

CD REVIEW 127

TRANSFORMATIONS

The music of Gila (Gillian) Carcas. Various artists. Music & Media NMC109.

Tracks as set out in the text that follows.

Gillian Carcas was born in England in 1963 and studied with Sebastian Forbes, John Casken and others. She received a PhD from Durham University and has taught at Southampton University and the Royal College of Music in London and returned to Israel in 2004. The music on this CD comes under the heading of Transformations but the pieces are mainly slight and inconsequential

By Scottish Rocks of 1990 for flute, piccolo, cello, piano and percussion was inspired by the composers love of Scotland and is a piece full of atmosphere but little else. It is abstract and mainly static.

Gyroscope for clarinet and piano deals with circular motion and dates from 1992 and is a more coherent work and includes some piano effects used by the distinguished British composer Robert Sherlaw Johnson. Music with such titles can be frustrating whereas Sonata, Symphony and Concerto, particularly if in these forms, present no such problems.

I wonder what composers wish to achieve by such uneventful works.

The next work is for violin and viola and is called Song for Joy, also dating from 1992. This is, the best work on this CD so far having a stronger style and using the qualities of these instruments in a concertante fashion.

The solo piano work is Droplets over the Horizon of 1991 which, it is said, inhabits a romantic style but the static style does not engender much interest although there are some rugged moments said to be menacing but the music does not evolve naturally. However, it does have some very good points.

The next work is Cissbury Ring for clarinet in A and piano trio named after one of the two rings on the South Downs. Titles like this can be off putting since the majority of listeners will try to find a connection between the titles and the work itself. This has been unsuccessful with other composers such as Debussy's Fireworks which does not sound like anything pyrotechnical. John Ireland wrote many pieces with titles such as Merry Andrew, Chelsea Reach, The Towing Path etc. and the titles are not reflected in the music.

When the music become agitated, as in Magna for piano, it is promising but inactive music and like a large slab of concrete pavement on a cold and wet day.

Autumn for viola and piano is far more successful as it is more conventional and simple in style. It was written for the composer's father, Laurie, who was a violist. It dates from 1998 and is quite a lovely piece.

Imaginary Moonwalk has nothing to do with Michael Jackson but with Apollo 11 and Neil Armstrong. That it is written for solo harpsichord is interesting. Perhaps the word imaginary is applicable.

The work for solo double bass Indigo Dreams is ugly. It may imitate an Australian didgeridoo but it is still awful.

The composer says that visual images lie behind Piece in Purple and Blue for cello and piano. But that does not help the listener. It does not and cannot conjure up such colours. However, there are a few delightful moments,

The String Quartet no 3 Encountering the Creator of 2009 recalls the Temple in Jerusalem. Here is a good piece with memorable material and which is, basically, conventional and coherent. The melodic content, unlike most of the other works, is welcome. It is the most substantial work lasting about 15 minutes. It is this style that will win the composer friends.

Sadly, it is the job of the reviewer to be honest and I am sorry that I cannot be more positive.

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