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Fanfare Magazine Issue 45:6 (Jul/Aug 2022)
Henry Fogel (Orchestral VI)

HARBACH *Visions of Hildegard. Mischances of Life. The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky. Eclipsis lunae. Spaindango – a Tango Caprice* • David Angus, cond; London PO •
MSR 1714 (70:10)

REVIEW

Composer Barbara Harbach (b. 1946), who has been on the faculty of the University of Missouri-St. Louis since 2004, is fortunate in having much of her music recorded, the majority on MSR. This disc is titled *Orchestral Music: VI*. David Angus and the London Philharmonic Orchestra have made many of the recordings, which is also fortunate, because both conductor and orchestra are familiar with her idiom and perform Harbach's music with real commitment.

Her compositional style is tonal and often quite lyrical, rather gentle in nature, and displaying a strong melodic gift. This is a style that would probably not appeal to those who believe that contemporary music must be challenging, difficult to absorb, and in some way filled with conflict. However, the word that keeps coming to my mind as I listen is "beautiful." All the works here was composed in 2017 and 2018. *Visions of Hildegard* was inspired by the medieval woman composer Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179). Harbach is a skilled organist and harpsichordist, so it is not surprising that she has an affinity for early music. The work is in three movements and is an orchestration of an earlier work for violin and piano. It gains from the additional colors provided by the orchestra. Harbach's considerable skill at orchestration is evident from the outset. In the third movement, "O ignee Spiritus" (O fiery Spirit), the instrumentation recalls the sound of an organ, in part through the use of sonorous lower brass. There is a real sense of grandeur to *Visions of Hildegard*, and at 15 minutes the work is the right length to find a spot-on orchestra concerts if conductors had sufficient curiosity to discover it.

Mischances of Life is an orchestral suite based on Harbach's critically praised opera *O Pioneers!* which is described in the notes as a work involving horrendous tragedy. I must admit that I would never have surmised this from the suite. Only in the final movement is the unsettling nature of the libretto, adapted from Willa Cather's 1913 novel of the same name, apparent—the music changes meter frequently, revealing darker colors and harmonic tension. Otherwise, I find the suite an attractive 25-minute work but without the gravitas I hear in the rest of the program.

The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky is a three-movement orchestral suite that takes its title from Bamewawagezhikaquay, the Native American name of the early 19th-century writer Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, who was part Ojibwa. The name translates as "Woman of the Sound that Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky." The first movement is introspective, reflective of Schoolcraft's poem "Pensive Hours." The second movement, "Luna and Stella" (Moon and Stars), is colorful and joyous. The last movement, "Trail of Tears," dramatically recalls the forced relocation marches that the U.S. government sent Native Americans on after evicting them from their homeland. Harbach has written a poem to accompany this movement, which is printed in the booklet. The music is very moving, making for a stark contrast to the preceding movements.

Eclipsis lunae is an exciting dramatic tone poem that can stand on its own, but which benefits from reading the composer's notes (despite the work's title, she describes a solar eclipse rather than a lunar one). "When the people saw that the moon was beginning to cover the sun, they became deeply distressed and anxious. To drive out the evil spirit that was covering the sun, they thought that music might dispel the darkness." The music describes an arc of emotion from mounting fear to triumph as their prayers are answered and the ritual succeeds. "As the sun began to reappear and get larger, the people rejoiced in 'how high the moon,' joyously playing the song that Ella Fitzgerald made famous."

The brief (five minute) *Spaindango - a Tango Caprice* was originally written for solo harpsichord or piano. To quote the composer, the music "features antique flourishes in vivid dialogue with 20th-century madness. Varying meters and quickly changing orchestration keep the listener off balance." The music demonstrates another of Harbach's qualities that I have always appreciated: humor. In contrast to the earnest seriousness of so much contemporary music she is not afraid to wink or smile occasionally.

MSR's recorded sound is excellent; the performances are all that a composer might hope for, and the booklet is a great help for the listener new to Harbach. I don't know if these recordings are leading to orchestral performances in America, but they should. Warmly recommended.

Fanfare Magazine, Issue 45:2 (Nov/Dec 2021)
Maria Nockin (Chamber Music VI)

HARBACH *Civil-Civility*.¹ *Visions of Hildegard*.² *Cuatro Danzas*.³ *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*⁴ • ¹James Richards, cond; ^{1, 4}Stella Markou (sop); ^{2, 4}Jane Price, ¹Julia Sakharova (vn); ^{1, 3}Jennifer Mazzone (fl); Alla Voskoboinikova (pn); ¹St Louis CO • MSR 1695 (76:57 📖)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW: A Chat with Prolific Composer Barbara Harbach

Barbara Harbach has an enormous catalog of works, including symphonies, operas, chamber works, choral music, and film scores. She has also arranged numerous Baroque pieces for modern instruments, and she is a keyboard performer of spectacular virtuosity. For her current recording, she has set some of her thoughts on civil rights, and women's rights and their achievements, as well as the treatment of Native Americans, in musical terms.

How did you stay busy and sane during the pandemic? Did you compose much? Did you do things you had never done before? What new ideas have jelled in your mind since the beginning of the pandemic?

That reminds me of being asked, "What did you do on your summer vacation?" Only this time the passing of the months was longer, darker, with no finish like the excitement of returning to school with new supplies. What I did begin during the required hibernation was to digitize the dozens of microfilm facsimiles of 18th-century women and men's compositions that I accumulated over several decades. I had ordered most of them from the British Library or Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and a few were given by colleagues. Some of the copies were in good shape, some were readable, and some required an imagination to fill in the notes or decipher the film-deteriorated manuscript. I am digitizing these manuscripts not to publish them, but to share them with interested colleagues who may find them useful for research. Learning several new software techniques was a challenge, but then challenges are supposed to be good for our brains! During the digitization, I came across some interesting tidbits. Elizabeth Weichsell Billington (1765/68–1818) was one of the greatest singers England ever produced. She was known for her natural voice, perfect technical control, wide range, head register, accurate intonation, and brilliant and original ornaments. She was born into a musical family. Her father, Carl Weichsell, was a transplanted German oboist and clarinet player, and her mother was a well-known singer. At an early age she accompanied her violinist brother on the keyboard. She studied singing with J. C. Bach and keyboard with J. S. Schroeter. After the death of Bach, she studied

voice with James Billington, a singing teacher as well as a double bass player. She married him in 1783.

Haydn called her "ein grosses Genie," a great genius, and she had triumphant tours of England and Italy. After the death of her husband, she married her second husband, a Frenchman, M. Felissent. Apparently, he mistreated her, for she soon left him. Unfortunately, he reappeared in her life, and she went to Italy with him, where he allegedly murdered her in 1818. Her story could be an opera in the making!

Weichsell wrote two sets of keyboard music, both before she was 12. The first was *Three Lessons for the Harpsichord or the Pianoforte*, c. 1775, op. 1. The title page adds, "A Child of eight Years of Age." The title page of her second set states: *Six Progressive Lessons for the Harpsichord or Piano Forte* composed by Mrs. Billington, Late Miss E. Weichsell, op. 2/2. It was written when Weichsell was 11. The title page calls these pieces *Lessons*, but the titles of all the individual pieces in the body of the work lists them as *Sonatas*. These compositions, op. 1, are amazing for an eight-year old or even for an 11-year-old. Weichsell apparently understood the intricacies of the two-voice texture and two-part form of the times, the complexity of rhythmic variety, and virtuosic technique. Even at this young age, no movements are alike in form; she did not write to a formula. Each of the sonatas of op. 1 is in two movements. Weichsell surprises the listener with unexpected shifts to 16th note passages, creating a momentary turbulence. She often creates other surprises by not going to the expected note or chords of resolution, but instead going to the higher or lower octave displacement.

Another interesting item I rediscovered as I was digitizing the manuscripts was by "A Lady," with no other identifying information. She flourished in the 18th century, and likely fits the social profile of other women composers of the time. For some reason, though, she chose to remain anonymous, perhaps because her family considered composition an inappropriate occupation for a lady. At this time, women musicians usually came from the aristocracy, the convent, or from a family of musicians and instrument builders. No biographical information or details regarding this publication exist, but her *Six Lessons for Harpsichord* attest to her talent and intelligence.

All the facsimiles that I work with are a fascinating and intriguing addition in the study of English women keyboard composers of the 18th century such as Elisabetta de Gambarini, Elizabeth Turner, Elizabeth Hardin, and Jane Freer. All available from HMP (Harbach Music Publishing). Many of these women were also child prodigies on the keyboard or singers who became acclaimed during their lifetimes. Unfortunately, these women were forgotten and overlooked in the succeeding years by music historians. Every woman composer that is recovered and every new edition that is published provides another link in the history of 18th-century women composers.

During the past months of seclusion from the world, I started recording excerpts of my 18th-century women composers, eventually to post them on my website so that others may get a chance to hear some of these intriguing and unknown compositions and judge for themselves the quality of the music. Consequently, I learned so much about self-recording that I now know why I leave recording in the hands of professionals such as Richard Price of Candlewood Digital, who has recorded and edited most of my later CDs.

Your CD contains a piece called Civil-Civility. How would you define it?

Civil-Civility depicts the acts and writings of courageous women who I felt defied all odds to help women and humanity. Women have historically struggled to achieve their rights in patriarchal societies since the time of the ninth-century composer Kassia. She was born to a wealthy family in Constantinople and refused to accept the dictums for feminine behavior. Therefore, she founded a convent. The chamber orchestra piece, *Civil-Civility*, continues the resistance by highlighting six women who made a difference in their lifetimes despite prejudice, ignorance, arrogance, and chauvinism. All were quintessential role models. Written in six movements, the various ensembles capture the spirits of these intrepid women and create musical portraits.

“Sentiments”: Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was an American suffragist, social activist, abolitionist, and leading figure of the early women’s rights movement. The melody passes from one instrument to another in equality to ensure that “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.” Perhaps fighting for equal rights produces unexpected allies and unusual sentiments among the participating instruments in the string orchestra.

“Gift of Mystery”: Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962) is revered as a political figure, diplomat, and activist. She was the longest-serving First Lady of the United States, and even campaigned and gave speeches for her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. “Gift of Mystery” is a wordless vocalise for soprano, violin, and piano. Often when a woman speaks, her words go unheeded. Perhaps a wordless movement gives more prescience than if words are used and sung. Certainly, in the case of Eleanor Roosevelt, her words did not go unheard.

“Memories of Our Lives”: Rosa Parks (1913–2005) is known nationally as the “mother of the modern-day civil rights movement” in America. In *Memories of Our Lives*, there are 12 complete variations of the eight-measure passacaglia theme, with the 13th being only a partial statement of the theme.

“Committed”: Margaret Mead (1901–1978) was an American anthropologist, author, and speaker in the 1960s and 1970s. In “Committed” I was inspired to write a two-part piece for string orchestra with flute and piano. The first

part is newly composed and projects the feeling of peace, while the second portion is based on the German chorale *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* (In Peace and Joy I Now Depart). This joyous chorale was written by Martin Luther (1483–1546).

“Light of Truth”: Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931) was a former slave who became a journalist and launched a virtual one-woman crusade against the vicious practice of lynching. “Light of Truth” is a set of variations for string orchestra, and perhaps the variations could be interpreted as searching for truth. The slight tango feel that begins in variation five is usually expressed by the viola. All instruments enjoy tossing the melodies back and forth.

“Ain’t I a Woman?”: Sojourner Truth (1797–1883). She was born into slavery and became an African-American abolitionist and women’s rights activist. In 1828, she went to court to regain custody of her son, and she became the first black woman to win such a case against a white man. Written for soprano, piano, and chamber string orchestra, the short introduction opens with a dramatic and declamatory statement, “And Ain’t I a Woman?” At the end of the piece, she contemplates the celestial, and begins to assert her strength and independence, “I’m not going to die, I’m going home like a shooting star.” This is a musical tribute to the strength and courage of Sojourner Truth and all the women who, each in their own way, exhibit boundless courage and fortitude against sometimes unseemly odds.

How would you describe Hildegard’s music for modern listeners?

I have admired Hildegard of Bingen for years! Her music with the soaring melodic lines is almost spiritual and unworldly in its beauty. My *Visions of Hildegard* was inspired by Hildegard (1098–1179) and her writings and music. Amazingly, she founded the monasteries of Rupertsberg in 1150 and Eibingen in 1165. Known as Saint Hildegard, or Sibyl of the Rhine, she was known as an abbess, writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, and visionary. Many consider her to be the founder of natural history in Germany. She was a composer of sacred monophony and is the most recorded Medieval composer in modern history. It was an interesting and mysterious journey to be inspired by the words that Hildegard used and then create melodies and harmonies that would enhance the texts, all the while conscious of the fact that Hildegard was inspired by these same words.

The first movement, “O vis eternitatis” (O power within eternity) is a Responsory for the Creator and Redeemer. “O nobilissima viriditas” (O noblest green viridity), the second movement, is a responsory for virgins. The last movement, “O ignee Spiritus” (O fiery Spirit) is a hymn to the Holy Spirit. The movements have varying meters; the sections reflect the words, from a gentle lullaby to rhythmic and exciting, energetic, and propelling tempos, all using the vivid colors of the violin and piano.

How did you come to use aspects of Spanish flamenco and Argentine tango in Cuatro Danzas?

Cuatro Danzas para Flute y Piano is a four-movement piece with a Spanish flavor and frenzied outer movements. The music anticipated my move to the Southwest with its Spanish influences.

Danza Flamenco begins with a whirling waltz made of toccata-like 16th notes in the high register of the piano, and then rapidly descends to the lower range. Beginning with a trill, the flute joins with the melody while the piano again whirls down the keyboard, but only halfway. Odd juxtapositions of intervals, swiftly changing modes, sequences, clashes of seconds, interjections of 4/4 time, phrase repetitions but with different accompaniments are in the piano, until a descending section with trills in the flute and tremolos in the piano introduce the tango section. The tango in 2/4 is introduced by the piano with dotted rhythms typical of the tango. The right hand has clusters of chords with seconds and sevenths. Glissandi and trills abound, leading to the last section, which combines the two styles flamenco and tango. The opening material of whirling 16th notes returns, and then the piece ends abruptly with a staccato note in both parts.

La Mente (Only in the Mind) is a three-part ABA form. A plaintive, soaring, improvisatory, and decorated solo flute opens the movement and is repeated seven times, often starting on a different beat in the measure. A flourish in the piano introduces the B section with several variations that have rhythms reminiscent of tango rhythms. In the final section, the tango rhythm continues, while the flute and right hand play melodic adaptations of the first section.

Andante para vihuelo de penole begins with the left hand of the piano resembling the sound of a plectrum-plucked Spanish Renaissance guitar. The first part has a slow-moving lyrical melody in the flute over a walking bass in the left hand. The next section is faster with a swing, a wider range, with the right hand and flute in duets at the octave, thirds, and canons, until a *fortissimo* dynamic is reached, along with demanding chords in the piano and trills in the flute.

Danza-Delirio is a two-part movement with a coda. Each part has its own ostinato bass part, rapid scales, three-octave glissandi, fast arpeggios, and dramatic left-hand clusters. The coda deceptively sounds like a recapitulation, but it is whimsically truncated. I have often written pieces incorporating tango rhythms, as in *Midnight Tango* from the symphony *Night Soundings* for orchestra, which can be heard on my CD *Orchestral Music II*.

How did you get interested in Jane Johnston Schoolcraft? Did you once live near the Ojibwe Reservation? What is her name in Ojibwe and what does it signify?

