

PERCUSSION RECORDINGS

Akademie Percussion Ensemble V2

Akademie Percussion Ensemble

Equilibrium

This is the inaugural commercial recording for Akademie Percussion Ensemble (APE), a Korean professional percussion group founded in 1993. The CD focuses on the lighter side of percussion ensemble music and includes several ragtime pieces ("The Whistler," "Xylophonia," "Charleston Capers" and "Dill Pickles") in addition to some light jazz and classical selections. The final selection, "Visional Train," is the lesser-known piece on the CD but has a western sound.

The overall sound is very crisp and accurate with very little improvisation. Most arrangements are played exactly as published. Most of the selections are between two and five minutes in length. For conductors seeking recorded examples of tunes appropriate for their pop or commercial percussion ensemble, this would be a good resource.

—Julia Gaines

Forests of the Sun

Temple University Percussion Ensemble
Albany Records

Glenn Steele and the Temple University Percussion Ensemble have produced an excellent recording of some of the staples in the percussion ensemble repertoire. The pieces chosen for this recording all revolve around some aspect of the sun. The title track, "Forests of the Sun" by Tim Clark, was premiered by the Temple University Percussion Ensemble conducted by Alan Abel at the first PASIC in Rochester in 1976, and it is fitting that it should now be recorded by the same ensemble.

The ensemble blends well with the electronic sounds and does a great job capturing the essence of the piece. Other cornerstone pieces on this recording are Cynthia Barlow's 1993 PAS Composition Contest winner "Nomen Solers" for marimba quintet, "Desert Express" by Leander Kaiser, and Gillingham's "Stained Glass." The recording also includes an original composition by Steele, "Moapa Valley of Fire," which is reflective of Native American culture and sounds, and Claudio Tripputi's "Triptico for Percussion Ensemble," which is centered around Afro-Cuban rhythms and instruments.

This CD is an excellent addition to the percussion orchestra recording collection and is a great audio resource for conductors wishing to perform this music.

—Julia Gaines

Kroumata Encores

Kroumata

BIS

All the favorite encores from one of the world's most noted percussion ensembles can now be heard on one CD. *Encores* includes five ragtime selections ("Chro-

matic Fox Trot," "Nola," "Jovial Jasper," "The Humming Bird" and "Dill Pickles") in addition to several pieces arranged and composed by different members of the ensemble.

Not all of the pieces on this recording are fast and flashy, as is common for encore selections. A favorite encore of this ensemble is their arrangement of Swedish composer Hugo Alfvén's "Skogen Sover" or "The Forest Sleeps" with baritone soloist, which is included on this recording. Instruments other than percussion heard on this CD include harmonica, double bass, accordion and recorder. Most of the pieces are between three and five minutes in length and range in musical style and instrumentation. Whether delivering a soft soundscape or thrilling an audience with a fast and furious whirlwind of sound, the pieces on this CD are all excellently performed and offer a valuable contribution from this reputable ensemble.

—Julia Gaines

My Favorite Things

Mayumi Sekizawa

Bachovich Music Publications

Mayumi Sekizawa has been a name in the marimba world for several years, with her major concert debut occurring in 2000 with the Houston Symphony. Her first solo recording, *My Favorite Things*, was released in 2005 and is an excellent recording of several styles of music.

The CD contains three arrangements by Sekizawa, one original composition, two personal commissions, and a standard piece in the advanced marimba repertoire. The three arrangements by Sekizawa are brilliantly performed. The title of the CD comes from her arrangement of a Richard Rodgers tune from *The Sound of Music* and is a very fun and challenging piece. The other two arrangements are of flamenco guitar pieces and work well for the marimba.

The two commissions are challenging and interesting. The first one is called "Take the Six," referencing the "6 line" subway the composer often used in the city and is written for marimba and electronic sounds. The second is "Fading Memories..." and was meant to reflect subtleties of Japanese culture.

Most marimbists will want to hear Sekizawa's insightful musical interpretations of Peter Klatzow's "Dances of Earth and Fire." The original composition that ends the CD is a reflective choral and a classy touch to the end of a great recording.

—Julia Gaines

Ritual Music

Third Coast Percussion

Self-published

Third Coast Percussion is a percussion quartet "committed to breaking down the barriers between popular and classical styles, working with composers to create new music that facilitates performances in a wide variety of venues, from concert

halls to theaters to dance clubs." With this as their mission, they have released their debut recording, *Ritual Music*.

