, 2010

JEN BAKER

This marathon concert, produced in close partnership with Pauline Oliveros, paid tribute to her pioneering work in electronic experimental music and celebrated her varied influences. The program explored the evolution of Oliveros's music from early notated pieces for chamber ensemble to collaborative works created with dancers and visual artists. The musical performances were interspersed with spoken tributes from friends and colleagues of the composer.

Pauline Oliveros is an eternal innovator whose work has deeply influenced the evolution of many strains of contemporary classical music, from electronic to improvisation. I am particularly thrilled to be able to acknowledge her contributions to the field with the Schuman Award and to note that she is its first female recipient.

—Carol Becker, Dean, Columbia University School of the Arts

As a professional performing musician and frequent concert attendee, I am ever hopeful that the events I see will be entertaining, memorable, and, if I am lucky, transformative, as was Pauline Oliveros's Commemorative Concert on March 27, 2010 at Columbia University's Miller Theatre in New York City. Oliveros, the first woman composer to receive the prestigious William Schuman Composition Award (which comes with an unrestricted grant of \$50,000), was honored that night for her significant contribution to American music. Since 1981, the Schuman Award has recognized "the lifetime achievement of an American composer whose works have been widely performed and generally acknowledged to be of lasting significance."

A feeling of celebration was in the air from the minute I walked into the auditorium until the minute I left the concert, which lasted a mighty three hours and forty-five minutes. As we entered, the first piece on the program, *Deep Listening: Lear* (1988), was already playing through the speakers.

It was subtle enough that one really needed to listen for it under all the conversation. The packed audience cheered as Pauline was introduced and honored, and she eagerly participated in the audience performance piece that she led in which she asked us to make childhood sounds (sounds that we liked, but may not have been allowed to make when we were children). She characteristically added that we should try to make these sounds during a space when no one around us was making sounds. This piece evoked the same feelings of deep listening, spontaneity, and irreverence that I remember from the first time I met Pauline and learned of her works in an Oberlin College music theory class twelve years ago.

The pieces on the program spanned fifty years. We saw brief video footage of some of installations, including *Flowing Rock/Still Waters* (1987), *Ghostdance* (1995), *Njinga the Queen King: Return of a Warrior* (1993), and the *Lunar Opera*, performed at Lincoln Center Outdoors in 2000. The effect of seeing such a program of varied material in such a relatively short period of time, and all coming from the same person, was immense. Most surprising for me was Oliveros's earliest piece on the program, *Variations for Sextet* (1960) for cello, trumpet, horn, clarinet, flute, and piano. Reminiscent of serial writing, this piece, likely the only one on the program written in strict notation, was performed exceptionally well by the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE).

I was struck by the depth, beauty, and sonorities of many of the pieces. In *Oracle Bones: Mirror Dreams*, the multisensory experience was just as evocative as each of the individual parts. Sitting at various corners of the stage, Oliveros played accordion and her EIS (Expanded Instrument System), Miya Masaoka played the koto and electronics, and Ione performed spoken word and sonic vocals. Dancer Heloise Gold used a small portion of the stage for movement, starting and ending near the right of the stage (and in between Masaoka and Ione), and migrating toward the front stage in the middle of the piece. The presentation also included a video projection by Benton-C Bainbridge in which vivid yellows and reds brought the entire back wall and stage alive along with vibrating shapes in three-D, creating an almost extra-terrestrial feeling. I was drawn into this piece from the moment Ione began with, "Are you there, empress?" The wing-like