I wrote *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, a cycle of four pieces for soprano, violin, and piano, inspired by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's Ojibwe name. Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (1800–1842) was an extraordinary Native American princess in the Ojibwe tribe of the North Shore of Lake Huron and both shores of Lake Superior. The Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Ojibwe Indians lived in this region of the Great Lakes for more than 500 years. Jane's Indian name was Bame-wa-wa-ge-zhik-a-quay, which translates as "Woman of the Sound that Stars Make Rushing through the Sky." She was the granddaughter of the famous Ojibwe Chief Waub Ojeeg, and her mother, Susan, or Shau-gush-co-da-way-Quay, was the daughter of the chief. Jane's father, John Johnston, was a white fur trader. Jane was educated, which was unusual for a young Ojibwe girl at that time.

She gained a great deal of education from her Anglo-American father teaching her English, reading, writing, the Bible, and his love of history and poetry. Her father even took her to study in Ireland and then to England. She married a white man, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, as did her mother. Since Jane spoke both English and Ojibwe, she provided access to the Ojibwe community for her husband. He learned its oral history and traditions and he published the stories.

Jane Johnston Schoolcraft was the first known Native American poet and the first known Native American woman writer. Her husband published her poems and stories. Her writings and poems in English paralleled those of Anglo-American and British writers such as William Wordsworth and Lydia Sigourney.

"And Musing Awhile," the first movement of the song cycle, is an excerpt taken from her poem, "Pensive Hours." The last line of the poem is "So pensively joyful, so humbly sublime."

The author of the second movement, "Ojibwa Prayer," is unknown. The language of the *Ojibwa Prayer* is also known in Chippewa, Saulteaux, Southern Ojibwa, and Mississippi Ojibwa. The prayer was taken from Bishop Frederick Baraga's Catechism written in the middle 1800s. The setting portrays in music the wind of the Great Spirit, the weakness of the many children, the beauty of the sunsets and the many things that the Spirit has made. The prayer asks for wisdom from the lessons that come from earthly beauty, so when life fades, their beauty comes to you.

Inspired to write the lyrics and music for the third movement, "The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky," I combined virtuosity and lyricism to musically portray the many diverse facets of Schoolcraft's short life. The following is an excerpt from the movement:

The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky

A woman –
Ojibwe and French-Canadian,
American, Irish, and English.
Eloquent, lyrical, emotion stirring.
Born in Sault Ste. Marie,
Upper peninsula, Michigan.
Of mixed bloods, a métis,
She was red and white at once.
Her mother, Susan, daughter of a famous war chief.
Her father, John, was Scotch-Irish.
Jane was raised to be an Ojibwe elite,
And a member of white, high society.

For the last movement, "Trail of Tears," I was moved to write the lyrics of the Cherokee's tragic journey. Evicted from their Southeastern homelands by the federal government in the 1830s, Native Americans were forced to march to eastern Oklahoma. The long walk became known as the Trail of Tears, an ordeal of disease, starvation, and death. The Cherokee Nation was one of the largest native groups in America, and their removal took the longest. The Cherokee were forced to leave their homes and march more than 1,200 miles inland to present-day Oklahoma. Beginning in the summer of 1838 and continuing into the winter, approximately 15,000 Cherokee were relocated, and more than 4,000 died from disease, exhaustion, or exposure. In the Cherokee language, this event is referred to as "the trail where they cried," giving rise to the English Trail of Tears. The entire story is told through a child's eyes. The following is an excerpt from the movement:

The banging was so loud!
They broke through the door.
The soldiers hit my father.
They pushed my mother at sword point.
My little sister cried and whimpered.
"Shut up," they said, "Shut up."
O Great Spirit we had hope.

When did you first learn of the Trail of Tears? Was it in your schoolbooks? Do you hope to teach people about it with your concert piece?

I have known the Ojibwa Prayer for many years and knew that I wanted to write a piece on the moving and mystical lyrics for soprano, violin, and piano. During my research I became intrigued with the story of Jane

Schoolcraft, and the Trail of Tears became the song cycle's culmination in telling a small part of the story of our First Generation's triumphs and tragedies.

I understand you have retired from full-time teaching. Do you still have some students? Are you mentoring young women composers?

We moved to New Mexico right before the pandemic became the worldwide crisis, and I am looking forward to making new contacts within the musical communities. I would love to mentor young women composers as well as young male composers. It is difficult for women composers to receive the acknowledgement that their music deserves—a centuries-long struggle. According to a report from Donne (donne-uk.org), "Equality and Diversity in Concert Halls," their in-depth analysis of composers' works scheduled for the 2020–2021 season in 100 orchestras from 27 countries shows that only 11.45 percent of the scheduled concerts worldwide included compositions by women. That is a small improvement over the last few years; 88.55 percent of the music played was written by men. I should also mention that contemporary male composers have difficulty getting their orchestral works programmed, since many orchestras tend to do pieces in the historical orchestral canon.

I look forward to reaching out to the local musical community, and this fall I will present a video lecture to the American Guild of Organists, "Women Composers for the Organ," featuring historical and contemporary composers and their works.

Where did you come from?

Both my husband, Thomas George, and I are from Pennsylvania, but we met at Yale. Tom is a chemist/physicist/administrator, and a pianist, who just released a jazz trio CD with MSR Classics, *Stardust*, based on the tunes of Hoagy Carmichael. This follows two CDs of his, also on MSR Classics, that featured women jazz composers. We are what I would call "academic gypsies," having been in academic communities all our careers from Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, New York, Washington State, Missouri, and now New Mexico. I even did a year at the Frankfurt Musikhochschule studying classical pipe organ with the renowned pedagogue Helmut Walcha.

Did you find your musical outlook changed with the climate?

While here in New Mexico, I was commissioned by the Missouri American Wild Ensemble's septet for flute, clarinet, horn, violin, viola, cello, and percussion, and the piece will be performed in celebration of the Missouri Bicentennial this year 2021. The title of the composition is *Following the Sacred Sun* – Suite for Chamber Ensemble, and is a four-movement suite that follows the adventures of Sacred Sun or Mi-Ho'n-Ga (1809?–1836?), an

18-year-old young woman who left her Osage fur-trapping family and friends in Saline County, central Missouri, to travel to France. She was a beautiful woman, and the French embraced her and her fellow Osage travelers. Lauded and treated royally, she stayed in luxury hotels, ate rich and exotic foods, and attended French operas, arriving in fancy carriages. As the French tastes turned to other exoticisms, the Osage people along with their manager became destitute. Sacred Sun had twin daughters that were born in Belgium, and she gave one away to a wealthy Belgian woman. The Osage spent the next few years traveling in Europe. Fortunately, when the Marquis de Lafayette, French hero of the American Revolutionary War, heard about Sacred Sun and her Osage companions, he sent them back to America. When she returned to St. Louis in 1830, her tribe had moved to the Oklahoma territory near Fort Gibson. This piece continues my interest in First Generation's stories, "The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky," and now *Following the Sacred Sun*. Hopefully, I plan to write another orchestral CD for the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and I look forward to seeing if New Mexican culture and cuisine attract my muse.

What do you find is the current direction of new classical music?

To quote Cole Porter, "Anything Goes!"—from tonality to atonality, jazz with classical, rap with classical, etc. It is an exciting time for music in all its forms. Each composer has his or her niche, and I believe that we write what we want to hear. I feel that some interesting and exciting music is written for video games, film, and TV music.

What do you do for amusement in this COVID world?

I have friends and colleagues who have told me that they have never been as busy as after retirement. And I agree! I put off many projects until their time "had come," like digitizing manuscripts, taping excerpts for historical editions, and creating a new website. I have discovered that I love to cook, especially with hot peppers. One reason we moved to New Mexico was that it is the chili capital of the world! My usual starters for stir-fry include chili peppers or habaneros, garlic, and onions—it almost doesn't matter what else is in the mix! Hot Italian sausage and pasta is great with that.

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach is well known for composing music for orchestra, chamber ensemble, voice, and keyboard. She is also active in researching and promoting the music of women composers from the past when their work was rarely published and generally unrecognized. Harbach holds a Master's degree from Yale, a concert diploma from the Frankfurt Conservatory, and a Doctorate from the Eastman School of Music. Currently an award-winning professor emerita from the University of Missouri at St. Louis, she was recently named one of the Thirty Most Innovative Professors Alive Today.

Harbach opens her compact disc performance of *Civil-Civility* for string orchestra with soprano, flute, violin, and piano. The work is divided into six movements, each devoted to a female rights activist. Elizabeth Cady Stanton is described in "Sentiments," Eleanor Roosevelt in "Gift of Mystery," Rosa Parks in "Memories of Our Lives," Margaret Meade in "Committed," Ida Wells-Barnett in "Light of Truth," and Sojourner Truth in "Ain't I a Woman." We should not forget that Harbach herself suffered discrimination because of her gender in the 20th century. Each movement of *Civil-Civility* is a cogent meditation on its subject. Her tonal, melodic music retains the power of her drive for equality, as do the performances of the soloists and orchestra. Soprano Stella Markou, flutist Jennifer Mazzoni, violinist Julia Sakharova, and pianist Alla Voskoboynikova contribute mightily to the glory of this rendition.

Abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) was an exception to the usual rules for women of her time because as a nun and the founder of convents, she was not bound by obedience to a superior or a husband. *Visions of Hildegard* for violin and piano is composed in three movements. The first, "O vis eternitatis," is a responsory for the creator and redeemer. The second, "O noblissima viriditas," is a responsory for virgins, and the final movement, "O ignee Spiritus," is a memorable hymn to the Holy Spirit. Each movement combines the spirituality and simplicity of Hildegard with the intense musicality of Harbach's setting for violin and piano. *Cuatro Danzas* for flute and piano, played by Mazzoni and Voskoboynikova, is a rhythmic secular piece that invites listeners to tap their feet. It is most refreshing after the serious civil rights work and the mystical religious work.

Some starry night, take an old country road to the top of a mountain. Stop far above the city lights, beyond the traffic, and listen. Can you not hear the sound the stars make rushing through the sky? Then pop Harbach's disc in the player and enjoy her musical version of the phenomenon.

The Sound the Stars Make Rushing through the Sky for soprano, violin, and piano lets you see the starry sky and hear its magical sounds even when you are in the middle of a busy town. Harbach's music encompasses peace and tranquility, along with the picture of the lovely, indigenous American Jane Schoolcraft, who tells us a poignant tale of her vanished world. The passionate rendition by soprano Stella Markou, violinist Jane Price, and pianist Alla Voskoboynikova is a revelation for those of us who have forgotten the treatment of Native Americans in the past. The sound is pristine on this disc and the soloists sound the way they would if the listener were sitting in an intimate hall dedicated to chamber music.

This CD is not to be missed, with its pieces on civil rights, women's rights, and Native American history.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 45:2 (Nov/Dec 2021)
Henry Fogel (Chamber Music VI)

HARBACH *Civil-Civility*.¹ *Visions of Hildegard*.² *Cuatro Danzas*.³ *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*⁴ • ¹James Richards, cond; ^{1, 4}Stella Markou (sop); ^{2, 4}Jane Price, ¹Julia Sakharova (vn); ^{1, 3}Jennifer Mazzone (fl); Alla Voskoboinikova (pn); ¹St Louis CO • MSR 1695 (76:57 📀)

REVIEW

It is welcome to encounter new music that is tonal, melodic, emotionally communicative, and yet still sounds fresh. Such is the case with Barbara Harbach's output. The first word that comes to mind as one listens is "beautiful." This is music for any listener who enjoys, for instance, Vaughan Williams's warmth and rich melodic style. Harbach is an American composer, harpsichordist, and organist, born in 1946 and serving since 2004 as a professor of music at the University of Missouri at St. Louis. She began as a performer, and her composing followed naturally from that.

Civil-Civility is a six-movement work scored for chamber orchestra with soprano, flute, violin, and piano. It pays tribute to six women who played important roles in the movement for women's and human rights: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Margaret Mead, Ida Wells-Barnett, and Sojourner Truth. Much of the music is gently lyrical, though the final movement, referencing Sojourner Truth, is more dramatic. The soprano's angular lines are punctuated by percussive chords from the piano, and the work ends dramatically with "I am not going to die, I'm going home like a shooting star." At almost a half hour, *Civil-Civility* is the major work on the disc.

Visions of Hildegard is scored for violin and piano, and was inspired by the medieval composer Hildegard of Bingen. Harbach's melodic gift is particularly evident in the hymn-like first two movements. The third and final movement, "O Fiery Spirit," is more driven, though it alternates rhythmic passages with more gentle ones.

Cuatro Danzas is scored for flute and piano. All four movements are influenced by Spanish dances, and once again Harbach alternates mellow lyrical passages with spikier rhythmic sections. The third movement, *Andante para vihuelo de penole*, is seductive at first but slowly builds to an energetic climax. On the way it combines jazz influences with the Spanish flavor. The finale, "Danza Delirio," sounds exactly like what its title leads you to expect, although once again Harbach holds your attention by briefly changing the mood in the middle before a quite amusing finish.

The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky is a song cycle for soprano, violin, and piano inspired by the life of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (1800–1842), a Native American princess of the Ojibwe tribe. The first movement sets a text written by Schoolcraft, the second is a traditional Ojibwe prayer, and the final two movements feature texts by Harbach herself. This is the most outwardly emotive piece here, but it is still clearly the work of the same composer. In some ways *The Sound the Stars Make* is also the most Modernist of the works on the program.

The performers are all from the St. Louis area and presumably include colleagues of Harbach's. All of the performances are committed and well executed. The recorded sound is warm and well balanced. It is fortunate that MSR provides texts, as the words are not always easily comprehensible from just listening. In the 1950s and 1960s it would have been difficult for a composer like Harbach to find performances, because of the rigidity of the musical establishment's resistance to tonal and melodic music. Fortunately, we are beyond that now, and this gifted composer's work is performed and recorded with some frequency.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 45:2 (Nov/Dec 2021)
Ken Meltzer (Chamber Music VI)

HARBACH *Civil-Civility*.¹ *Visions of Hildegard*.² *Cuatro Danzas*.³ *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*⁴ • ¹James Richards, cond; ^{1, 4}Stella Markou (sop); ^{2, 4}Jane Price, ¹Julia Sakharova (vn); ^{1, 3}Jennifer Mazzone (fl); Alla Voskoboinikova (pn); ¹St Louis CO • MSR 1695 (76:57 📖)

REVIEW

A new CD from MSR Classics is Volume 6 in a survey of the chamber music of the American composer, keyboard artist, and educator Barbara Harbach. I always welcome the opportunity to hear and review Harbach's music. Her compositions are notable for their melodic inspiration, lovely and transparent scoring, and keen sense of involvement with her subject matter. I also admire the optimistic, life-affirming atmosphere that pervades her work. This is not to say that Harbach's music is unremittingly cheerful, even in moments that call for a darker mode of expression. But like Aaron Copland, whose spirit, I think may be found to some degree in her music, Harbach maintains faith in the human experience, and the possibility of hope. In previous reviews of Harbach's orchestral music, I've praised her "lean, bright, and keenly transparent orchestral sonority, in which the various instrumental families are always heard with the utmost clarity." In the context of chamber music, concerns regarding textural clarity are not so pressing. Still, Harbach's sensitive and delicate blending of instrumental voices in these chamber works is once again notable and impressive. It is music of substance that falls graciously on the ear.

Civil-Civility, scored string orchestra, soprano, flute, violin, and piano, is in six movements. The movements are musical portraits of "courageous women who defied all odds to help the women of the world, and all humanity"; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Margaret Mead, Ida Wells-Barnett, and Sojourner Truth. The soprano soloist appears in the movements devoted to Eleanor Roosevelt and Sojourner Truth. The former is a soaring coloratura vocalise, while the latter is an impassioned setting of Sojourner Truth's speech, "And ain't I a Woman?"

