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Jennifer Higdon Wins Two Classical Grammys
(Photo by Getty Images)

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notions of female and male composers and what might make music “manly and modern” or “feminine and charming” provide insight into the root of the issues encountered even today.

Part three—*Contemporary Creative Practices and Identities*—contains essays covering everything from *Little Orphan Annie* to “what is ‘new’ music,” with each subject being carefully researched and well-written. Jacqueline Warwick, in her “Urchins and Angels: Little Orphan Annie and Clichés of Child Singers,” provides a fascinating description and account of the types of child roles in musical theater, while paying particular attention to the attraction of the character of Annie and her accompanying troupe of courageous and inventive orphans to aspiring girl performers. Subsequently, Richard Elliott offers a compelling article about Nina Simone (1933-2003), Judy Collins (b. 1939), and Sandy Denny (1947-1978). Using a song written by Denny and recorded by all three women as the point of departure for the discussion, Elliott examines the musical interpretation of each singer as influenced by age and life experience. Mimi Haddon concludes this section in an attempt to tap into the unique characteristics exhibited in the lyrics and the videos of the British rock

band The Smiths, and how these construct “sanctuaries for social outsiders”—spaces where those who are queer and those who are different can relate and rest.

The final two essays, a discussion of “‘New music’ as a Patriarchal Category” by Lauren Redhead and the uniquely constructed experiential chapter of Caroline Lucas, are especially engaging because they speak directly to composers of new music. In fact, what interests Redhead about the validation given to different works based on the construction of the pieces themselves and the materials used in the creation of the performance is relevant to many composers and scholars in the discipline. However, Redhead’s position seems to give the impression that these hierarchies of value attributed to the music described here occur because the pieces are written by women. Based on considerable experience with a variety of traditionally seated and performed concert works in contrast with more theatrical productions, this contention is erroneous as music composition is not gendered. In this respect, a higher value should be placed on new music works that feature *algorithmic complexities*; this author would like to see Redhead pursue this issue. This concept

is further confirmed by Caroline Lucas’ final chapter, where she allows the reader access to her discomforts, her musings, and her reactions to many of the situations suggested indirectly by Redhead. Certainly, the chapters make an intriguing pairing.

Gender, Age, and Musical Creativity is absolutely a “must” for libraries of feminist musical scholarship. The variety is terrific, and all of the articles are written so that an experienced scholar or someone new to this type of discussion can understand and benefit. Acquire this publication and use it to inform your own work and also the work of your students and colleagues. A delightfully, instructive experience!

Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, composer, author, and researcher, is Director of Instructional Information Technology at the University of North Texas. She is the creator of the blog “afterthefire1964” (<http://afterthefire1964.blogspot.com/>), a resource for families living through the nightmare and distress of watching a loved one succumb to alcohol and/or drug addiction. She is the author of Crossing the Line: Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States (Ashgate, 2006) and is beginning a new edition of that text. An avid martial artist and an (ill-advisedly) aspiring gymnast, she is currently working on a new piece exploring these aspects of her life in connection with electroacoustic music.

COMPACT DISC REVIEWS

Juliana Hall: *Love’s Signature: Songs for Countertenor and Soprano*

Darryl Taylor, countertenor; Juliana Hall, piano; Susan Narucki, soprano; Donald Berman, piano. MSR Classics, CD-54-JH (2017)

MONICA BUCKLAND

What could be more satisfying in the creative world of recorded music than to have a composer, at the height of her powers, compose in the genres in which she seems most at home and assemble exceptional artists to perform and record these works? Juliana Hall’s CD *Love’s Signature* (2017) represents the culmination of all these factors and more. It is her first CD to be dedicated entirely to three of her song cycles.

Love’s Signature celebrates the different types of love through the selection of some of the most meaningful historical literature: the plays of William Shakespeare (1564-1616), which reveal a rich variety

of love; the letters of Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), in which she expresses great affection and warmth for the individuals in her circle; and the poems of Marianne Moore (1887-1972), which convey aspects related to the love of music.

Hall is perhaps unusual owing to the thirty years she has devoted to the art song as a form of musical expression. Although she has composed instrumental solo and chamber works, she has written more than fifty song cycles as well as vocal chamber works. Her compositions exhibit an impressive sensitivity to the setting of the words, with her varied and nuanced interpretation of the texts.

Hall’s pieces have been widely performed at venues and festivals in the USA, the UK, and twenty-four other countries. Notable performances include the selections from her song cycle *Night Dances* (1987) in Dawn Upshaw’s First Songs project at the Morgan Library & Museum in New York and a performance of her tenor song cycle *The Holy Sonnets of John*

Donne (2015) at a Holy Week meditation service at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. Her music has also been recorded and widely broadcast.

The song cycle *O mistress mine* is not a random collection of Shakespeare’s texts, but instead, a cycle with a conscious dramatic arc. Beginning with the lighthearted and energetic “Lawn as white as driven snow,” in which a peddler tries to persuade lads to buy gifts for their sweethearts, the cycle expresses the delights of young love, while engaging the listener with the cry, “Come buy.” In contrast, the four songs at the heart of the cycle—“O mistress mine,” “If music be the food of love,” “Take, o take those lips away,” and “Tell me where is Fancy bred”—all have a darker side that references the torments of being in love. The theme of love and death continues to the last song, “Fear no more the heat o’ th’ sun,” which says that love outlives even death. Hall’s music is broadly tonal, but in a more extended sense, sometimes layering tonal areas on top of

one another, which results in a unique harmonic structure.

