

Perhaps even more than she could have imagined: compared to clips of the early Hawkins ensemble performances, it's a wonder to hear just how far new-music performance has come in 75 years. Finally, it seems, she has interpreters dexterous enough to keep up with her utopian, hairpin velocity. And calling in Peter Evans to tackle the impossible trumpet writing was curatorial brilliance. Though Evans is a vastly different player from Lucia's chosen Gerald Schwartz – less technically careful or classically 'beautiful' – his seemingly effortless abandon in the high-stakes extremities is a welcome reminder of the longevity of Dlugoszewski's impact on the instrument's modernity: many of new music's brass techniques were seeded first by her suggestion. Evans plays like a long-lost child of this music, and his touch lends the concerto a delirious sense of instantaneity.

But Evans, an American, is conspicuous here: the album is a predominantly German-speaking affair. Which isn't theoretically a problem – Americans do the inverse all the time – except that it's not an isolated phenomenon. Like Musikfabrik's Partch project ten years ago, or the mounting of Braxton's *Trillium* in Prague in 2023, American cultural negligence continues to foist responsibility on to Europe for the upkeep of our less-orthodox inheritances: as I write this, Musikfabrik is busy preparing a night of Hawkins/Dlugoszewski ballets for MaerzMusik in Berlin. America banks on other governments to fund what our novelty-fuelled performance economy can't spare the time to preserve, and the result has been a contemporary experimentalism increasingly ignorant to its own ancestry. Much is owed to Klangforum for the Dlugoszewski renaissance, but it begs the question why it took enterprising Austrians to rediscover an artist reared in the Corn Belt? Perhaps, if we showed more care for our weird vanguard, we could learn to better love the industrial mid-American grandeur that such a reckless intellectual independence as hers makes almost holy.

Ty Bouque

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Linda Catlin Smith, Cassandra Miller, Laurence Crane, *Folks' Music*.

Chamber Choir Ireland, Hillier, Esposito Quartet. Louth Contemporary Music, LCMS2302.

If the ongoing tumult of our fast-paced reality doesn't provide enough fodder for contemplation, consider adding one more item to your list – the state of things with new music. Although

minuscule in comparison with more pressing concerns, there is a crucial question articulated by Paul Griffiths in his liner notes for *Folks' Music*: what happens to compositions after their inaugural and often solitary performance? 'Festivals come and go. First performances also. Where new music is concerned, the instincts of the throwaway culture have largely taken over. A new piece, even by a composer of acknowledged distinction, will be performed a few times and then discarded. On to the next one,' writes Griffiths.<sup>1</sup> Whether this is because new music has been contaminated by the toxic by-products of our excessively saturated information society, affecting the way our tiny music economy works, is irrelevant. The reality is that most pieces do not get a second performance.

But should all pieces be recorded and preserved for future generations, thereby increasing our digital footprint with gigabytes of data? Certainly not! However, in 2023, one organisation – the Louth Contemporary Music Society – successfully managed to preserve music that really mattered. *In C Irish* has become a documented piece of history, allowing listeners worldwide to live through the first performance of Terry Riley's infamous *In C* played by traditional Irish musicians on traditional instruments. Their latest offering, *Folks' Music*, features two choral works – *The City, Full of People* by Cassandra Miller and *Folio* by Linda Catlin Smith – as well as *String Quartet No. 2* by Laurence Crane. These compositions, commissioned by LCMS' co-founder Eamonn Quinn, were initially performed and recorded live at the LCMS midsummer weekend festival in 2023. Now existing in digital form, the question becomes more relevant than ever: do they deserve to be preserved into the future?

*The City, Full of People* by Cassandra Miller opens the album with its gleaming contrapuntal bliss, whose sheer beauty, typical of any polyphonic work, can only be grasped unilaterally, from one viewpoint only. Over its 16 minutes, the listener gets to enjoy a moving performance by Chamber Choir Ireland conducted by Paul Hillier. The choir, strategically divided into six groups encircling the audience, creates a unique spatial dynamic that disperses an omnipresent radiance, compensating for the inherent human limitation in focusing on multiple vocal lines simultaneously. Fortunately, the recording successfully captures and preserves these spatial reverberations. In her characteristic approach to borrowing pre-existing material and infusing it

<sup>1</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Folks' Music* liner notes.

with personal idiosyncrasies, Miller drew inspiration from three phrases in Thomas Tallis' 1560s setting of verses from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. She expanded these phrases into three distinct segments: the first serving as an introduction and foreshadowing the impending wound-up intensity and heavy turmoil of the second part with its gradual build-up, while the third functions as a tranquil postlude – a contemplative afterword.