Visions of Hildegard, for violin and piano, is inspired by the music of Hildegard of Bingen. The work is in three movements; "O vis eternitatis" (O Power Within Eternity), "O nobilissima viriditas" (O Noblest Green Viridity), and "O ignee Spiritus" (O Fiery Spirit). *Cuatro Danzas*, for flute and piano, is in four movements: "Danza Flamenco," "La Mente," *Andante para vihuelo de penole*, and "Danza Delirio." *Quatro Danzas*, "with a Spanish flavor and

frenzied outer movements," "reflects [the composer's] move to the American Southwest."

The final work, *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, is "a cycle of four pieces for soprano, violin and piano." The work is inspired by the life and writings of Jane Johnston Schoolcraft, a princess of the Native American Ojibwe tribe. Schoolcraft is one of the earliest known Native American writers. The four movements are "And Musing Awhile" (a setting of poetry by Schoolcraft), "Ojibwe Prayer," "The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky," and "Trail of Tears." Harbach herself wrote the text for the final two movements; the former a celebration of Schoolcraft's life, the latter a child's eyewitness account of the brutal forced relocation of Native Americans.

The performances are all excellent, beautifully played and recorded. In *Civil-Civility* and *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*, Harbach challenges the soprano soloist with music that requires by turns flexibility, ease in the upper register, vocal beauty, power, and expressiveness. Stella Markou distinguishes herself with accomplished, compelling performances, though all of the featured artists perform with the highest skill and commitment. The booklet includes extensive and informative program notes (author uncredited), sung texts, and artist bios. This is a release of considerable merit, and highly recommended.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 45:2 (Nov/Dec 2021)
Colin Clark (Chamber Music VI)

HARBACH *Civil-Civility*.¹ *Visions of Hildegard*.² *Cuatro Danzas*.³ *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through the Sky*⁴ • ¹James Richards, cond; ^{1, 4}Stella Markou (sop); ^{2, 4}Jane Price, ¹Julia Sakharova (vn); ^{1, 3}Jennifer Mazzoni (fl); Alla Voskoboinikova (pn); ¹St Louis CO • MSR 1695 (76:57 📖)

REVIEW

The music of Barbara Harbach always seems to be a joy to review. The sense of open-air freshness to her music is irresistible, and it always seems to be so carefully constructed. Not a note is wasted; Harbach knows what she wants to say and exactly how to say it.

The six movements of *Civil-Civility* for string orchestra with soprano, flute, violin, and piano (2016) celebrate the acts of courage and the writings of women who have struggled to maintain a voice within patriarchal societies: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks, Margaret Mead, Ida Wells-Bennett, and Sojourner Truth. Each musical portrait is strongly characterized, and the addition of soprano, violin, and piano to the second, “Gift of Mystery,” is highly effective. Stella Markou is a fine soprano. There is something about Harbach’s writing that cuts straight to the heart, and one can certainly feel that in the third movement, “Memories of our lives,” inspired by Rosa Parks. The overarching inspiration, though, is the ninth-century Kassia of Constantinople. Refusing to accept societal norms, she instead founded a convent. This movement is powerful: A passacaglia founded on the hymn tune *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*, it has a rigor hitherto not found in the work. The St. Louis Chamber Orchestra is particularly convincing here.

It is the flute of Jennifer Mazzoni that shines through in the fourth movement, “Committed,” inspired by the American anthropologist and author Margaret Mead. Again, religious music forms part of the fabric here, as in the movement’s second half, Martin Luther’s *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* (In peace and joy I now depart) makes itself known. The next movement, “Light of Truth,” celebrates the onetime slave Ida Wells-Barnett (1862–1931), who became a journalist set against the barbarism of lynching. There is a peace to Harbach’s setting, and the composer reflects the search for truth by working with a finely crafted set of variations. The final track is vocal, featuring Stella Markou in fine voice for “Ain’t I a Woman,” a celebration of Sojourner Truth (1797–1883), who became the first black woman to win a custody case for her son. Within the space of a mere five minutes the music moves from the intensely personal (that initial

cry of "Ain't I a Woman") through to something far more transcendent and celestial. Harbach's music mirrors the beauty and the truth of these musing on the eternal. It is difficult to imagine a finer performance than this one conducted by James Richards. I wonder if the recording is just a touch dry, though.

Scored for violin and piano, *Visions of Hildegard* celebrates another great woman: Hildegard of Bingen, a true polymath and genius whose own music is indeed celestially guided. Harbach takes three titles by Hildegard and locates their essence in her own time and expression, while somehow maintaining the profound spirituality. The three movements are "O vis eternitatis" (O power within eternity), "O nobilissima viriditas" (O noblest green viridity), and "O ignee Spiritus" (O fiery Spirit). The occasional dance steps of "O nobilissima viriditas" sound impeccably American, as does the gentle repose of the easily gliding violin melody, so beautifully played by Jane Price. Alia Voskoboynikova is a fine partner here (the two instruments are very much equals); plus, the recording seems finer, less airless. There is a definite feeling of the divertimento about the *Cuatro*

Danzas for flute and piano (2018). The pronounced Spanish flavor reflects Harbach's move to the American Southwest. Jennifer Mazzoni is a fine flutist; her sound is absolutely stunning, particularly in the flute's lower registers. The rather sultry third movement is particularly fascinating, as it accelerates slowly but inevitably, with the piano's walking bass adding a laid-back feel.

And although "Danza delirio" implies some sort of crazy dance, the result is more controlled, the excitement coming instead from the tightness of ensemble from the two players.

Inspired by Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (a princess of the Native American Ojibwe tribe), *The Sound the Stars Make Rushing Through The Sky* (2017) is a suite of four movements. It boasts two texts (the final two) by Harbach herself. The luxuriant first movement, "And Musing Awhile," is a text by Schoolcraft (from *Pensive Hours*); the second is a traditional Ojibwe Prayer, beautifully and touchingly set by Harbach and gloriously sung by Markou, for which Jane Price's violin is a vibrant obbligato. The generosity of expression in the third song (which takes its title from the overall title of the collection) is positively Romantic in gesture, particularly perhaps the final, flung-out high note for voice. The title of the final movement, "Trial of Tears," refers to the forced marches in eastern Oklahoma; it was coined by the Cherokee. The story is told here through the eyes of a child; Harbach's setting is potent and uncompromising—a remarkable way to close the disc.

I have yet to be disappointed by anything Harbach has written. This disc acts as yet another affirmation of Harbach's stature in American music today.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 43:5 (May/June 2020)
Henry Fogel (Orchestral V)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW with Composer Barbara Harbach,
Unapologetic Romanticist

In listening to some of your prior CDs and your new one (the fifth volume of orchestral music of yours issued on MSR Classics), I am struck by your unabashed musical conservatism. I say that with admiration; although tonality has been making a comeback in recent years, I still think it takes courage today to write tuneful music with warmly Romantic harmonies. Have you felt any sense of resistance from the musical establishment?

A composer who writes either avant-garde music or neo-Romantic will have advocates and detractors. Over the years, I have gotten interesting comments on writing tonal music. In the following, I have paraphrased the comments to protect the innocent. One reviewer wrote, "Harbach writes nice music; too bad she was born 100 years too late." Or how about, "Harbach writes white music (no chromaticism with sharps and flats), although it's nice." Or "Harbach needs to write 'edgier' music." Or, as an editor of historical women composers, I received a letter from a pianist, who is moving towards playing the organ. Here's what she wrote: "You arranged one of her [Elizabeth Sterling] pieces, and I happened to look at your dates and bio, and wow—you are still alive!" Hmm, that comment 'kinda' puts it all into perspective....

I have tried to write 'edgier' music at times over the years and failed. The music came out sounding like a rerun of a theory exercise in a 20th-century harmony class, or just plain incomprehensible. A lot of my inspiration comes from poems and writings by women creators such as Emily Dickinson, Dorothy Parker, Alaskan women pioneers; art; and history (especially the tragedies of the Civil War era, the Holocaust, and Native American women writers).

Your connection with tradition is particularly strong in this fifth volume. Suite Luther was composed in 2017, 500 years after Martin Luther purportedly nailed 95 theses to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, which led to the birth of Protestantism. You use Luther's chorale A Mighty Fortress is Our God as one of the bases of this suite. Could you speak about how you used it and how you treated it—how you kept such a sense of freshness in a tune that is so well-known by all listeners?

As an organist I have logged many hours on the organ bench, playing my first church service when I was nine years old (I was fortunate to be tall, so I could reach the pedals). I have held posts in many different Protestant and Catholic denominations, and the Lutheran Church may be one of my favorites with its long tradition of hymnody and liturgy. For *Suite Luther* I wanted to use only chorales composed by Martin Luther. It is remarkable that after 500 years his music and theology are still resonating. As an organist who played many compositions from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, I wanted to invigorate traditional melodies with contemporary harmonization, rhythm, and orchestral colors.

In 2017 I wrote this five-part suite and used *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* in three of the movements (I, III, V). Luther wrote the hymn sometime between 1517 and 1519, and it became known as the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation," since it increased support for the Reformation movement. The Luther hymn of the second movement, *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart (Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin)*, is a paraphrase in German of the *Nunc dimittis*, the canticle of Simeon; it was written in 1524 and is often used for funerals. The third Luther hymn, heard in Movement IV, is *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee (Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir)*. Written in 1524, it is a paraphrase of Psalm 130.

I. "Motet – A Fortress Strong" is an exuberant arrangement of the original rhythmic melody of *Ein' feste Burg*. I follow the form of the hymn, AABA¹ (A¹ indicating a variation of A), featuring counterpoint preceding each presentation of the phrases with "pre-imitation" as did Buxtehude, Pachelbel, and J. S. Bach. Opening with a five-note timpani fanfare with cymbals, the trumpet and trombone announce the first phrase of the hymn, seemingly in double time. The woodwinds follow with new material, and then close the introduction with the ending phrase of the "A" section. A short imitative section precedes Luther's original rhythmic notation, with the flute regally playing the melody and soaring above the orchestra. The lively middle "B" section has transitional material featuring the brass instruments in close harmony and a more subdued presence for the words "And armed with cruel hate." This is followed with cascading flourishes in the strings before the echoes of the familiar opening phrases herald the end of the movement.

II. "In Peace and Joy I Now Depart" is a six-phrase hymn by Luther. I was inspired to write a two-part piece with the form of ABA¹B¹. The "A" parts are newly composed, with the ethos underscoring a feeling of Peace, while the "B" portions evoke the feeling of Joy. The "A" section begins with a decorated flute melody, with the oboe taking over the melody along with comments from the lower woodwinds and horn. The Joy section is reminiscent of a Renaissance dance, with the trumpet presenting the chorale

melody with decorations, and then being joined by the horn with string accompaniment. The flute melody heard at the beginning of the piece returns, but with the decorated melody in a major tonality. "A¹" returns with a fuller and richer harmonization, while the xylophone and timpani enhance the musical fabric in "B¹."

III. "Chorale Fantasy – Ein' feste Burg," or "Christ, the New Contender," is a powerful and lively setting of the second verse of *Ein' feste Burg*, which announces Christ as the triumphant advocate. The melodies of the imitative introduction are derived from the first two phrases of the famous hymn melody, with conversations between the woodwinds and strings. The woodwinds state the "A" section, followed by more introductory material. The brass section and flute lead the next "A" section, while the winds and brass alternate in the "B" portion with strings, busily commenting on the introductory material. The entire orchestra joins in the noble final phrase.

IV. "From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee" (*Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*) is a newly harmonized rendition of the four-part chorale in AAB form. The movement creates a mood of introspection with recurrent plaintive petitions, using an orchestra here of only flute, horn, trumpet, trombone, and strings. The pre-imitation is original material, and also utilizes some motives derived from the original melody. The horn and trombone play the melody in unison, with the counterpoint weaving around them. The rising motives reflect the pathos or word painting of trying to climb out of the depths to a holier place.

V. "Ein' Feste Finale" marks the return of Luther's famous hymn *Ein' feste Burg*, but this time with the more familiar rhythmic notation. The hymn tune pulsates with many different simultaneous rhythms and key changes, with trombone and tuba in unison and in canon, and sections with three-part canons. The triumphant ending is rendered by full orchestra in traditional harmony for the final iteration.

Writing *Luther Suite* made me even more appreciative of the composers that came before us, and grateful for Martin Luther and his creative hymn writing.

Early American Scandals is a piece that addresses some of the less pleasant parts of our country's history, particularly the era of slavery and the Civil War. It ends, though, in a rather upbeat manner with an old-fashioned romping Virginia reel. Speak about the progression of emotions of this suite.

Early American Scandals, written in 2017, are four snapshots that look back to the turbulence, Revolution, slavery, Civil War, and social unrest of the 18th and 19th centuries. I have always been intrigued by this time period, and have written several compositions exploring the moods and pathos of

that time, including *Booth! an American Musical*; *Two Songs from the Sacred Harp* for string orchestra; *Frontier Fancies* for violin and orchestra; *Freedom Suite* for string orchestra; Symphony No. 3, "A State Divided"; Symphony No. 8, "The Scarlet Letter"; *Pioneer Women* for soprano, clarinet, and piano; *Harriet's Story* for soprano, violin, and piano; and *Emanations of the Sacred Harp* for cello and piano. *Early American Scandals* won the TUTTI orchestral composition prize and was premiered March 7, 2019 at Denison University in Granville, Ohio.

I. "Love – Revenge," the first movement, uneasily evokes a happier time, with hints of conflict and revenge, as when "the master" makes unwanted advances toward a slave or when the love object chooses another. The movement has two themes. One is a subtly menacing waltz with descending half steps, often accompanied with flourishes in the upper strings; the other, a rising and descending melody that contains repeated notes, is first enunciated by the bassoon, and later more forcefully by trumpet and trombone.

II. "River Styx" focuses around the choices people make—some are abhorrent and some fulfilling. The first of four themes is gently nostalgic, full of longing for a lost love or for one who has died. The desire to be reunited is strong, accompanied by a willingness to brave the River Styx to pass into hell to see the beloved one more time. Shortly after the introduction of the gentle opening motive, the River Styx theme provides a jolt of reality, with short dotted rhythms and powerful strident horn and brass iterations. A little later, the flute and clarinet introduce the third theme, "Looking for an Angel." Imitation abounds in transitions as well as within all three themes. Emotions become more complex when the Angel theme, with flute and oboe in canon at the octave, combine with the River Styx on the clarinet. The last theme, introduced by trombone and imitated by trumpet, may represent a call before the Divine. In the final section, the three themes intermingle and intertwine, and conclude with the River Styx theme, reminding us that one doesn't always get what one wants!

III. "The Vulture Hours" occur in the night when sleep does not come, and one's mind is tortured with thoughts of things done and not done. The past rears up like a winged phantom; cruel memory rips into the darkness with a terrifying shriek. Each dream becomes a nightmare when the vulture hours descend. "The Vulture Hours" was inspired by the horror John Wilkes Booth brought upon his family, never to be forgotten. The clarinet is heard in a short *Vorimitation* before the bassoon introduces the first theme of ambiguous tonality and melancholy, and an ever-so-slight hint of tango. The clarinet joins the bassoon with another statement of the melody, while the flute and oboe join with a canon at the octave. The trombone adds darkness

as the texture grows to *fortissimo*, then returning to the sadness of melancholy. One last crescendo is heard before the music dissolves into the darkness.

IV. "Virginia's Real Reel" is a romping, early American period dance piece that originates from the Revolutionary and Civil War eras. It is based on three fiddle tunes: *Five Miles out of Town*; *Johnny, Bring the Jug Around the Hill*; and *Jack Danielson's Reel*. The tunes are stated individually, with each featuring a section of the orchestra—strings, woodwinds, and brass—before bringing in the entire orchestra for a show-down, hoe-down finish. The trombone acts as the caller for dancing a reel, which abounds with imitation, mode changes, string glissandos, and flourishes.

