

ensemble and narrator. It is in the vein of the children's ballets on Albany 798 (S/O 2009): perfectly appropriate for young audiences, with no less color, dissonance, and wit than his other works. There are moments that seem to drag a bit without the dancers, though. In his review of several concertos on Artek 62 (S/O 2015), Bradley Lehman wrote "that a man of 78 could write music so endearing, salubrious, and youthful seems a miracle." Hoffer is now 85 and doesn't seem to be slowing down or losing his charm. This album is a delightful treasure.

**PICKARD:** *The Gardener of Aleppo; Daughters of Zion; Snowbound; Serenata Concertata; The Phagotus of Afranio; Ghost Train; 3 Chicken Studies*

Nash Ensemble/ Martyn Brabbins  
BIS 2461 [SACD] 79 minutes

John Pickard's music has been reviewed regularly in ARG, with little consensus. Barry Kilpatrick and Robert Moore were enthusiastic (J/A 2008, M/J 2018); but Stephen Estep, Bradley Lehman, and Allen Gimbel found other works "too showy" (J/A 2013), "a challenge" (M/J 2014), and "bland" (N/D 2017). This album of chamber music runs the gamut of his style and I agree with several of my colleagues. *Serenata Concertata* for flute and ensemble is the earliest work, one of his first commissions. It is more lyrical and pleasant than the later, brasher works on the album. The remaining works have programs that fall into two categories: dark, existential subjects and lighthearted subjects. The darker works include 'Daughters of Zion' for mezzo soprano and ensemble and *The Gardener of Aleppo* for flute, viola, and harp. 'Daughters of Zion' is based on provocative theology questioning the effects Jesus's birth had on the world. In *The Gardener of Aleppo*, delicate instrument colors represent the fragility of life in war. Both of these works are more thought provoking than moving; perhaps intentionally. The remaining works have more lighthearted subjects, though dissonance still abounds. *Snowbound* for bass clarinet, cello, and piano revels in the instruments' dark colors. 'Three Chicken Studies' for solo oboe and *The Phagotus of Afranio* for bassoon and piano are both wind showpieces that use extended techniques for humorous effect. My favorite of them is *Ghost Train*, a bonkers, technicolor romp on the 'Dies Irae' theme. Though his works have compelling ideas and imaginative color, I am frustrated that they often seem to run their course long before the end of the work even in the immensely enjoy-

able *Ghost Train*. What initially catches the ear doesn't always sustain the entire work. In all, interesting music that doesn't quite reach its potential.

**BLAND:** *Classical Soul; Zone Blue; A Higher Level; Cell Fone Blues; Heat Seeking Missile; Playground Dreams; Sunday School; Phunky Phrogs Rag; Up Escalators; 3 Chaconnes in Blue*

Judith Olson, p—Cambria 1256 76 minutes

Ed Bland's (1926-2013) first major artistic statement was the 1959 documentary *The Cry of Jazz*. Though evidently the work of an amateur, it remains important as the first film to speak directly on cultural appropriation in jazz. He soon abandoned filmmaking and found commercial and avant garde success arranging for film and television, as well as for the bands of Dizzy Gillespie, Sun Ra, and Lionel Hampton, among others. He also had a lifelong interest in classical music, experimenting with (though not pursuing) 12-tone music and writing several pieces for the Baltimore, Detroit, and St Louis Symphonies. He was particularly affected by *The Rite of Spring*, saying that it was the first classical piece he had heard that could swing. These piano pieces are relatively late works, all written for Judith Olson. Though firmly rooted in classic jazz progressions, they sometimes spin into Stravinskian dissonance—crunchy, but never unpleasant. *Classical Soul* takes this farthest, seeking to bridge the vernacular of black gospel music with atonal textures without losing unity and emotion. In his own words, it is "Ives meets Ray Charles". It is a fantastic piece and should be widely performed. His improvisatory variation style is the most compelling quality of these pieces—it captures the feeling of jazz more than a number of cross-over works (ones by Stravinsky included). Still, as Olson makes clear, they are precisely notated and structured—and devilishly difficult. These are friendly works, but by no means unsubstantial. An enjoyable and intelligent album.

