

Nouveautés en bref

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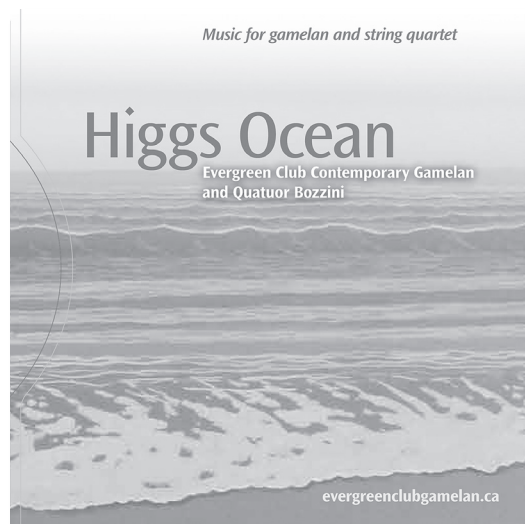
Keiko Devaux

Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan / Quatuor Bozzini

Higgs Ocean: Music for Gamelan and String Quartet

Artifact Music / ART-042 / 2015

Higgs Ocean is not only a unique collaboration between Canadian ensembles The Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan (ECCG) and the Quatuor Bozzini, but a beautiful collection of works by five Canadian composers: Linda Catlin Smith, Michael Oesterle, Ana Sokolović, Petar-Kresimir Klanac, and Mark Duggan. It is an ambitious project to explore the sonic combination of gamelan and string quartet that is extremely successful as each composer approaches this challenge with distinct character both in how to confront the contrasting sounds and tunings, as well as simply in instrumentation. The ECCG, which formed in 1983, is known for being highly explorative in its commissions and works. The ensemble has steadily built a repertoire of Canadian and international commissions and toured internationally. The Quatuor Bozzini, the notoriously playful risk-takers, has been commissioning works and building a vast and stunningly diverse repertoire since 1999. The meeting of these two ensembles opens up rich and complex compositional doors that are met with fervor and precise subtlety in this collection of works. The album is comprised of five pieces, *In the High Branches* (2008, Linda Catlin Smith), *Higgs Ocean* (2008, Michael Oesterle), *In Between* (2008, Ana



Sokolović), *Spe Salvi* (2012, Petar-Kresimir Klanac) and *Pitohui* (2007, Mark Duggan).

The choice of track order on an album should not be underestimated, and in the case of these works, it acts almost as a secondary voice reflecting and dialoguing between the diverse approaches from piece to piece. Linda Catlin Smith's *In the high branches* (2008) allows the ears to calmly align with the juxtaposition of these two ensembles. The album then plunges into the title track *Higgs Ocean* (2008), by Michael Oesterle, which is separated into three movements. He introduces melodic-rhythmic motifs in the strings in the first movement, and in the third movement the use of pizzicato in the strings intermingles with textural timbres of the gamelan. Ana Sokolović's *In Between* (2008) enters with gusto and with both ensembles in full swing. The driving rhythmic motifs eventually cease, leaving us with a steady, quiet pulse in the gamelan, as the quartet gently come back to life underneath. The slow build in the strings creates the sensation of infinite rising. Toward the end of the piece, a musical

saw lends a distinctly eerie and dreamy character. It is a complex and audacious piece that takes many unexpected turns. Petar-Kresimir Klanac's *Spe Salvi* (2012) calms and envelops us in his meditative melody based upon the Gregorian Chant *Victimae paschali*. The album finishes with a work by Mark Duggan, founding member of the ECCG. *Pitohui* (2007) matches the gamelan ensemble beautifully with violin (Mira Benjamin), and cello (Isabelle Bozzini).

musica intima & Turning Point Ensemble

Thirst: Ana Sokolović – Julia Wolfe

Redshift Records / 87553101166 / 2015

Thirst is a collaborative project bringing together two highly acclaimed Canadian contemporary ensembles, Turning Point Ensemble and musica intima to showcase a diverse collection of works by Ana Sokolović (Montreal) and Julia Wolfe (New York). musica intima is an internationally renowned vocal ensemble with a unique method of practice. They rehearse and perform using a shared leadership model, allowing them to freely exchange and share their ideas. Turning Point Ensemble, a large instrumental ensemble based in

Vancouver and founded in 2002, is known for highly innovative and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Ana Sokolović and Julia Wolfe, both internationally celebrated and highly prolific, each demonstrate in their bodies of work a very eclectic range of influences that distinguish them from their contemporaries. Sokolović, drawing from her Serbian roots, her rich Montréal home base, dance, and electroacoustic inspired techniques, to name a few, introduces incredibly innovative perspectives on form and melodic-rhythmic structure. Julia Wolfe carries folk, classical, and rock influences in her tool kit, and is a co-founder of the New York music collective Bang on a Can.