When I listen to music for the first time, I do so without reading explanatory notes so that I can hear the music unbiased by any commentary. Then I try to learn about the music and what lies behind it. The first time I heard Arabesque Noir I definitely heard the Eastern influences in it; when I read the notes accompanying the disc, I understood that you were attempting to capture the complicated relationships between slaves and masters, giving the Thomas Jefferson-Sally Hemings relationship as an example. This did deepen my appreciation of some of the elements of tension and release I heard in the music. Can you expand on this for our readers?

Arabesque Noir (2017) was inspired by the ornamental designs found in Arabic and Moorish decoration. The music reflects the florid ornamentation with flowing melodies and motifs that are sinuous, spiraling and undulating. It seeks to capture the complicated relationships between slaves and their masters; the subtle, hidden and forbidden interactions that can occur, such as the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings.

I. In the first movement, "Looking for an Angel" opens with a sweeping melody for solo flute that spans more than two octaves. Upon the second statement of the theme, the flute melody is imitated by the oboe, accompanied by the strings. The two instruments cross parts and intertwine until the bassoon, clarinet, and trumpet joining the imitative texture. The oboe states a second theme, similar to one heard in *Early American Scandals*, "Looking for an Angel," found in the second movement of that work, "River Styx." One can interpret the second theme as representing the seeking out of an angel to bring happiness to a life without hope. After a short transition, the horn takes up the theme with the trumpet, oboe, and clarinet joining the imitation. The sweeping first theme returns, with the melody now in the first violins. The mood changes as the horn states a new theme, "She's a Woman, Simply Woman," which depicts the enchantment between lovers and features an expansive range with strings interjecting

"comments," as would a Greek chorus. The trombone takes over, while the "Looking for an Angel" theme returns in a three-part canon in the woodwinds. As the "She's a Woman" theme finishes, the woodwinds begin a three-part canon in diminution, having half rhythmic values. The conversation is ended when the timpani begins an insistent five-note motive. The violins and oboe play the opening theme in imitation, being joined by the flute, horn and viola. The movement ends quietly with only a fragment of "Looking for an Angel."

II. "Evening Love" depicts lovers wrapped in the arms of the night, with arabesque melodies descending in a tetrachord in the bass; viola gently repeat this motive while the second violins enter on a single pitch. The first violins follow with a slow, gently moving theme. Pizzicatos in the viola, cellos, and bass provide accompaniment under the flute and violin duet. A second theme emerges in the trumpet, echoed by the oboe. Their interplay continues until the flute starts a descending and then ascending motive that is imitated by the first violins. All themes begin to vie for attention until the horn introduces the melody, "A Slave to Love," with its double meaning of being a slave, but also being in love—"Now I'm a slave to love, and so enslaved by love remain." All themes return and compete for dominance, interacting and intertwining, sinuous and seductive.

III. "In the Still I Will Wait" continues exploring clandestine trysts of lovers, and even if parted by death, "I will wait for you, my heart." The movement opens with a descending cadenza-like figure in the solo first violin, accompanied by the flute. A gentle and beguiling ascending waltz melody opens with the clarinet in canon with the flute—an octave higher—and strings, with 3/4 passages being interrupted by passages in 2/4. A new ascending theme emerges in the trumpet, imitated by the oboe in canon at the unison, followed by a return of the first theme as a horn and trumpet duet, imitated by flute, oboe, and clarinet. The trombone introduces a new theme, with numerous comments from the woodwinds, which is repeated with a canon among the trumpet, horn, and clarinet that leads to a climax using material from the introductory cadenza. The first theme returns, but this time in the first violins. Imitation in the strings and woodwinds is heard, leading to a section of several themes weaving in and out, with instruments vying to project their lines. "In the Still I will Wait" closes with gestures of the opening cadenza motif, fading away like the memories of long ago. *You seem to enjoy exploring duality in your music. For example, Recitative and Aria is a two-movement work inspired by the life of the great actor Edwin Booth. On the one hand, he was an extraordinarily successful actor famed throughout the world. On the other hand, his life was shadowed by tragedy—his brother being the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, and his own wife dying after three years of marriage, further complicated by his inability*

because of his drinking habits to read some telegrams that tried to inform him of her illness. I find that same duality in much of your other music too, and indeed the complexity of music makes it an ideal art form for exploring these contrasts. Is that something you consciously strive for?

In many of my movements, I try to write strong and diverse themes that lead to duality of tempo, melodies, orchestration, shifting and changing meters and rhythms. As humans, we share many emotions, and I try to portray this commonality, as well as juxtapose different melodic moods, or *pathos* to depict how we interact, intertwine, and react with one another. Opera is a great medium to display duality in music. In the same scene, the characters may have differing strong emotions, even in the same recitative or aria. Feelings and emotions may flow in a parallel field or be 180 degrees apart.

In addition to composing, you are an organist, harpsichordist, and pianist. How do you balance your performing and composing careers?

As I completed the 14-CD set of Antonio Soler's 120 sonatas, there existed only Soler for several months, 6–8 hours a day. As a composer, writing an opera is an all-consuming passion, where it becomes advantageous to go into a zone where you work with recitatives, arias, duets, ensembles, etc., and are unaware of the passing of time, only to look up and see that it is almost dusk. In the last decade or so, I have turned more to composition, as it fulfills my passion for creativity.

In what ways have your skills and experiences as a performer influenced the music you compose?

After years of playing the great composers for organ, harpsichord, and piano, I absorbed many contrapuntal techniques such as imitation, canons, and fugues that are now part of my compositional technique, and I try to decorate them with my harmonic and melodic language, striving for continuity and cohesion. As an organist playing "The King of Instruments," one becomes an orchestrator on the organ with many strings, flutes, principals, woodwinds, brass, and even percussion sounds at one's finger tips to give magnificent color to compositions, from French and German Baroque composers to French and German Romantic, and to 20th- and 21st-century composers.

Attempting to characterize a composer's music with words is always tricky.

After all, if one could do that accurately one wouldn't need the music.

Nonetheless, if I were to try to describe to a listener what your music is like, I would probably choose words like "harmonious," "tuneful," "colorful," and "joyous." Are those fair descriptors? Would you expand on them?

I believe that the adjectives are an apt description of some of my music. I also try to juxtapose dark emotions among the more optimistic melodies for

variety or duality in color, tone, and ambience such as in *Recitative and Aria* or *Early American Scandals*.

REVIEW (Henry Fogel)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

Barbara Harbach is an American composer, organist, pianist, and harpsichordist, born in 1946. Her compositional style is conservative and very audience-friendly. She exhibits a very strong lyrical impulse with a gift for composing melodic lines that stay in the memory. This new release is Volume 5 in MSR's series of Harbach's orchestral works.

Suite Luther is a five-movement built around three hymns by Martin Luther. His most famous, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*) is the basis of the first, third, and fifth movements. *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart* and *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee* serve the same role in the second and fourth movements, respectively. Harbach applies modern harmonizations and orchestral colors to the hymns, but never in such a way as to disguise the basic melodies. Harbach was a Minister of Music at an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Missouri and was inspired to compose this work at that time. This is music that reflects the feelings of peace and joy.

There is an exotic color to *Arabesque noir*, a three-movement work inspired by the designs of Arabic and Moorish decoration. Harbach writes that "the music reflects the florid ornamentation with flowing melodies and motifs that are sinuous, spiraling, and undulating." She also says that her music seeks to capture the "subtle, hidden and forbidden interactions that can occur" between slaves and their masters, giving Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings as an example. This piece is very beautiful, focusing on the erotic and sensuous aspects of those relationships.

There is a greater degree of tension in *Early American Scandals*. About the second movement, "River Styx," Harbach tells us that "the music focuses around the choices we make—some are abhorrent and some fulfilling." There is an element of the unfulfilled, or the unresolved, in this music, and real melancholy underlying "The Vulture Hours." The final "Virginia's Real Reel" is a wild, rollicking Copland-like dance that would make a wonderful encore for an American orchestra to take on tour.

The final work is in a way the most moving, even though it is the shortest.

Recitative and Aria takes its inspiration from the life of Edwin Booth. An historically acknowledged great actor famed for his portrayal of Hamlet, but shadowed by the threefold tragedy of his brother (John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Lincoln), the death of his wife, and his own alcoholism. The music is at once yearning, Romantic, and terribly poignant.

The performances seem committed and are certainly well played, and the recorded sound is natural and clean. The composer's notes are helpful and informative. This is a disc of refreshingly enjoyable new orchestral music.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 43:5 (May/June 2020)
Huntley Dent (Orchestral V)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

REVIEW

There's a strain of Americana that many *Fanfare* readers can identify with. It doesn't necessarily use folksongs but has a populist ethos that puts Copland in his *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring* mode and most of Morton Gould's compositions at odds with cultural snobbery. The heyday of the populist aesthetic was the 1930s, when the Great Depression made comrades of the workingman, left-wing idealists, and WPA artist and composer in a way not to be repeated. But some composers of considerable technical skill who could swim in the post-Schoenberg mainstream, which remains elitist even though strict atonality and dogmatic 12-tone systems have had their day, choose instead to reach the broader audience that Copland and Bernstein won over.

I don't mean to read Barbara Harbach's mind or to impose an idiom on her orchestral music, which in the latest volume ventures beyond American culture. But as the booklet points out, she has an abiding interest in early American history. As a noted organist and harpsichord player, it is natural for her to align herself with the 18th century onward, and there are elements of counterpoint in her writing that stem from Bach. She goes even further back historically when mining the hymns of Martin Luther, but *Suite Luther*, which begins the program, doesn't use *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, which features in three of the work's five movements, as Mendelssohn did for solemnity in the "Reformation" Symphony, but rather is closer in spirit to Copland's use of *Simple Gifts* in *Appalachian Spring*. She proves that a Lutheran hymn can dance. There's an unalloyed streak of optimism in Harbach's musical imagination that is irrepressible.

For six decades, from the songs of Charles Ives through the ballets of Copland and the Broadway musicals of Bernstein, optimism seemed like an enduring aspect of American music, but I think Harbach is one of its last heirs. The best piece here is *Recitative and Aria*, which is based on the actor Edwin Booth reflecting on the sorrow and tragedy brought upon his name, which was illustrious in American theater circles in the mid-19th century until his brother, John Wilkes Booth, brought unforgivable shame to it. The piece employs a solo French horn to speak for Edwin, and the accumulation of expression is powerful. I wouldn't say, however, that the music achieves tragic impact. In compensation, Harbach delivers arching melody and swelling emotion that is satisfying in its own right.

Her most exploratory piece is *Arabesque Noir*, where the night in the title is sensually amorous. Orientalism in Western music has had a seductive erotic overtone, even if this had to be decorously hidden. Harbach is interested in the master-slave relationship (one could as easily call it the sultan-harem relationship) in which secret assignations are buried. To delve into these ambiguities she doesn't imitate the melisma of Arabic music, but instead adapts her own idiom to create "motifs that are sinuous, spiraling, and undulating," to quote the program notes, which are very helpful in their detail and completeness. The notes also speak of extensive ornamentation, but I don't hear that so much as a style personal to Harbach of embedding melody in shifting texture, glittering color, and contrapuntal figures. *Arabesque Noir* is her equivalent in music to a Persian carpet. (In *Suite Luther* the way she sets the hymn tunes like a chorale against a constantly moving accompaniment can't help but sound like Bach cantatas.)

Early American Scandals is a provocative title, but the music is at times no more scandalous than a waltz. The mood is nostalgic, reaching back to Stephen Foster and Louis Moreau Gottschalk as I hear it. This is the vein of Americana I grew up with in the light classical recordings that Morton Gould specialized in. Gould lamented that he wasn't nearly as famous for his serious pieces, and clearly Harbach doesn't write in a folksy vein. She is continuing the neo-Romantic strain that occupied American composers who rebelled against atonality. It was a hard sell in the 1950s and 1960s, and when Minimalism made tonality once again chic, the aesthetic was not Romanticized but quasi-mechanistic.

What Harbach and her predecessors have as a great advantage is that audiences love melody and are won over by Romanticism. I don't know if this has aided Harbach's acceptance in the concert hall, but her artist bio describes a burgeoning career not just as a prolific composer but as a keyboard performer, editor, and publisher. She is especially active in the area of women composers and has done great work advancing the cause of American women composers in particular. Her energy is seemingly inexhaustible, and I am glad to report that her musical imagination sustains a high level of exuberance, invention, melodic attractiveness, and curiosity about new themes and musical languages. This enjoyable disc is evidence of all those things, and the performances under David Angus leading a somewhat reduced London Philharmonic are everything they should be—warmly recommended.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 43:5 (May/June 2020)
Colin Clarke (Orchestral V)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

REVIEW

Conductor David Angus and the London Philharmonic Orchestra are no strangers to the music of Barbara Harbach. Two discs of her symphonies Nos. 7–11 (plus the orchestral suite *Hypocrisy*) performed by that combination stand out in particular, so it is good to encounter Angus and his Londoners again, recorded at Cadogan Hall, one of London's newer halls, just off Sloane Square, and a superb recording venue. All four works heard here were composed in 2017.

Inspiration for Harbach can come from a wide variety of sources. For the first piece we hear, it is Martin Luther that provides the backbone for the five-movement *Suite Luther*. It uses the chorale melody *A Mighty Fortress is Our God* (*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*) by Luther himself in three of the movements, and the hymns *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart* (*Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin*) and *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee* (*Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir*). The opening movement, "Motet," introduces the chorale in a blaze of joy, and Harbach references techniques by composers such as Buxtehude, Bach, and Pachelbel in using counterpoint to precede each phrase. There is a sense of calm to the second movement, and some lovely woodwind playing in this section from the LPO as well; the approach to the final glowing consonance is nicely managed. It's difficult to miss the famous chorale *Ein feste Burg* in the third movement, which is itself entitled "Chorale Fantasy," in this context fresh, being supported by markedly open harmonies. "Introspection" (aka the slow movement) comes with *Aus tiefer Not*, perhaps unsurprisingly given the chorale title. The scoring here is pellucid; only strings, flute, horn, trumpet, and trombone are used. The contrast of the lightly tripping counterpoints to the chorale of the finale (*Ein feste Burg* again) offers both a sense of arrival and of hope. Harbach uses playful counterpoint to maximal effect, with the whole building to a final *tutti* statement of the theme in traditional harmonic garb.

Arabic and Moorish decoration inspires *Arabesque Noir*. Melodic curlicues dominate the first movement, "Looking for an Angel," which has a second theme the composer calls "She's a Woman, Simply Woman." The woodwind excels in this first movement, while the central "Evening Love" exudes fragrant crepuscular satiation. The melodic flow is easy and approachable, and the final "In the still I will wait" describes secret trysts of lovers; at

times it seems viscerally to be seeking to project the clandestine thrill associated with such meetings.

Described in the booklet notes as “four snapshots that look back to the turbulence, Revolution, slavery, Civil War and social unrest of the 18th- and 19th-Centuries,” *Early American Scandals* returns to a period in history that has inspired Harbach on a number of occasions. The first movement, “Love—Revenge” begins with a reminiscence of a waltz, one which soon takes on sinister undertones. The “revenge” part of the title could refer to that between slave and master, or equally within a relationship. The second part, “River Styx,” touches on the Orpheus legend in the pining to see a lover one more time, but it also meditates on decisions we make in life, whether good or bad. The ear is led through the process by generally appropriate spotlighting (the clarinet is perhaps a touch forward in the sound image). The third part, “The Vulture Hours,” refers both to insomnia (those hours of the night when one is eaten up by repetitive thoughts) and to the assassin John Wilkes Booth and the horror he brought on his family, the darkest part of the piece. In contrast, three fiddle tunes find their way into “Virginia’s Real Reel,” with the slide trombone of Lyndon Meredith providing a real feel of a hoedown. This is a more considered party than one might find in, say, Copland; thematic superimpositions, too, when they occur, veer more towards Ives.