**DAYTON:** *From Sombre Lands; Grounds; From Forgotten Lands; Letters for John*

Christopher Lowry, va; James Cameron Dennis, Peter Dayton, p; Aireborn Studio Orchestra/ Keith Christopher; Peabody Symphony/ Alan Buxbaum

Dayton 0—39 minutes

This is the second album of Peter Dayton's music that has come our way; Stephanie Ann Boyd found his chamber music sensitive and

heartfelt (J/A 2018, new). This album is more expansive and retains the essentially personal nature of his music. It is a tribute to his fruitful artistic relationship with abstract landscape painter John Hitchens. Dayton wrote the solo piano work 'From Sombre Lands' after Hitchens's painting of the same name. His subsequent arrangement for orchestra inspired Hitchens to revisit the painting with bold new colors, which in turn spawned the entirely new symphonic poem *From Forgotten Lands*. These are inquisitive and mystical works with a keen sense of drama and bold orchestral colors. These darker, more violent works stand in stark contrast to the pastoral *Grounds* for string orchestra, written with the English countryside in mind. It is beautiful lush ensemble textures lead to tender string solos, as if a walker in the countryside stopped to admire the ripples in a puddle or a falling leaf. Dayton's compositional range is impressive; his emotional, personal touch remains consistent. There is plenty to enjoy in this fantastic album I look forward to hearing more from him.

**WHITACRE:** *Lux Aurumque; October; A Boy and a Girl; Sleep*

Joby Burgess, Sam Wilson, Calum Huggan, Rob Farrer, marimba

Signum 625—21 minutes

These are arrangements of choral works by Eric Whitacre for marimbas, with some appearances by vibraphones. These arrangements are not idiomatic to the instruments I don't think marimba tremolo is pleasant or effective for this slow, drawn out music. This would not be the place to start if you are new to Whitacre. If you know his music, you probably already know whether you like his saccharine, inspirational aesthetic. This won't change your mind, nor will it draw you away from the original choral works.

**REICH:** *Quartet*; **SIMCOCK:** *Suite for Percussion Quintet*; **COREA:** *Duet Suite*; **LOCKE:** *Her Sanctuary*; **OZONE:** *Kato's Revenge*

LSO Percussion Ensemble

LSO 5090—79 minutes

Here is some more inspired music for pitched percussion. This is the second album by the LSO Percussion ensemble; the first was a 2016 all Reich release with his Sextet, 'Clapping Music', and *Music for Pieces of Wood* (LSO 5073, not reviewed). The Reich connection continues here with the second recording of *Quartet*, originally commissioned for and recorded by the Colin Currie Group

(Nonesuch 565676, J/A 2018). Rob Haskins found it enjoyable, but thought it lacked the depth and excitement of the earlier works. Though I agree that it's not top drawer Reich, I find the piece's presentation here in the context of other jazz pieces effective. All pieces involve vibraphone, and two (by Chick Corea and Makoto Ozone) were conceived as jazz duos with the great vibraphonist Gary Burton. The LSO Percussion's performance of *Quartet* is freer and more relaxed, which works for this piece and program. The central piece is the first recording of *Suite for Percussion Quintet* by ensemble member Gwilym Simcock. It is a 40 minute homage to his favorite jazz groups, with an ambitious scale that sometimes reminded me of Pat Metheny's *Way Up*. Reich's melodic influence is also palpable. The kinetic sections stay spontaneous and the calmer, more drawn out sections are structured intuitively. His love for this ensemble is clear thru the joyful and energetic writing and the beautiful cohesion of the performance. This is a wonderful album a joyful tribute to contemporary jazz and its musical exchange with minimalism.

**WITTER JOHNSON:** *Fairtrade?*; **CAMPBELL:** *Frail Skies*; **HORROCKS HOPAYIAN:** *A Danc-ing Place (Scherzo)*; **SHIN:** *In this Valley of Dying Stars*; **ROTH:** *Bone Palace Ballet*; **SERGEANT:** *But Today We Collect Ads*; **GIGUERE:** *Revealing*; **SIEM:** *Ojos Del Cielo*; **MORGAN WILLIAMS:** *Scoot*; **TAPLIN:** *Ebbing Tides*; **ASHBY:** *Desires*; **LEE:** *Brixton Briefcase*

London Symphony/ Francois Xavier Roth

LSO 5092—68 minutes

The Panufnik Composers Scheme (named for Andrzej Panufnik) is a program in partnership with the London Symphony to give young and emerging composers a chance to have a short composition played by the London Symphony. This is the third set of recordings from this project. Most of these pieces are experiments with texture, color, and even aleatory. This means that some feel underdeveloped or haphazard; some are also unpleasantly loud and cacophonous. I suppose this excitement is inevitable when young composers take a renowned, expert orchestra for a test drive. There are moments of brilliance, too. Ayanna Witter Johnson's 'Fairtrade?' examines the high human cost of the global demand for cheap clothing. Her imaginative evocations of machinery never overshadow the human concern central to the piece. I would love to hear this developed into a longer work. Alex Roth's 'Bone Palace