The piano always has its own character, at times introducing and mingling with the voice and at other times contrasting with the voice. For example, in “Who is Silvia?” the long, gentle lyrical line is first presented in the left hand of the accompaniment. A nod to Schubert, perhaps, yet only a nod as Hall’s setting maintains an adoring mood, while casting the listener into different harmonic and rhythmic worlds. In “If music be the food of love,” the composer skillfully incorporates “Greensleeves” as a counterpoint to both the vocal line and the chromatic accompaniment. Moreover, rather than doubling or merely “accompanying” the vocal line, towards the end of “Tell me where is Fancy bred,” the piano and voice join forces for the dramatic ringing chords of “Ding dong bell.”

Hall originally composed the cycle for countertenor Brian Asawa, who died in 2016. The performer on the CD is countertenor Darryl Taylor, who is known for his powerful artistry. He approaches Hall’s songs as individually as the composer herself, adapting his tone and style to the particular words. “Who is Sylvia” is silky-smooth and tender, while “This is a very scurvy tune” is presented in a delightfully camp style, with swoops like a slightly drunken nightclub singer—but never exaggerated as to leave good taste behind. The accompaniments are played beautifully by the composer in equal partnership with the singer, so that the performance remains perfectly balanced.

Hall composed *Syllables of Velvet, Sentences of Plush* (1989) early in her career during her year as a Guggenheim Fellow. Instead of poetry, she chose to set the letters of Emily Dickinson (which Dickenson wrote to her future sister-in-law, two cousins, a classmate, a family friend, and a mentor). According to the composer, the letters “contain as much musicality within them as any composer could ask for” (liner notes). The texts are full of affection and contain moments of charm and wit that directly correspond to the style of Dickinson’s poems—all of which are expressed colorfully throughout Hall’s settings. “To Emily Fowler (Ford),” for example, is a wonderful musical painting of Emily running in the chilly weather (“I can’t come in this morning because I am so cold”),

which is achieved through the alternating rapid and sustained passages of the piano and voice.

One striking characteristic of the piano part throughout most of the cycle is that the right-hand part, which is generally active, is at a considerably higher pitch than the vocal line. This gives the listener the impression that the singer is embraced by the two hands of the accompaniment. Only in the last song does the piano come down to earth “at last!” at the conclusion.

The song cycle *Propriety* (1992), based on texts by Marianne Moore, was the result of Hall’s search for poetry about music. She commented: “It was my hope to catch some of the excitement of high-level music-making and some of the depth of profound musical meaning celebrated in these poems, and to accept the message from these poems that music is a gift that contains within it the power to soothe and heal, and to transcend the concerns of daily life with humor and with faith” (*Sparks & Wiry Cries*, “Composer Profile: Juliana Hall”). The title song, “Propriety,” tries to capture the essence or essential quality of music by creating a highly virtuosic and dramatic song that features a declamatory vocal delivery in call and response sections that are varied with softer and more sustained material. “Carnegie Hall: Rescued” uses pianistic figures from the Baroque and Classical periods, which give the listener a feeling of relief that this iconic venue was rescued.

Soprano Susan Narucki and pianist Donald Berman form a singer-pianist partnership that seems ideally suited to this repertoire. Both are advocates of contemporary music: Narucki has given more than 100 world premiere performances of works by composers such as Elliott Carter, George Crumb, and György Kurtág, and Berman has recorded the complete short piano works of Charles Ives and Carl Ruggles. As with the Taylor/Hall combination in the Shakespeare songs, Narucki and Berman sound very much at ease, not only with the musical language of these cycles, but also with the give and take of an equal partnership.

Love’s Signature was recorded at Oktaven Audio, with excellent balance and a sound quality that resembles a live performance: neither too close to the singer nor with that slightly dead sound that signals a studio recording. The booklet is compre-

hensive, providing interesting information on how Hall came to these texts plus some of the musical decisions behind their settings, as well as detailed biographies and the complete texts of the poems and letters. The CD is an organic package of composition, performance, recording, and booklet. In conclusion, the music of Juliana Hall is fresh and constantly surprising. She does not experiment with avant-garde sounds or forms, yet she has found a way to take elements of existing musical idioms and incorporate them into an original style that is always innovative and thoroughly delightful.

Monica Buckland is Music Director of the New Tyneside Orchestra and an Associate of Newnham College, Cambridge; she is currently based in the UK after many years in Switzerland and Germany. A particular focus of her performing career—and her three CDs to date—has always been music by living composers.

Lydia Kakabadse: *Concertato*

Jess Dandy, mezzo-soprano; Sound Collective: Sara Trickey, violin; Sarah-Jane Bradley, viola; Tim Lowe, cello; Ben Griffiths, double bass. Divine Art DDA 25149 (2017)

LYNN GUMERT

Concertato (2017) is British composer Lydia Kakabadse’s third CD release. Four of the six works on the CD—*The Coachman’s Terror, Dance Sketches, Cantus Planus, and Recitativo Arioso + Variations*—are scored for a string quartet that includes a double bass instead of a second violin. Kakabadse is a double bass player, and she believes that the instrument’s distinctive tone quality adds richness and color to the quartet’s sonority. The term *concertato* refers to the Italian Baroque style characterized by the contrast or interaction between two or more groups of instruments or voices, and this idea permeates the album generally.

Kakabadse draws on her multinational heritage (Russian/Georgian father and Greek/Austrian mother) as well as her love of early music. She has studied and taught Middle Eastern and Greek dancing, both of which influence the melodic scales, ornamentations, and rhythms in her work. Although the CD is primarily instrumental, much of her *oeuvre* is choral and vocal; her engagement with poetry and language is evident through the programmatic elements that drive the instrumental forms on this album.