Finally, *Recitative and Aria* is inspired by the work of the actor Edwin Booth (the older brother of John Wilkes above). The free-flow recitative section leads to the instrumental aria in which Wilkes dreams of a world wherein things could have been different, one in which he is free from alcohol addiction and does not lose his wife after just three years of marriage. This final section (separately tracked and entitled “Our love forever now”) is a glowing beacon of hope, beautifully and unhurriedly performed here, a the perfect close to the disc.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 43:5 (May/June 2020)
Ken Meltzer (Orchestral V)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

REVIEW

In the May/June 2019 issue of *Fanfare* (42:5), I had the pleasure of interviewing Barbara Harbach, and reviewing *Symphonic Storytelling*, Volume 4 in MSR Classics' series of the American composer's orchestral music. That disc comprised her Symphony No. 11, "Retourner," and the orchestral suite *Hypocrisy*. Volume 5 features a quartet of multi-movement works, inspired by a variety of subjects. Harbach composed *Suite Luther* (2017) in observance of the 500th celebration of Martin Luther's nailing of his 95 theses to the door of the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg. Movements 1, 3, and 5 involve settings of the Luther hymn *Ein' feste Burg* (A Mighty Fortress). They alternate with, respectively, settings of two other Luther hymns: *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart* and *From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee*. *Arabesque Noir* (2017) embraces "ornamental designs found in Arabic and Moorish decoration" as the starting point for music that "reflects the florid ornamentation with flowing melodies and motifs that are sinuous, spiraling and undulating." This sound world, in turn, is the basis for an exploration of "the complicated relationships between slaves and their masters." *Early American Scandals* (2017) "are four snapshots that look back to the turbulence, Revolution, slavery, Civil War and social unrest of the 18th and 19th centuries." *Recitative and Aria* (2017) was inspired by the great American actor Edwin Booth, older brother of Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth.

In my review of Volume 4 of Harbach's orchestral music, I wrote the following: "Both the Symphony No. 11 and *Hypocrisy* are the work of a composer of inspired ideas, and the ability to communicate them in the context of a masterful, attractive, and compelling orchestral palette. Harbach favors a lean, bright, and keenly transparent orchestral sonority, in which the various instrumental families are always heard with the utmost clarity.

The transparent and 'open' sonic landscape of both compositions evoked for me the impression created by many of Aaron Copland's works, even if the respective composers' melodic profiles are quite different. But like Copland, Barbara Harbach composes in an attractive tonal idiom, and possesses the gift of being able to craft melodies that linger in the memory long after the music has ended. The brightness of the orchestral sonority complements the general mood of the music. I think that another composer exploring the

same source material might have invoked a darker mode of expression. But of course, that choice remains with the individual composer, and Harbach communicates her thoughts in a masterful and convincing way." The current disc under review inspired like impressions. I was especially taken by Harbach's ingenious manipulation of the hymns in the *Suite Luther*, but all of the works contain engaging material, ingeniously developed, and beautifully scored. With regard to my previous "darker mode of expression" comment, I did not, for example, hear in the *Recitative* portion of *Recitative and Aria* the suggestion of "a mad soliloquy where one repeats and contradicts in a stream-of-consciousness rant." That music struck me as quite structured and attractive. But I suggest that as an observation, not a criticism.

As in Volume 4, conductor David Angus and the London Symphony Orchestra offer performances that are admirable in quality of execution and tonal beauty. The recorded sound is first-rate, conveying the brightness of Harbach's sound world without a hint of glare or stridency. Fine program notes (by the composer?) round out this admirable project. If you enjoy Barbara Harbach's music, you don't need my recommendation of this disc. If you are unfamiliar with Harbach's work, and are interested in contemporary orchestral music couched in an individual, communicative, and lovely idiom, I am sure you will find much to enjoy. Recommended.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 43:5 (May/June 2020)
Maria Nockin (Orchestral V)

HARBACH *Suite Luther. Arabesque Noir. Early American Scandals. Recitative and Aria* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1672 (59:02)

REVIEW

Since American composer Barbara Harbach is a Minister of Music at an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Missouri, she chose to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing his theses to the door of the Church in Wittenberg with a new suite. She uses the reformer's motet, *Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott* (A Mighty Fortress is our God), for the movements one, three, and five, and two of his lesser-known hymns for the remainder. The piece opens with a fanfare and a stately rendition of Luther's original theme. Once it was thought the theme was originally a tavern song, but that has been disproven. Harbach varies its presentation with soaring flute and string textures and brass harmony. Part II is based on Luther's 1524 hymn *Mit Fried und Freud ich fahr dahin* (In Peace and Joy I Now Depart). Harbach's dense orchestration expresses the former sinner's peaceful state of mind and brings it to a happy conclusion. Flute motifs along with harmony from the oboe and French horn express the joy of invincible faith. The third part is a fascinating orchestral "choral fantasy" related to *Ein' feste Burg* and Christ's victory over sin. Part IV *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir* (From Deepest Depths I Cry to Thee) is based on the Lutheran version of Psalm 130. Beginning in a dark mood, Harbach's music eventually reminds us that Christian souls count on the promise of salvation. For Part V, Harbach returns to Luther's indomitable tune, using it as a canon and as the basis for a grand finale by the full orchestra.

The inspirations for *Arabesque Noir* were the intricate designs of Arabic decoration. The soaring melody of *Looking for an Angel* draws the listener's mind up into the beauty of the heavens. Intertwining lines of flute and strings lead us on as stronger melodic textures intervene and return the listener to the search. With strings and flute sounds, the seductive sound of *Evening Love* tells of those who must express their affection in the dark. Is she actually a slave or has she merely enslaved him with her charms? Many melodic fragments intertwine, suggesting the listener to choose an accompanying story. Like the Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, would the living lover build a monument to his dead partner? Would it be a waltz, a canon, a horn and trumpet duet? Harbach's *In the Still I Will Wait* gives us all of that and more in the resplendent ending to this piece.

Harbach's *Early American Scandals* is in a lighter but still serious vein that provides a thoughtful mood for an orchestra concert. In 2019, the unusual piece won Denison University's TUTTI Orchestral Composition Prize. In a nod to the "#MeToo" movement, Harbach gives us a musical description of an unequal relationship. Is she afraid not to respond? Does she really want revenge on him for his lack of respect for her wishes? The composer describes all these sentiments in "Love-Revenge." In a completely different mode, *River Styx* examines love for a dead partner. Would the listener, like Orfeo, brave the Styx to see the lover once more? The clarinet combines lyrically with flute and oboe, but brass tones warn of danger as themes interweave to form the translucent textures of this part of the piece. "Vulture Hours" bring no sleep, as the music builds to a *fortissimo* before it dissolves into darkness. The ebullient piece ends with the vigorous "Virginia's Real Reel" based on three fiddle tunes: *Five Miles Out of Town*, *Johnny Bring the Jug around the Hill*, and *Jack Danielson's Reel*. The first is from Kentucky, the second from Missouri, and the last was often heard in both Missouri and Nebraska.

Harbach's *Recitative and Aria* refers to the life of actor Edwin Booth (1833–1893), the brother of John Wilkes Booth, the man who killed Abraham Lincoln. With her music, Harbach reminds us that the actor lived much of his life under the stigma of his relationship to the assassin, one of the results of which was alcoholism. In the nostalgic music of the *Aria*, Edwin Booth's dream reunites him with the young wife who died while he was under the influence of drink. MSR Classics gives the listener good fidelity on this new collection of Harbach's work, but once in a while the sound of the full orchestra becomes a bit dense. I particularly loved the strong *Luther Suite* and the amusing part of the *Scandals*. I think this disc or download belongs in everyone's collection of American music.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 42:6 (July/Aug 2019)
David DeBoor Canfield (Orchestral IV)

HARBACH Symphony No. 11, "Retourner." *Hypocrisy* • David Angus, cond;
London PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach continues to produce symphonies and other orchestral works at an impressive rate and, further, to get them recorded by a superb conductor and orchestra in order to present them to a wide public. I've previously positively reviewed a number of CDs of her music, including a disc devoted to her Symphonies 7 through 10, liking in particular No. 8, even though I noted that her symphonies would better be considered suites due to their eschewing of traditional symphonic breadth and development. Her 11th foray into the genre maintains this impression, and is subtitled "Retourner" in tribute to Willa Cather's 1913 novel *O Pioneers!* The gentle opening horn solo is soon followed by some figuration that sounds as though it wandered over from Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, but the very lyrical opening movement falls most graciously upon the ear.

The symphony's second movement is stylistically similar to the first, but is a bit more up-tempo, and again features solo lines tossed around among the various instruments of the orchestra. Harbach has a skillful way of incorporating the brass into the texture, giving the members of this section plenty of their own solos rather than reserving them for block-style chorales or sectional writing. Some of the melodic lines are even given to the xylophone, which Harbach keeps from sticking out like the proverbial sore thumb. The venue depicted in the final movement shifts from Nebraska to a church in France in which a country fair is taking place. This movement juxtaposes 2/4 and 6/8 meters throughout, frequently giving the melodic line again to a brass instrument—this time the solo trumpet. I find this tune to be one of the more memorable ones in the symphony, which despite being well orchestrated does not have many melodies that linger in the memory. I also found the ending of the work to be too abrupt, but that is not a deal breaker by any means.

The CD is filled out with a 12-movement suite entitled *Hypocrisy*, written as music to accompany the 1915 silent flick *Hypocrites*. The film, directed by Lois Weber, a leading female director of her era, addresses topics that were at least as controversial 100 years ago as they are today, including such issues as abortion, birth control, capital punishment, and child labor. The film was considered quite innovative in its special effects, not to mention its reference to these controversial topics. Harbach's music, on the other hand,

is very traditional, and no doubt complements the visual action of the movie well. Whether it is quite as successful as its disc mate as stand-alone music is something I'm not quite convinced of. While very pleasant, it occasionally strikes me as rather directionless. This is not the sort of music that grabs a listener and demands his full attention. Rather, it would provide a good background ambience over which to read a book or newspaper.

David Angus and the London Symphony Orchestra make a good case for the works on this disc, and I have no doubt that many *Fanfare* readers will enjoy the concert, perhaps finding more substance in it than I have. Actually, I must say I enjoyed it too, but this is not music that I find demands repeated hearings.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 42:5 (May/June 2019)
Ken Meltzer (Orchestral IV)

HARBACH Symphony No. 11, "Retourner." *Hypocrisy*: Orchestral Suite • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW with Composer Barbara Harbach

A new recording on MSR Classics is the fourth volume in the label's series of the orchestral music of American composer Barbara Harbach. Subtitled "Symphonic Storytelling," the recording features two orchestral works inspired by narratives created in the second decade of the 20th century. *Your Symphony No. 11, "Retourner" (2017), is based upon Willa Cather's 1913 novel, O Pioneers! What were the circumstances that led to the creation of this symphony, and why did you choose O Pioneers! as its basis? How does your music reflect and illuminate Cather's narrative?*

I have been intrigued with the writings of Willa Cather since I read *My Ántonia*, followed by *The Song of the Lark*, and then *O Pioneers!* Perhaps my affinity to Willa and her novels comes from my own background—I grew up in rural Pennsylvania with the nearest town six miles away, and there were wide-open spaces similar to Nebraska. The only surrounding houses were those of my father's two sisters, and my grandparents who ran a traveler's inn until the 1960s. I was enchanted with *O Pioneers!* and thought it would make a great opera. Years later, after rereading *O Pioneers!* I felt that the time was right to write, and the opera was premiered in 2009 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Sometimes a writer or a composer is not finished with a particular subject or scene or even a theme or melody. In 2016, some themes from my opera were swirling through my imagination, some enlarged and transformed, some merely changed, as well as new ideas emerging for the same scene. Each of the symphony's three movements refers to a particular scene in *O Pioneers!* The first movement of Symphony No. 11, "Retourner," is adapted from a scene of Willa Cather's 1913 lyrical novel of tragedy and transformation. Nebraska is making the transition from frontier to prosperous rural heartland. The first movement, "Return-Debate," takes place in the early 20th century. Emil Bergson has just returned home to Nebraska from Mexico and with much eagerness goes to an orchard, where he plans to meet his childhood sweetheart, who awaits him. She is now Marie Shabata, married to an ill-tempered man. The bond between them is rekindled, and escalates into a clandestine passion. The movement is a compilation of themes and motives, and they are always changing and morphing into new versions of themselves—all related but different,

depicting a conversation, sometimes coherent, other times incomprehensible as only intimate conversations can be. As conversations between lovers often unfold, they may be a debate, or else seductive, strident, or joyous with anticipation and reconciliation. The themes leap from instrument to instrument, intertwine, mingle, and frolic.

"Our Sweet and Carefree Youth," the second movement of "Retourner," is also inspired from a scene from *O Pioneers!* It is a moment when the soon-to-be lovers, Alexandra Bergstrum and Carl Linstrum, look back on their youth, and remember the tender scenes of their childhood—milking cows and going to the General Store—a sweet and carefree youth. To set the stage Alexandra, who runs a successful farm in spite of her brothers, is in her office, working with her ledgers and a Burroughs adding machine. The opening theme, begun with the trumpet and upper woodwinds, represents her adding machine in its methodical and steady beat. Looking out her window over the land, she imagines a stately anthem to Nebraska. The scene dissolves as Alexandra returns to the reality of bookkeeping, but soon the mood changes and Alexandra feels alone, yearning for love. Superimposed over Alexandra's sad song, the adding machine theme begins to dominate. Reality returns once again, but this time ending with a happy ode to the adding machine.

The third movement, "The Art of Tarot," takes place at the fair in a nearby French church where everyone dresses in the Mexican fashion. Marie, who dresses as an old Bohemian fortune teller, is the Queen of Hearts who "will all your fortunes tell." Marie is happy to see her lover, and during the evening her lover steals a kiss from her. In the confusion that follows, he tells her that he will leave her alone if she admits that she loves him, and she does. The scene opens with a short string introduction, followed by the trumpet ushering in the lilting melody. As with doomed lovers, the next section starts with a sense of foreboding of impending tragedy. The festive aura keeps trying to return, and is successful for short while. In a capricious and flirtatious scene, the piccolo takes a short cadenza, leading into a new theme. However, an ominous atmosphere prevails, harmonically restless, with attempts at striving for a happier message. While the triumphant ending should be celebratory, impending tragedy masks the tone, anticipating the deaths of Emil and Marie.

The second work on "Symphonic Storytelling" is Hypocrisy (2016), an orchestral suite written for the 1915 silent film Hypocrites. Tell us about this remarkable movie, and its brilliant creator. When did you first become familiar with Hypocrites, and when did you decide to compose a new score to accompany the film?

I am inspired by strong women creators and have composed music on the texts, poems, or novels of these creators such as Willa Cather, or women

who helped pioneer Alaska, plus Maya Angelou, Dorothy Parker, and Harriet Scott, to name a few. I am also a fan of silent films, and have become fascinated with women directors, who in spite of almost overwhelming odds have produced outstanding and thought-provoking films, often with a social message. Over the years I have written scores to six silent films, including the well-known directors Alice Guy Blaché and Lois Weber.

1) *Hypocrites* (1915) for orchestra and 49-minute silent film with director Lois Weber. (Released on MSR Classics 1646, *Harbach Orchestra IV*.)

2) *The Birth, Life and Death of Christ* (1906) for chamber ensemble and 33-minute silent film with director Alice Guy Blaché, premiered at the St. Louis International Film Festival in November 2014. (Released on MSR Classics 1544, *Harbach Chamber Music V*.)