The CD opens with the title track, "Ritual Music," a bombastic and celebratory frolic made up of drums and keyboards. Written by group member David Skidmore for the Chicago Dance Company, it begins with a primeval explosion of drums and other non-pitched percussion. The highly syncopated section suddenly dissolves into a more subdued, sparse groove for marimba and drums. Subtitled "Variations on the Numbers 2 and 4," the work is highly organized, and the pitches in the marimba, the rhythmic motifs and the structure of the phrases were all determined numerically. The piece never loses its rhythmic drive, even through the many texture and dynamic changes, and moves inexorably to a final climax.

Owen Clayton Condon, another group member, composed the marimba duo "Double Helix." This is a musical representation of DNA, capturing in sound the information-rich strand as it twists and turns in a complex spiral. There are elements of minimalism here but without the unvarying repetition. This is a complex work, performed flawlessly by the composer and quartet member Peter Martin.

In stark contrast, the third piece, "Twilight," seems to float with its sustained marimba chords, shifting and blending into changing textures. At times there are random pan-triadic colors, and then what seems to be an actual chord progression emerges. Soon, a more pointilistic section begins, finally joined by the vertical structures to create a wonderful ethereal effect. Again, minimalistic elements are evident as the piece slowly dies away.

The CD concludes with Nico Muhly's "Ta and Clap," written for two marimbas and a third player using instruments of his or her choice. The composer states, "Tapping and Clapping is a method of teaching rhythms wherein all beats are accounted for, resulting in a fully-rendered moto perpetuo that only implies empty spaces naturally found in a rhythmic pattern." While mathematically constructed, this is not readily apparent to the listener, who is treated to a shifting mosaic of drum and keyboard sound that seems to move indiscriminately wherever it will.

This is an outstanding recording, both in terms of the compositions and the performance. The three quartet members mentioned above, along with group founder Robert Dillon, have produced a recording that represents the depth of their musicality and the rich palette of the percussion family.

—Tom Morgan

Sticks and Stones

Roger Braun

Equilibrium

This CD features three outstanding works for percussion and string instruments. The CD opens with an excellent performance

of Lou Harrison's "Concerto for Violin with Percussion Orchestra" performed by Marjorie Bagley on violin with the Ohio University Percussion Ensemble, conducted by Roger Braun. The composition makes reference to Harrison's use of gamelan influences through the use of metal pipes, flower pots, coffee cans and brake drums.

The second track on the CD is "Elegy: Snow in June" by Tan Dun. The score calls for cello and percussion quartet. Cellist Michael Carrera provides a virtuoso performance along with the percussion group. The work features fragmented phrases that build to a full-score middle section, then returns to fragmented statements that gradually stretch out to the end of the work.

The CD closes with "Porch Music" by Mark Phillips, a composition for violin, cello and a percussionist who performs on marimba and vibraphone. The work is presented in six brief movements, during which Phillips captures Appalachian influences of rhythm, style and color.

The performances by each artist are of the highest quality. This is an excellent CD, and should expand the imagination of how to write for percussion and other instruments.

—George Frock

It's Telling...A Drummer's Perspective

Jae Sinnett

J-Nett Music

A modern jazz recording led by the musically accomplished drummer Jae Sinnett, *It's Telling...A Drummer's Perspective* is an aggressive, freewheeling set of eight original jazz compositions. Spanning a number of contemporary jazz subgenres, the leader/drummer/composer combines a thorough post-bop musical approach with modern forms and styles. Sinnett writes tunes that are melodically interesting and harmonically advanced. This talent, combined with his excellent drumming, produces a great recording.

Collaborating here with Steve Wilson (saxes), Allen Farnham (piano) and Terry Burrell (bass), Sinnett really swings, has a nice touch and great jazz sound. Many of the tunes change meters and/or feels, much like recent recordings from the Dave Holland Band. The tunes range from funk tunes in 5/4 and 7/4 ("Truth be Told," "Cliffhanger") to a New Orleans second line/swing tune ("Crescent City Undercurrents"), a dark, modal tune in 5/4 ("Locus"), a Latin/funk tune in three ("Bum's Rush"), a moody ballad ("Manque"), and a brush feature ("Simple Pleasures"). Sinnett often solos over vamps or around rhythmic figures with a loose, swinging feel and always provides just the right accompaniment to each tune. He seamlessly weaves the styles of Jack DeJohnette and other jazz masters into his own voice and certainly deserves wider recognition from both the public and drumming communities.

—Terry O'Maboney