Much has already been said about the parallels between early music and new music: for example, the way time works in such compositions and, more broadly, how we listen to them. It is no wonder that such fusions have become commonplace, yet achieving a successful and engaging synthesis is not easy; it requires great skill and, perhaps, a bit of luck. In Miller's case, one can instantly recognise the echoes of Tallis' old music from the distant past with its dominant-tonic resolutions leapfrogging each other. Yet there is something alluringly odd about this music: the melodic fragments intentionally avoid coincidence, coming in and out of focus at will. Such blissful cacophony has increasingly become a feature of music written in the past few years, resembling, to me at least, our daily existence. Just as in life, choices must be made and sonic sacrifices accepted. The same holds true for *The City, Full of People*: its tenacious blend of stillness and momentum deserves careful consideration.

The second piece on the album, Laurence Crane's *String Quartet No. 2* played by the Esposito Quartet, also explores dominant-tonic resolutions, but in a more direct way. It opens with chorale-style tonic and dominant 7th chords that alternate, creating a monumental sense of push and pull, just like in the European music of the common-practice period. Hence, the title of the work, carrying the burden of tradition, seems more than appropriate, though one will not find excessively ornate melodic lines, intertwining into a complex web of motifs and chords, or vibrato-rich timbres of violin, viola or cello. It would not be Laurence Crane himself were he to simply copy older work's features and traits without adding his own twist to the established genre of the past: the same swaying motion of the tonic-dominant relationship is transplanted on to any two chords that happen to neighbour each other. They rock back and forth, occasionally losing their charted path and leading listeners to unknown places.

Here, repetition plays a significant role in discombobulating and stupefying: chords resolve in slightly different ways or contain subtle alterations. Sometimes, they follow up with melodic

extensions, elegantly tripping the listener up in one way or another but always unexpectedly. It is precisely this feature – the subtle type of repetition – that doesn't render the development of the piece predictable. Conversely, his earlier piano works built on the more direct, surface-layer repetitions and unexpected changes that undermined their flow. *String Quartet No. 2* is certainly one of Crane's silkier and more placid pieces. Unlike his previous work *Natural World*, which truly struck as a fresh approach in Crane's writing, this composition feels like a return to a well-refined formula. We are bestowed with musical artefacts from a time long gone only to make sense of how we hear and perceive them here and now, in their transcendental acoustic glory.

The sense of crisp resolution, crucial to Crane's work, gives way to more nuanced and intertwined interactions in Linda Catlin Smith's *Folio*, where beautiful vocal lines flow freely and wander in different directions. The words are set to texts in two collections of writings by Emily Dickinson: *The Gorgeous Nothings*, which features her envelope writings (fragments of poetry penned on used envelopes), and *Open Folios*, which presents facsimiles of some of her later writings. While certainly pleasant to the ears, given the magnificent performance by Chamber Choir Ireland under the direction of Paul Hillier, I wish there were more unexpected changes of texture and register to create an icy sense of drama – something I genuinely appreciate in Smith's writing. The composer's recent portrait album *Dark Flower*, on Redshift Records, stands as a fine testament to her abilities. In *Folio*, the music gets slightly louder and more apprehensive over time, and the occasional chromatic shifts help vary the colour. Yet the conclusion of the piece may leave some listeners feeling less fulfilled.

But to answer the question posed above: should the pieces on *Folks' Music* be preserved into the future? Certainly yes! They deserve to be played over and over again and appreciated from different perspectives, both vertical and horizontal, textural and polyphonic, modern and old. And while they all have one foot in the past, with various remnants of chords, texts and consonances, the other foot anchors sturdily in the future.

Marat Ingeldeev

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Eva Zöllner, *voces, señales*. Genuin, GEN 23838.

This is an album of contemporary accordion music from Colombia, written either for