3) *Judith Simon* (1915) for chamber ensemble and 39-minute silent film with director Adolf Merai. A Hungarian-Jewish silent film called *Simon Judit*, it premiered at the Touhill Performing Arts Center, University of Missouri-St. Louis in November 2006. (Renamed *Echoes from Tomorrow for Chamber Ensemble* and released on MSR Classics 1255, *Harbach Chamber Music II*.)

4) *A House Divided* (1913) for chamber ensemble and 13-minute silent film with director Alice Guy Blaché, premiered at Webster University in November 2005. (Renamed *Separately Together for Chamber Ensemble* and released MSR Classics 1253, *Harbach Chamber Music I*.)

5) *How Men Propose* (1913) for Chamber Ensemble and 6-minute silent film with director Lois Weber, premiered at Webster University in November 2005. (Renamed *Carondelet Caprice for Chamber Ensemble* and released on MSR Classics 1253, *Harbach Chamber Music I*.)

6) *Making an American Citizen* (1912) for chamber ensemble and 16-minute silent film with director Alice Guy Blaché, premiered at the St. Louis International Film Festival, Tivoli Theatre, November 2004. (Renamed *Transformations for String Quartet* and released on MSR Classics 1253, *Harbach Chamber Music I*; also released as *Transformations for String Orchestra* on MSR 1255, *Harbach Chamber Music II*.)

Hypocrites is a significant silent film by the American film director, Lois Weber (1888–1939), and is noted for its use of religious imagery and innovative special effects. My aim was to write an original, contemporary film score for this 1915 silent film. Broadly, the film dramatizes the fascinating, frustrating, and moralizing indictment of hypocrisy, particularly in reference to religion, business, politics, as well as love and family—timeless subjects of literature and film. I feel that there are two reasons to add contemporary music to silent film: 1) to show how contemporary music enhances the picture, and 2) to expose the silent film to newer, younger audiences and attract new and appreciative audiences to the genre.

The film follows the two parallel stories of an early Christian monk and a modern minister. The medieval monk devotes himself to completing a statue of "Truth." When his work turns out to be an image of a naked woman, he is murdered by a mob. The contemporary minister is the pastor of a large wealthy urban congregation for whom religion is a matter of appearances and not beliefs. A series of vignettes follows in which the *Naked Truth*, a nude, reveals the hypocrisy of the congregation members and exposes their appetites for money, sex, and power. In the film, the nudity is barely visible due to the film technique of double exposure, producing a ghostly appearance. This technique was revolutionary for its time, as was Weber's intricate editing. The film proved to be quite controversial. Although there were calls for censorship, the film was generally hailed as an artistic and cultural milestone. The *New York Evening Journal* described the film as "the most startlingly satisfying and vividly wonderful creation of the screen age." A print of the film is kept in the Library of Congress and is now available on DVD by Kino.

Lois Weber was the leading female director-screenwriter in early Hollywood. She began her career alongside her husband, Phillips Smalley. Her films were well-scripted and acted, popular, and financially successful. They addressed topics that contained controversial social issues such as abortion, birth control, capital punishment, religious hypocrisy, a living wage, child labor, prostitution, and white slavery. Lois Weber's name was regularly mentioned as one of the top talents in Hollywood, and she was the first and only woman elected to the Motion Picture Directors Association in 1916, an honor she held for decades.

Have there been screenings of the movie Hypocrites with your film score? If so, I'm curious as to the audience reaction, both to the movie, and to your music.

Unfortunately, we have not yet had a screening, but we are planning a premiere.

Did you conceive Hypocrisy as an orchestral work that can also be performed independent of the film?

One of my goals in writing the film score is the hope that it will add musical punctuation and feeling to the drama, stretch the emotional range, and guide the audience into the receptive frame of mind to comprehend, with empathy, the subtleties of the narrative. An effective musical score provides an emotional bridge into an historical film genre that may otherwise prove to be inaccessible to present-day audiences, such as the relevant topic of religious bigotry that resonates today. Contemporary music set to silent film is a growing genre that consistently enthralls audiences, making this an area of growing artistic significance.

The overall goal was to write music that not only serves the film as a musical video, but stands on its own musical merits, so I renamed it *Hypocrisy—Orchestral Suite*.

Symphonic Storytellers reunites you with artists with whom you have previously collaborated; the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and conductor David Angus. Describe your ongoing creative relationship with Angus and the LPO.

There are so many moving parts in putting together all the personnel involved in taping an orchestral CD that it literally took people from two continents to put this one together, and I don't know how I am so fortunate to work with so many talented and gifted people!

Maestro David Angus and I have worked together on several CDs since 2008:

Orchestra Music IV, Volume XII, MSR Classics 1646 (2018);

Orchestra Music III, Portraits in Sound, Volume XI, MSR Classics 1614 (2016);

Orchestra Music II, Symphonies and Soundings, Volume IX, MSR Classics 1519 (2014);

Music for Strings with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Volume VII, MSR Classics 1258 (2011).

Last August, in 2018, we recorded four new orchestral pieces for another release this year on the MSR Classics label. I have gotten to know members of the LPO players who have been on several of my recordings, and I delight in seeing them when I go to London.

As a conductor, David has an incredible ear and can finely tune a large orchestra (pun intended!). The LPO members have great respect for him, and give him their best musical efforts, for which I am very grateful. He is also Musical Director of the Boston Lyric Opera since 2010, as well as being in demand as an orchestral conductor here and in Europe. Since I tend to write melodically, David has an intuitive feel for my music, and I am fortunate to be able to work with someone of his caliber and artistry. I always learn more about my music as well as orchestration in general from talking with him and watching him conduct rehearsals. The musicians of the LPO are some of the best! Strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion are all incredible and inspiring. I often write with the sound of the various performers of the LPO in my mind's ear, and know that they can do anything I write for them.

The recorded sound on this disc, made at London's Blackheath Halls, is mightily impressive. Tell us about the production team involved in creating your recordings.

There are many others who have greatly helped me so much over the years with the taping and production of CDs: Mike Hatch (sound engineer and director at Floating Earth in London), Richard Price (produced, edited, and mastered at Candlewood Digital), Rob LaPorta (product management at MSR Classics), Patrick Garvey (project management), and Tim Schwartz (package design).

The first time I went to record with the LPO was my *Music for Strings with the London Philharmonic Orchestra*. I was in the recording booth with headphones listening to the rehearsal, when a question came up in the viola section: Is it F# or F \natural ? David and the violists discussed each of the possibilities, and were still unsure. Since the LPO usually records deceased composers, it was startling to hear someone ask, "Isn't the composer here?" That was me! I had to find the measure quickly and feign an intelligent response with "I think it's as written."

Your career encompasses composing, performing, and teaching. What new projects are on the horizon?

I am intrigued by the writings of Native American women and have created a song cycle for soprano, violin, and piano that will be premiered this spring. I am also working on another 40-minute silent film that was directed by Alice Guy Blaché. This summer I plan to return to London for another taping with the fantastic recording team, LPO, and Maestro Angus.

REVIEW

HARBACH Symphony No. 11

"Retourner." *Hypocrisy: Orchestral Suite* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

Symphonic Storytelling is the fourth volume in MSR Classics' series of the orchestral music of the American composer, keyboard artist, and educator Barbara Harbach. Both of the featured works arose from narratives originally created in the early portion of the 20th century. The Symphony No. 11, "Retourner," is derived from music Harbach first composed for her 2009 opera, *O Pioneers!*, in turn based upon Willa Cather's 1913 novel of the same name. The orchestral suite, *Hypocrisy*, is Harbach's score for the 1915 silent film, *Hypocrites*, directed by Lois Weber. In my interview with Dr. Harbach, she provides considerable detail about the original source material, and the music it led her to compose. Both the Symphony No. 11 and *Hypocrisy* are the work of a composer of inspired ideas, and the ability to communicate them in the context of a masterful, attractive, and compelling orchestral palette. Harbach favors a lean, bright, and keenly

transparent orchestral sonority, in which the various instrumental families are always heard with the utmost clarity. The transparent and “open” sonic landscape in both compositions evoked for me the impression created by many of Aaron Copland’s works, even if the respective composers’ melodic profiles are quite different. But, like Copland, Barbara Harbach composes in an attractive tonal idiom, and possesses the gift of being able to craft melodies that linger in the memory long after the music has ended. The brightness of the orchestral sonority complements the general mood of the music. I think that another composer exploring the same source material might have invoked a darker mode of expression. But of course, that choice remains with the individual composer, and Harbach communicates her thoughts in a masterful and convincing way. I was engaged by this disc from start to finish, and look forward to further exploration of Barbara Harbach’s work.

Of course, great credit must go as well to the interpreters. The London Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor David Angus offer beautiful, superbly executed performances, all captured in a rich, detailed, and natural concert hall acoustic. The excellent liner notes provide a wealth of detail on the featured works. This is a first-rate disc in every way, and a fine example of how the art of orchestral music continues to flourish in our day. Warmly recommended.

Fanfare Magazine in Issue 42:5 (May/June 2019)
Henry Fogel (Orchestral IV)

HARBACH Symphony No. 11

"Retourner." *Hypocrisy*: Orchestral Suite • David Angus, cond; London
PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach, a prolific American composer, organist, and harpsichordist born in Pennsylvania in 1946, has received a number of positive reviews for her music in *Fanfare* but was new to me. I should perhaps start paying more attention to positive reviews, because I really enjoyed this disc. Others have commented on the American sound of her music, and indeed there are many passages that might have come from the pen of Aaron Copland, particularly in his conservative (even folksy) mood.

The 11th Symphony is loosely based on a scene from Willa Cather's novel *O Pioneers!*, written in 1913 and set in early 20th-century Nebraska. Its three movements are titled "Return, Debate," "Our Sweet and Carefree Youth," and "Tarot." I don't know the novel and did not feel I needed to in order to enjoy the score. It is tonal and melodic, with some contrasting edgy energy in the "Debate" section. The second movement is sweet and tender, rich with tunes that stick in the memory, while the third movement recalls a country fair.

Harbach wrote *Hypocrisy* as a score for the 1915 silent film *Hypocrites*, directed by Lois Weber. The film was daring and far ahead of its time, featuring nudity and dealing with troubling social issues that are not yet resolved (abortion, wage disparity, child labor, prostitution, etc.). According to the composer's helpful notes, "the film points out the intriguing, aggravating and moralizing indictment of hypocrisy, especially applied to religion, business, politics, love and family." The only issue that I might raise with the score is that the music seems almost too attractive to accompany a film that Harbach herself calls "shocking and controversial." But listened to merely as a picturesque orchestral suite in 13 sections, lasting more than 50 minutes, *Hypocrisy* is very engaging. There is enough variety to sustain our interest, and some movements ("Shock and Death" is one, the final "Sermon of Hypocrisy" is another) don't shy away from tension.

David Angus and the London Philharmonic have recorded two previous CDs of Harbach's orchestral music—to date MSR has released 12 volumes in their series devoted to her—and they certainly sound "inside" the music. The recorded sound is clean, and perhaps just a touch on the dry side, but not

objectionably so. For those who enjoy the more conservative strands of contemporary American music, this disc is definitely worth getting to know. Harbach brings a fresh, vivid, warm voice to both works on the program.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 42:5 (May/June 2019)
Colin Clarke (Orchestral IV)

HARBACH Symphony No. 11

"Retourner." *Hypocrisy*: Orchestral Suite • David Angus, cond; London
PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

REVIEW

The music of Barbara Harbach has impressed me on a number of occasions, not least a disc of her Symphonies Nos. 7–10, also on MSR and also performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under David Angus. That was the third volume on this label of her orchestral music; here we meet the fourth volume (and the 12th volume of Harbach's music). Again, there is a symphony, here coupled with a symphonic suite; the whole disc is subtitled "symphonic storytelling." And indeed Harbach is a wonderful storyteller in sound.

The Symphony No. 11 is subtitled "The Retourner" and is cast in three movements, each with its own title. The first movement depicts a scene from Willa Cather's 1913 novel *O Pioneers!*, thus taking the "place" to early 20th-century Nebraska. The music certainly has a lovely tinge of nostalgic Americana to it. The novel sounds charming, as indeed does Harbach's music and the performance. Conductor David Angus finds amazing detail, not least in the many delicious solo woodwind contributions; the solo trumpeter also warrants commendation. It is Harbach who really takes the laurels, however, for providing such a supremely well crafted, pleasurable movement. Entitled "Return, Debate," it speaks of the return of a man to claim his beloved, who is by now married to an ill-tempered man. The music opens out magically for the central "Our Sweet and Carefree Youth," again with its ideas taken from Cather's novel. Here the lovers look back and reminisce; the music includes an imagined musical anthem to Nebraska. Harbach's musical narrative follows some of the scenes in the book, but the music has a flow and an inevitability all of its own. The solo trumpet, Jason Evans, is magnificently lyrical here, too, with Nicholas Mooney's horn echoing the lines well.

The finale is set in a country fair in a French church and is entitled "The Art of Tarot" (though the last time I looked, church and tarot didn't particularly mix). The character Maria is the "Queen of Hearts" who tells fortunes (the Queen of Hearts being the equivalent to the Queen of Cups in the tarot, of course). Harbach creates a little miracle here, capturing the spirit of the time of the novel with an impeccably light touch, and sculpts a gorgeous work—perfect, if I may say so, for Sunday afternoon listening—linking her music to the novel but at the same time constructing a perfectly formed, freestanding

symphonic work. In some senses it is more of a sinfonietta than a symphony, but really that's just semantics. This is fabulously refreshing; written as recently as 2017, the ink is almost still wet, and it sounds like it.

The orchestral suite *Hypocrisy* is recent, too, written in 2016. The starting point here was Harbach's original score for a 1915 silent film, *Hypocrites*, directed by Lois Weber (the first and only woman ever to be elected to the Motion Picture Directors Association). The concept of hypocrisy is examined, as applied to religion, business, politics, love, and family alike. The excellent MSR booklet includes a detailed description of each movement; the second movement, for example, finds Harbach fetchingly using a three-part canon to depict its title, "Conversations." It is so simple and yet so effective. The film itself is freely available online and worth watching, not only in relation to Harbach's music but also for the remarkable, absolutely innovative, ghostly special effects. The same skill with use of the orchestra heard in the symphony is in evidence here, but the music is necessarily more episodic as it portrays the various scenes. There is a pronounced tenderness to some of the writing (for example, in the movement entitled "Curiosity," or "Dancing Children," with its enchanting bassoon solos so beautifully phrased by Jonathan Davies). There is a Stravinskian sense of artifice, of distance, in the wind-dominated chords and writing of "Shock and Death"; woodwind imitation is perfectly managed by the LPO players. Harbach's lachrymose imitation in "Robe of Mourning" is massively affecting, the contrast to the jauntier "Vignette of Love" that follows marked. Orchestra leader Vesselin Gelliev's solo violin shines in the final "Sermon of Hypocrisy."

