

Review: LINDROTH: YTTE; JAFFE: 4 Pieces Quasi Sonata. Offering; GIDEON: Creature to Creature Carl, RobertView Profile. Fanfare - The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors (Nov/Dec, 2014): 449-450.

LINDROTH YTTE, JAFFE 4 Pieces Quasi Sonata. Offering. GIDEON Creature to Creature Laura Gilbert (1 a fl, 2 fl); Jonathan Bagg (va); Daniel Lippel (gtr); Donald Berman (pn); Elizabeth Shammash (mez); Stacy Shames (hp) ALBANY 1483 (56:49 )

This recording comes as an intersection between two composers (who both teach at Duke University) and performers with whom they have collaborated over a series of projects. Scott Lindroth's YTTE's (2008) title is from the omnibus name the "outsider" artist Achilles Rizzoli gave to his oeuvre, "Yield To Total Elation." Rizzoli was an architectural draftsman, and he had (according to Lindroth) a Neoclassical bent. Lindroth (b. 1958) says this is not his own aesthetic, but if we enlarge the definition just a little, I think it does fit. YTTE revels in elegance, clarity, crispness, and formal balance. It is light on its feet, and feels rooted in both dance and archaic folksong (beneath the largely chromatic surface). I also like the fact that it is genuinely fast music, not just in tempo but harmonic rhythm. It also reminds me of some more recent English music, ranging from Britten to Adès.

Stephen Jaffe (b. 1954) is represented by two works. The earlier, Offering (1996) is a trio like Lindroth's, except that the plectra instrument here is harp rather than guitar. Not surprisingly, it has a Debussyan sound, not just in the timbral mix but in its flow and mercurial transformation of materials. Jaffe has a great lyric gift, a knack for memorable motives, and fine dramatic pacing. All of these are evident in both his pieces, and as an example of the last, in Offering three-quarters of the way through there is a beautiful disruption by the sudden sound of a crotale (followed by a bell-tree), a gentle but tonic shock that moves the music into yet another expressive dimension.

Jaffe's Four Pieces Quasi Sonata (2006) is a four-movement duo for viola and piano, that yes, as its title suggests, feels architecturally substantive enough to merit the sonata title, yet also has a lightness of touch that keeps it sweet and playful. The first movement is tenderly ruminative and has a Barberian harmonic feel. The second is a taut rhythmic interchange between the two instruments, a real game. The third is a brief soliloquy that leads directly to the finale, an amiable shuffle (the subtitle is "kleine pop music") that reaches a satisfying climax without breaking much of a sweat. In its mix of elements, and sometimes sharp juxtapositions, I can't help but be reminded a bit of the composer's teacher George Rochberg.

Miriam Gideon (1906-1996) is a little the bit the "odd-composer-out" on the program, at least to my ear. Her Creature to Creature (1985) is a clean and concise setting of poetry by Nancy Cardozo. I suspect it is in the program in part because its ensemble is another variant of the core musicians for the project. For me the main problem is that the work's language is very much in the late-Modernist/high-chromatic, quaintly known a few decades back as Uptown. It's elegant and can be expressive on a moment-to-moment basis, but the moments don't really accumulate into something greater. It also doesn't project a lot of humor, which I think is inherent in these texts, which have some of the most wittily strict rhyme schemes I've encountered in a while.

Performances are excellent throughout. Both Lindroth and Jaffe are composers whose discographies always benefit from increase, and those not yet familiar with their work will find this an excellent introduction. Robert Carl