This release demonstrates the versatility and dynamic range of Sokolović's works in the first three tracks. "...and I need a room to receive five thousand people with raised glasses...or...what a glorious day, the birds are singing 'halleluia'..." (2014), commissioned by the Turning Point Ensemble, is a highly innovative work that explores musical elements from the Serbian rock band Ekatarina Velika of Sokolović's youth. Using these elements as source material, she then develops them drawing on techniques used in electroacoustic works. The result is this highly dynamic and rhythmically complex earworm of a masterpiece. *Dring, dring* (2010, rev. /2014), a short and playful vocal work performed by musica intima ensemble, explores the characters and common phrases we inhabit when using the telephone. Each vocalist establishes their own distinct character that works in counterpoint as the piece explores the four sections of: dialing, answering, lullaby, and 'bye-bye' in English, Spanish, Serbian, and French. Thirdly, we are met with *Vez* (2005), which is Serbian for 'embroidery', a solo cello work performed beautifully by Ariel Barnes. *Thirst* (2008), by Julia Wolfe, the title track for the album bringing together the two ensembles, is a 27" work and part VI of the 8-part work '*Water*' (2008), by Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe.



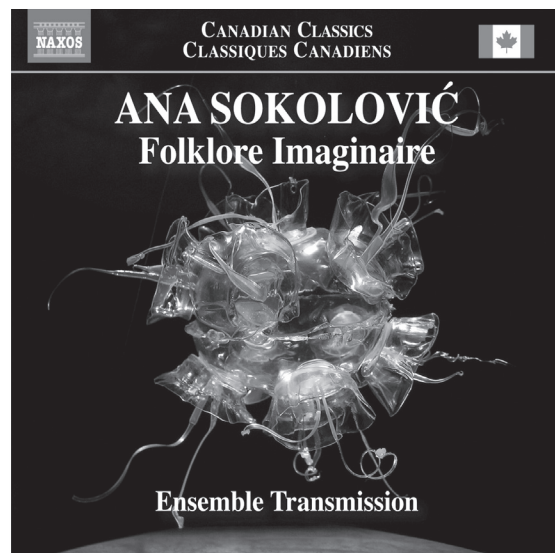
Ensemble Transmission

Folklore imaginaire

Naxos / 8.573304 / 2016

Folklore imaginaire is a celebration of Ana Sokolović's both stylistic and instrumentally diverse nature as a composer. Ranging from the poetic and beautiful, to the rhythmically complex and comical, Sokolović's fresh and dynamic body of work creates a very rich and enjoyable listen from start to finish. Ensemble Transmission, a contemporary ensemble based in Montréal, is a collective of six musicians. Performing on *Folklore imaginaire* are Guy Pelletier (flute), Lori Freedman (clarinet), Alain Giguère (violin), Julie Trudeau (cello), Julien Grégoire (percussion), and Brigitte Poulin (piano). Within Sokolović's six works on this disc there are three solo works (for cello, piano, clarinet), a duet (bass flute and piano), a trio (violin, cello, and piano), and the full sextet for the final track. Three of these works, *Trois études* (1997, rev. 2013) for piano solo, *Mesh* (2004) for clarinet, and *Un bouquet de brume* (1998, rev. 2014) are all world premiere recordings, and the final track *Ciaccona* (2002, rev. 2011) was arranged for Ensemble Transmission.

The album begins with *Vez* (2005) for solo cello. Julie Trudeau performs the piece with intimacy and fierce familiarity as if it were written for her. *Portrait parle* (2006), initially commissioned by the Trio Fibonacci, demonstrates Sokolović's humorous and playful nature. The composer draws poetic inspiration from the "synoptic board of physiognomical lines," a chart that was used by the French Police Department in the 1900 to identify people by displaying variations on various facial parts. The chart, and subsequently Sokolović's piece, is divided into 12 parts, each repre-



senting one facial part; nose, eyes etc. As she explores the different facial details in each of the 12 sections, she often revisits the same musical material re-invented. The chart serves as poetic inspiration, whereas the musical source material is based around clusters. *Trois études* are three short but dynamically diverse and dense *études* that bring us into a sonic dream world. In *Mesh*, commissioned by Lori Freedman, we see Sokolović's playful nature on display again where directives in the score are based on the instructions of an automatic air dryer. *Un bouquet de brume* for piano and bass flute is swirling and beautiful, allowing the flute to melt into the resonance of the piano. The final track is *Ciaccona*. Although it is for the full ensemble, it constantly rearranges itself to give way for momentary solos and smaller ensemble passages, constantly re-inventing the character, size, and sound of the ensemble.