This is a well-filled disc of highly enjoyable music, brilliantly performed by one of London's top orchestras (the Vladimir Jurowski years have really worked wonders on this band) and heard in magnificent sound from Blackheath Concert Halls. The sonic standard is hardly surprising, given that the sound engineer is the renowned Mike Hatch of Floating Earth. Excellent from all angles.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 42:5 (May/June 2019)
Maria Nockin (Orchestral IV)

HARBACH Symphony No. 11
"Retourner." *Hypocrisy*: Orchestral Suite • David Angus, cond; London
PO • MSR 1646 (77:37)

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach is an American organist, harpsichordist, and composer. The opening work on this recording, "Retourner," is her Symphony No. 11, so readers know she is prolific. Because she is fond of Willa Cather's writing, each movement of the symphony describes a scene from *O Pioneers!* In the first section, Emil Bergson returns from a time in Mexico to find Marie Shabata, who was his first love, married to an abusive husband. Harbach paints the picture with wind harmony, broken by percussion embodied in a cross theme. Ever-changing bits of melody form the strands of musical color that become a pattern. The second movement shows us two older lovers, Alexandra Bergstrum and Carl Linstrum. They look back on the time of their youth with a bright brass theme. As Carl and Alexandra converse, a mechanical rhythm denoting her adding machine punctuates the melodic tapestry with a reminder that the lady runs a ranch and has serious responsibilities. She is, however, looking for love, and the French horn plays Carl's theme over music representing Alexandra and her adding machine. In the final movement, we again see Emil and Marie at a fair where she is telling fortunes. Harbach's music describes their flirtation but with a sense of impending tragedy. The lovers embrace under a mulberry tree, where Marie's husband kills them both.

Hypocrisy is an orchestral suite in 13 parts inspired by Lois Weber's 1915 silent film *Hypocrites*. At the time the film was shown her work was thought to be on a level with that of D. W. Griffith and Cecil B. DeMille. Wikipedia identifies Weber as the most important female director the American film industry has ever known. In *Hypocrisy* Part I, "The Gates of Truth," members of a church congregation disagree with a sermon on hypocrisy. Their nodding and sneering is evident from the orchestra's rhythm and downward scales, even though the movement ends with the nobility of a harmonic blessing. Part II, "Conversations," deals with talk of replacing the minister. The trumpet and trombone play a melody but the woodwinds intrude with other textures. The scene ends with a delightful four-part canon. In Part III, "Deceptions," the minister morphs into a medieval monk named Gabriel. People are following Gabriel as he drags a bag of gold up a hill. Melodic tones describe the pastoral scene until a fanfare announces the opening of the bag. For Part IV, "Elusive Truths," a woman continues to

follow the monk up the hill as brass and woodwind themes dominate the musical scene.

In Part V, "Gabriel the Ascetic," the monk talks to a naked woman, actually the personification of truth, hiding behind a tree. Her theme is a distinctive plaintive melody played by the strings. For Part VI, "Curiosity," other monks laugh and carouse to unresolved orchestral motifs. For Part VII, called "Fated Fête Day," the trumpet plays a greeting for the arriving crowd and the cellos play a tango as Gabriel completes his statue of Truth. In VIII, "Dancing Children" continue the festivities accompanied by bassoon and clarinet. Two charming themes combine to add to the fun. Tragedy invades the merrymaking in Part IX, "Shock and Death." The people are shocked when Gabriel reveals his naked statue and a man stabs him. Part X, "Robe of Mourning," is a free harmonization of Bach's chorale *Komm, süßer Tod* with the horn playing the melody. In Part XI, "Vignette of Love," Truth holds a mirror up to Politics, sometimes in the present day, and at other times in the remembered past. The orchestra plays nostalgic dances, including a foxtrot and a two-step. Instruments of the London Philharmonic interact playfully in Part XII, "Mixed Signals." For Part XIII, the final "Sermon of Hypocrisy," solo violins play with pizzicato bass while a medieval family tends to a sick child. A trumpet plays their despair. A shift to modern times shows a dead minister and after a short fugue the main theme returns. In the finale to her piece, Harbach ties all the strands of her orchestral tapestry together with brilliant orchestration that produces a musical cloth-of-gold.

Although Harbach plays organ and harpsichord, she seems to have a love for trumpet and trombone, which are very prominent in the two works on this disc. The sound on this recording is clear and clean. Each solo instrument is well balanced with the rest of the orchestra. Conductor David Angus gives listeners a wide range of tempos and dynamics and he brings out the many musical colors in Harbach's writing. I enjoyed listening to both "Retourner" and *Hypocrisy* and think listeners will want to own this disc.

**Fanfare Magazine Issue 40:5 (May/June 2017)
Colin Clarke (Orchestral III)**

**HARBACH Symphonies Nos. 7, "O for Ferguson" • David Angus, cond;
London PO • MSR 1614 (Pioneers"; 8, "The Scarlett
Letter"; 9, "Celestial Symphony"; 10, "Symphony 62:54)**

REVIEW

In an interview with Barbara Harbach printed in *Fanfare* 35:6, I stated that her music "speaks with an open honesty that is rare in music today." If there is a connecting thread between these four symphonies, then that is it, a refreshing sense of freedom to speak the composer's own truth. This is the third volume of orchestral music by Harbach on MSR Classics, and the 11th volume of her music on that label. The consistent high standard of Harbach's music, coupled with her consistency of expressive means, is massively impressive.

A review of Volume I of Harbach's orchestral music formed part of my interview, "Meeting Barbara Harbach," in *Fanfare* 35:6; David DeBoor Canfield tackled Volume II as part of another interview feature in *Fanfare* 38:1. Now we come to Symphonies 7 through 10. The first thing to note is the standard of performance throughout. The London Philharmonic is going through something of a heyday these days, with much of the credit due to its current principal conductor, Vladimir Jurowski. The orchestra plays immensely responsively here under David Angus; there is a lovely sense of flow and inevitability to the slower sections of these works.

First up, then, the Seventh Symphony (2014), subtitled "O Pioneers!," as the music is adapted from Harbach's opera of that name set in 1910 Nebraska. Certainly the first movement, "Conflict," sets up the atmosphere, with its resolute opening. While the music is intimately related to the characters (trombones representing the anger of a specific character, horns playing the melodic lines of another, for example) and a specific place in the opera (act II, scene 3) the innocent ear enjoys highly charged music of great power and concision. Harbach's orchestration is worth studying, too; her textures are thick sometimes but never congested (this trait beautifully honored by MSR's recording). The central movement, ("Now I see what cannot be") is taken from the Trio in act II, scene 1, rising to an incredibly energizing setting of the anthem "O Pioneers." The finale dwells on loss, and the closure of that loss. The LPO's brass is particularly impressive (representing one character consoling another) as it dialogues with the woodwind and strings (representing the grieving person). Finally, the two coincide, in a

moment of resolution and newly found hope beautifully realized by Harbach. She structures and balances the movement perfectly.

The Symphony No. 8 of 2014–15 is based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*, consisting of portraits of three major characters (Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingworth, and Arthur Dimmesdale). In the first movement, Harbach's sweet, very characteristically American lyricism offers huge solace to the conflicts faced by the character of Hester, graphically depicted in sound. A portrait of evil in the shape of the character Chillingworth, the second movement finds Harbach expertly painting with a dark palette, while the finale considers the eternal story of an ordained minister struggling with his past sins. Depicting scenes of confession on the scaffold, the music yet has rays of light, beautifully rendered here by the LPO's strings.

Moving now to music for silent film, the Ninth Symphony (2014) reworks music for the 1906 film *The Birth, Life and Death of Christ*. If forced to choose an outstanding offering from the four symphonies here, this is the one that would come out top. There is a glorious delicacy to the first movement ("The Annunciation"); after such magical writing, short brass fanfares announce the arrival of the Magi. The sense of time suspended in "Celestial Vaults" is simply beautiful. This central panel represents the miracle of Saint Veronica, who offered her veil to Christ while he was carrying the cross; as a result, Christ's face was imprinted on the material. There is a palpable sense of the hallowed here. The finale presents the trio of temptations offered to Christ by Satan. Particularly delightful is the triangle-halo on a lightly scored sequence that, as the booklet notes point out, seems to refer to a French Noël. Fairly obviously, this portrays the angels. Harbach's Ninth Symphony is an engaging, winning work that will doubtless gain her many more followers.

Finally, there comes the Symphony No. 10, "Symphony for Ferguson" (2015). Ferguson is a place situated in Missouri and the scene of a tragedy in 2014, a shooting that sent waves around the world. Using traditional American tunes (*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, the spiritual *Wade in the Water*, William Billings's *Chester*) plus a melody from her musical *Booth!* ("Johnny, you're my hero"), Harbach weaves a strong tapestry. Widening the net, "The Fallen" second movement speaks to all those who lost their lives through war or injustice; the sound world is best described as shadowy. Finally, "Together in Harmony" is a plea for hope and peace. The ringing fanfares remind us what a tremendous brass section the LPO boasts these days. Harbach works with W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues* (the Handy original is wonderful, but interested listeners might wish to expand their horizons by exploring versions by Count Basie, Louis

Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald). Harbach's handling of the blues tune is full of joy; this is a glorious way to close the disc. All these are world premiere recordings; it is difficult to imagine finer, fresher versions though. Fascinating to see how opera, literature, film, and American music in its various forms all inform Harbach's completely unique and immensely strong style. The recording team deserve credit also, for the sound is first-rate, but no mention seems to be made of its members (or the recording venue) either in the booklet or online. Anyway, head over to msrcd.com/catalog/cd/MS1614 for a free streaming sample (the "Dimmesdale" movement from Symphony No. 8). This is fantastic, stimulating music by a master craftswoman.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 40:4 (Mar/Apr 2017)
David DeBoor Canfield (Orchestral III)

HARBACH Symphonies Nos. 7–10 • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSR
1614 (62:54)

REVIEW

Apropos of nothing, but a thought inspired by the surname of the conductor of this CD, if you're ever interested in partaking of the best hamburger you've ever eaten in your life, seek out the Black Angus chain in Armenia the next time you're there. You won't be disappointed! (Virtually everything you'll eat in Armenia is organic, which may explain why the food in general tasted so good there.)

My, my! I digressed even before I got started on the review. Even though the present CD is the sixth devoted to the music of Barbara Harbach that is now happily residing in my record and CD library, it didn't sink in to my addled brain as to how prolific a composer she is until I saw that this disc contains her Symphonies Nos. 7 through 10. Having written 10 symphonies in addition to a host of other orchestral and chamber music is certainly nothing to sneeze at, and Harbach continues to impress with her fluent compositional craft in these works.

The opening Seventh Symphony is subtitled "O Pioneers," and is intended as a paean to the settlers of the American West. Like Hindemith's symphony *Mathis der Maler*, Harbach's work is an adaptation of her eponymous opera, based on the Willa Cather novel, the plot of which is summarized in the notes. Briefly, it deals with a Swedish immigrant family's trials and tribulations as they settle into the fictitious town of Hanover, Nebraska. Three scenes in the opera lend their titles to the three brief movements of this work (the entire symphony lasts only 15 minutes). Despite the conflict and anguish in the plot of the opera, I hear very little but sunny optimism in the music, along with the expected "open" sonorities that are often used by composers to depict the American West. The piece is pleasing and effective, and often quite dramatic, even if it is not particularly profound in its musical aesthetic, surely located at the antipodes of the world of Mahler.

Harbach's Eighth Symphony is subtitled "The Scarlet Letter," and is (as you'd expect) based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel—one of my favorites of those I was required to read in my 11th-grade English class about 50 years ago. The three movements are named after the three main characters of the novel: Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingsworth, and Arthur Dimmesdale. The opening of the symphony sets the tone of the novel dramatically, with a

powerful five-note timpani figure portraying Hester's indecision over the choices she faces over the progression of her life. Other themes describe her solace, the revenge of her husband (using menacing figures in bassoons and brass), and the struggles of the ordained minister Dimmesdale, for the conflict between his faith and his actions. This conflict is represented by the alternation of major and minor sonorities and tonal centers.

In terms of tension and depth, this symphony forms a significant contrast with the preceding one, and I believe it to be the stronger work for those reasons. Indeed, this work is a major symphonic statement by a composer whom I would consider significant simply on the basis of this one work. My only wish is that the work could have been extended a bit. The fine ideas she employs could have been worked out and expanded such that the work could have easily been double the length than it is (a bit more than 14 minutes). Nevertheless, this is my favorite work among the four fine symphonic statements on this CD.

Symphony No. 9 bears the subtitle "Celestial Symphony," and is synthesized from the composer's silent film score *The Birth, Life and Death of Christ*. It opens with a flowing figuration above which soaring lines in the violins float to represent the Annunciation by the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary as she was informed that she was to give birth to the Messiah. "Celestial Vaults," the second movement describes Saint Veronica, who was said to be so moved with pity as she saw Jesus carrying his cross that she gave him her veil to wipe his face, his image being transferred to it as he used it. This event is not found in Scripture, but has come down through the centuries as part of the tradition of the Catholic Church. The movement is gently lyrical and full of pathos. The final movement, "Temptations," refers to the three temptations that Jesus faced in the wilderness as he was about to begin his earthly ministry of preaching the gospel. A rhythmic figure in the cellos suggests the struggle and deprivation that Jesus faced in these temptations involving the physical (turning stones into bread to satisfy his hunger), the spiritual (casting himself down from a high place knowing that angels would rescue him), and the vocational (foregoing the agony of the cross by worshiping the devil). The angels who ministered to Jesus after he resisted these temptations are represented by flutes. There is a fair amount of dissonance in this movement, but tonality triumphs in the end, even as the Savior did.

The CD concludes with "Symphony for Ferguson," Harbach's 10th essay in the genre, and reflects the composer's attempt to deal with the social unrest in the aftermath of the 2014 death of a young African-American man at the hands of a policeman in Ferguson, Missouri. The first movement, "Heroes," celebrates the men and women who have come forward to help in times of crisis (not just this one), and draws on the spiritual *Wade in the Water*, and

American patriotic songs, including *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and *Chester* for its inspiration. Added to these well-known tunes is one that Harbach borrowed from her own music, "Johnny, You're No Hero" from her musical *Booth*. The opening of the work is powerful and tumultuous, with dramatic lines in trombones and brass surrounded by swirling figurations in the strings. At the conclusion of the movement, she cleverly combines these tunes into a rather intricate tapestry. "The Fallen" follows as the centerpiece of the Symphony, and is a somber movement dedicated to all of those who have lost their lives through war or injustice. The composer has sought herein to produce a *chiaroscuro* effect through the contrasts in this movement; she has done so successfully through shifts in texture, instrumentation, and counterpoint. The symphony closes with "Together in Harmony," an expression of Harbach's hope for peace among nations and individuals. Fanfare-like figuration in the brass and timpani opens the movement, which weaves together several contrasting ideas (including a syncopated version of W. C. Handy's *St. Louis Blues*) in pleasing and convincing fashion.

David Angus and the London Philharmonic Orchestra do a splendid job in bringing these pieces to life. Pacing and accuracy of ensemble are especially noteworthy attributes of these premiere recordings. As much as I like these works, especially the Eighth Symphony, I should note that they would better called suites than symphonies, as there is not very much of what most auditors would consider symphonic form and development in them. This is not a criticism, but only an observation that might better suggest to *Fanfare* readers what these pieces are all about.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 40:2 (Nov/Dec 2016)
David DeBoor Canfield (Chamber Music V)

HARBACH *Terezin Children's Songs*.¹ *Nocturne noir*.² *Dorothy Parker Love Songs*.³ *The Birth, Life and Death of Christ*⁴ • ¹Stella Markou, ³Marlissa Hudson (sop); ¹Julia Sakharova, ³John McGrosso (vn); ¹⁻³Alla Voskoboynikova (pn); ⁴James Richards, cond; ⁴St. Louis CO • MSR 1544 (73:54 📖)

REVIEW

Composer and organist/harpsichordist Barbara Harbach is nothing if not prolific, as this is volume five of her chamber music, and I have also reviewed a disc of her orchestral music. Readers desiring more information about her may wish to refer to the interview that I did with her in 38:1. I really like her music a great deal, so I am always pleasantly surprised when I open the latest parcel from *Fanfare* Central to discover a new CD of her work. The present CD contains four chamber works for various groups of instruments (and in two works, they include the addition of a soprano to the ensemble).

The opening *Terezin Children's Songs* sets texts by the children who were confined to the Nazi "showcase" concentration camp, more often referred to by its German name, Theresienstadt. The "Potemkin Village" had an unusually high percentage of composers, writers, and other artistic prisoners who were allowed a degree of freedom to practice their art—until, of course, these unfortunate Jews were eventually shipped off to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Among the prisoners of Theresienstadt who eventually lost their lives were some 15,000 children, some of whose art and poetry was smuggled out of the camp. The depictions of the brutal life of the camp as seen through the eyes of a child are moving in the extreme, and the beauty of these settings is striking from the very first notes of the opening song, "Birdsong." It features a lovely lyrical melody sung by the soprano, with a counter melody by the violin weaving around it in canonic fashion. These lines are accompanied in the piano by some of the most gorgeous harmonies imaginable.

Despite the circumstances attending the writing of this poem by the anonymous child, there is a spirit of optimism in the poem ("You'll know how wonderful it is to be alive") that Harbach set exquisitely in the music. The second song, "Forgotten," foregoes the use of the piano in its first stanza, giving a particularly wistful quality to the setting of this text about love and friendship. "On a Sunny Evening" seems a bit more reserved in its rhythmic structure and harmonies; here, the subject is nature, but it closes with the lines, "If in barbed wire, things can bloom, Why couldn't I? I will not die!"

Unlike those of the first three songs, the authors of the final two are known. These include "The Butterfly" by Pavel Friedman and "Do not stand at my grave and weep" by Mary Elizabeth Frye. The shift in style in the final two or three songs from the lighter and more upbeat opening ones, both in the texts and Harbach's music, is quite noticeable. Nevertheless, their sadness yields a luminescent beauty that will deeply move the listener. This cycle, beautifully sung by soprano Stella Markou, worthily stands in the company of the great cycles by Samuel Barber and Ned Rorem. They're really that good, and this is my favorite work on the recital.

The *Nocturne noir* sets quite a different mood, full of drama and passion. From the title alone, I was expecting something, well, more nocturnal (i.e., peaceful and sleep-inducing). It turns out (I having finally read the booklet notes) that the piece was inspired by a dream, apparently one that included some moments of anxiety. Perhaps the most unexpected thing I heard was a fugue utilizing a jig-like motive. In any case, the piece produces a powerful impression.

The text of the *Dorothy Parker Love Songs* demonstrates the unerring eye of this American poet for the foibles of urban existence. The musical style of this cycle is similar to that of the *Terezin Songs*, although it is more up-tempo and more metrically regular throughout. Harbach especially well expresses in her music the conflicted feelings evident in the final poem of the triad, "Love Song," a whimsical text that begins, "My own dear love, he is strong and bold," and ends with "And I wish somebody'd shoot him," the latter line reinforced with a vocal swoop to the soprano's high C. Marliisa Hudson's soprano voice is several degrees weightier than that of Stella Markou, but seems perfectly suited to the tension in Parker's texts.

The major work on this disc is the closing one, *The Birth, Life and Death of Christ*. It is major both in terms of duration (more than a half hour in length), and the forces employed, a 13-member chamber orchestra. The title comes from the 1906 French film, *La naissance, la vie et la mort du Christ*, the most important work of the first woman filmmaker, Alice Guy, and one of the longest films that had been produced up until that time. The film is set in 25 scenes, and Harbach has written music to accompany each episode of this silent film. Her score was premiered in a showing of the film under the auspices of the St. Louis International Film Festival in 2014. Not surprisingly, there is a good bit of variety in the moods between one section and another to be found here. While this imaginative modal music is good enough to stand on its own, I would very much like to hear it in conjunction with the film for which it was written. I think its impact would be even greater in that context. Nevertheless, I can and do recommend this work and the others on this disc with considerable enthusiasm.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 39:1 (Sept/Oct 2015)
Lynn René Bayley (Soler)

SOLER Harpsichord Sonatas Nos. 1–120 • Barbara Harbach (hpd) • MSR
1300 (14 CDs: 1041:09)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW: Meet Barbara Harbach

Pennsylvania native Barbara Harbach, who studied organ and harpsichord at Penn State, and received a master's degree at Yale, and then a doctoral degree in organ and composition from the Eastman School of Music, has been one of the busiest performers in America. Her Wikipedia page tells us that following graduation she also studied organ at the Frankfurt Musikhochschule with the legendary Helmut Walcha. Interestingly, he told her that "he did not believe that women belonged on the organ bench." That statement has been more than refuted by her being ranked in 1992 by *Keyboard Magazine* as second to Keith Jarrett as "Top Keyboard Artist" in classical music, as well as her numerous organ and harpsichord recitals in North America, Asia, Europe, and Siberia. As also indicated on Wikipedia, she presented a weekly television series, *Palouse Performance*, broadcast in the northwest U.S.

Her many compositions in various genres and forms, from solo works to orchestral and choral pieces, have received awards. *The Music of Barbara Harbach, Vol. 1* was named "record of the year 2008" by MusicWeb International and received a Critics' Choice award from *American Record Guide*. Her works have also been praised in the pages of this journal by David DeBoor Canfield, and

I was very impressed with her previous recording of works by Arnold Rosner and Daniel Pinkham. She is a staunch champion of women composers: In 1993 she co-founded the *Women of Note Quarterly* and is now editor of *WomenArts Quarterly Journal*, despite her busy duties as Curators' Professor of Music at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where she teaches performance, composition, and related classes.

I was fortunate enough to be able to catch up with Harbach via email for this interview.

Barbara, I hardly know where to begin with this interview! You wear so many hats and have accomplished so much. Perhaps I should start by asking you which of your accomplishments you are personally most proud of: performing, composing, teaching, or proselytizing for other women composers?

I love them all! Whatever I am doing at the moment is the one that captures my imagination and energy. I do have to admit that teaching, composing, and editing is a bit easier than sitting at the organ or harpsichord for seven straight hours, but I do love to do it anyway! I have found my career changing over the years. At first, I thought I wanted to be a performing and recording artist, and played many recitals and performances beginning in the 1970s. In the 1980s I went to the British Library and ordered and received reels of historical women and men keyboard composers, and thus was born Vivace Press. (This was before the era of pdfs and email.) My vision was to recover, record, and publish the music of these talented women composers. What really charged my ambition to do this was an incident at an eastern university. I was asked to give an organ recital, and at the reception after the performance, I mentioned to a musicologist that I was interested in recovering the music of historical women composers. He said to me, "If there were any women composers, they wouldn't be very good." That was the gauntlet! In addition, the review headline of that night's recital read, "Tight Slacks, Organist in Good Form."

I can't imagine that a double major in harpsichord and organ is as common as that of harpsichord and piano. What drew you to the organ as your other instrument, rather than the more similar piano?

I played for my first church service when I was nine years old. I was sufficiently tall to be able to reach the pedals. The first hymn I played was *Bringing in the Sheaves*, and to this day I can play it in any key. The church service was held in my grandparents' "saloon," where there was an old harmonium that you had to pump with your feet, and I certainly developed great calf muscles! The "saloon" was in the hotel that my grandparents owned in central Pennsylvania, and since the county became dry, it was a saloon in name only. I graduated to a Hammond organ a few years later when we went to another church, and then in high school came one of the loves of my life, the pipe organ. The sound of the pipe organ still gives me a thrill, whether soft strings or drowning out the orchestra as in Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

I should mention that I took piano lessons beginning when I was four. My mother was my first teacher, and it was a wonderful way to bond with her. She was a terrific supporter of my musical career. I knew I wanted to be in music since I began lessons, and I enjoy the various facets that my career has led me.

I think I was drawn to the harpsichord because of the similarity of touch between the harpsichord and the tracker organ. When you press a key on the harpsichord, the pluck of the string gives a slight resistance similar to the feel of depressing a key on a tracker organ. Also, harpsichordists and

organists use much less wrist and body motion than pianists, and we do not need the upper body muscles required by pianists.

I suppose the next question should be who were the organists and/or harpsichordists who influenced you—the ones who inspired you to take up these instruments?

For 20th-century harpsichordists, I particularly admire and respect Wanda Landowska, as well as Gustav Leonhardt, Raymond Leppard, Ralph Kirkpatrick, Igor Kipnis, Ton Koopman, Sylvia Marlowe, Daniel Pinkham, Colin Tilney, Rosalyn Tureck, Fernando Valenti, Elisabeth Chojnacka, and many others.

For organists, I came of age with Helmut Walcha, Virgil Fox, E. Power Biggs, Marie-Claire Alain, and Gillian Weir; and now there is a whole crop of extremely talented contemporary organists. I still marvel that pipe organs, both large and small, are being built and installed in many churches in this rather cynical and perhaps non-church age.

If I may, I would like to ask a couple of questions regarding Helmut Walcha, since he is such an icon to so many of our critics and readers. I know that you had difficulties with him, but was there anything positive that you were able to get from the experience?

Oh, absolutely! He was a gifted organist, improviser, and composer! He would play Evensong every week at his church for free, the Dreikönigskirche in Frankfurt, where the audience would consist of only six or so of us students. When he would give a public recital that had a hefty ticket price, the church was packed. Go figure! At Yale, I studied with Charles Krigbaum, who had studied with Walcha, and I admired the articulations and interpretations of Krigbaum, which fueled my desire to study with Walcha. I was fortunate to be awarded a Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst to study with Walcha. Interestingly, Russell Saunders, with whom I studied at Eastman, was Walcha's first American student, and I was his last. While at the Frankfurt Musikhochschule, I was fortunate to receive the Konzert Diplom under Walcha. For my qualifying concert, Walcha would not coach Widor or any American compositions. In his defense, his forte was Germanic composers, and his forte was really a fortissimo!

And now, a different question, same topic: Did Walcha really have no respect even for those women organists who had become famous? I doubt that he would have heard of such organists as Mary Cherubim Schafer, but as a European-based organist he might have heard of Anne Maddocks, who worked at the famed Chichester Cathedral from 1942 to 1949, and he had to have known of Marie-Claire Alain (who, incidentally, was one of my personal heroes when growing up).

These are all wonderful women organists! And Marie-Claire Alain is one of my icons, also. Perhaps Walcha responded to the culture of his time, by not believing that women could be outstanding organists, so why teach them? Women would only get married and not use their training, so why waste a spot in the academy for them? The culture of suppressing women composers and performers goes centuries back in Germany and other countries. Just think of Fanny Mendelssohn and the struggles she and many other women had to endure to get their music recognized. How many women's compositions were left to languish in attics, only to be thrown out by future generations! So much has been lost over the centuries.

On a different topic, I was very happy to learn of your support for women composers. Nancy Van de Vate once told me that the unwritten rule in most American symphony orchestras is that perhaps one major composition per year by a woman composer is programmed; otherwise, it's back to the men. A friend of mine who considers himself enlightened once told me that he thinks this is only fair because "men write so much more music"!!! I would guess that you disagree with this as much as I do?

Absolutely; just check out the International Alliance for Women in Music, New York Women Composers, Society of Composers Inc., Donne in Musica, and American Composers Forum, just to name a few, and there are many, many women composers. According to the League of American Orchestras, only 1–2 percent of pieces played by orchestras in the United States are composed by women—what a shame! We write exciting, visceral, and beautiful music but cannot get it programmed. In the introduction to my book *Women in the Arts: Eccentric Essays II* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2015), I tried to address the issue of why there is a need for books about women in the arts, exhibitions of women painters, readings of women's poetry, concerts of music by women composers, and conferences highlighting women in the arts. It is an ongoing struggle for equity.

*I guess I really should ask where you come down on the recent revelation that Anna Magdalena Bach may have composed some of her husband's music—an article in *The Telegraph* by Ivan Hewitt suggests the cello suites. I can't imagine that living with and even playing her husband's music on a daily basis wouldn't have rubbed off on her, as it did on his sons?*

I think this is a fascinating thesis! Anna studied with the best, and I believe that Bach's creativity ignited hers! Or consider some other 18th-century women composers such as Elizabeth Billington, Anna Bon, and Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, who wrote music as teenagers and then went on to have other careers or dropped out of composition or got married and tended to a large estate. Elizabeth Billington (1765/1768–1818) wrote her opus 1 at the tender age of eight years old, and her mature opus 2 at age 11. Her sonatas compare favorably to Mozart's at the same age. Elizabeth went on

to become one of England's most outstanding operatic sopranos. The CD I recorded, half Billington and half Mozart, is still available as Classical Prodigies: Elizabeth Weichsell Billington/Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Hester Park Records, CD 7703, Vivace Press: vivacepress.com). I enjoyed working with Elizabeth's music, and her second marriage was tumultuous. She and her husband would separate and then reconcile, until in the last reconciliation he took her to Italy and then murdered her. I talked with one of her descendants in England and asked if the story were true, and she told me that it was true. Elizabeth's story and career, from child prodigy composer to famous soprano, a jealous husband, and a murder, is a made-for-TV movie waiting to happen!

If I may ask about Palouse Performance, which I've never seen: what kind of show is it? Performances by you, or a music discussion show with musical guests like the once-famous radio show St. Paul Sunday?

As the host of the show, *Palouse Performance* was a wonderful opportunity for me in the Palouse in the 1990s when I was professor of music at Washington State University, which is a region located in eastern Washington state surrounding Pullman. It is a large wheat-growing area, and each day the rolling fields of wheat seemed to change in color and depth. *Palouse Performance* showcased talent from Washington as well as performers passing through the region. We did everything from classical to blues, jazz, rock, and I also did performances on clavichord, harpsichord, and organ. One of my favorite shows was a woman composer/performer who wrote her country-western song *I'm Gonna Fax My Baby Some Love* (faxing was still new in the 1990s). The fertile Palouse region inspired my *Frontier Fancies* for Violin and Orchestra.

To briefly discuss your CD of music by Rosner and Pinkham, I was really wowed by the fact that such interesting modern music was composed for the harpsichord. Do you also work for more pieces like this? A body of modern works for harpsichord in addition to the 18th-century repertoire?

Yes, I am totally supportive of contemporary harpsichord composers and music. I recorded four CDs of contemporary harpsichord music featuring the music of Van Appledorn, Borroff, Zwilich, Diemer, Starer, Stern, Read, Rose, Martinů, Thomson, Albright, Adler, Sowash, Templeton, Fine, Near, Jones, and Locklair. I think Rosner's *Musique de Clavecin* is an incredible piece and not for the faint-of-heart technically! His portraits of women are fascinating and intriguing.

I have also recorded contemporary organ composers such as Adler, Locklair, Bitgood, Marga Richter, Zwilich, Julia Smith, Ethel Smyth, Violet Archer, Gardner Read, Gwyneth Walker, and Jeanne Demessieux.

How would you characterize your style on the harpsichord, as compared to other well-known harpsichordists currently active?

It seems to me I incorporate a lot of articulations and performance practices, and I pay close attention to melodic contours and harmonic foundations, which probably stems from my organ technique. I like to hear the harpsichord played with a fluid technique, and let the music speak for itself, without imposing the performer's personality on it.

In your new set of the keyboard sonatas of Antonio Soler, how did you go about sorting through the manuscripts and deciding the correct performance style?

It was a long process. For some reason, I bought the entire works of Soler some time before I even thought of recording the sonatas. I used the Samuel Rubio edition of his 120 sonatas for the recording. I am glad I got them when I did, since you can no longer get the Rubio editions. First, I analyzed all the movements for form and melodic repetitions. Then I listened to many recordings of Soler by various artists, and all had some fine interpretations, but when I sat down to record, I knew how I was going to interpret them—somewhere between Baroque and early Classical. I enjoyed the journey of researching and recording them, and it took two decades to get them all done. At one point, I didn't know if I would ever complete them, but various serendipitous events allowed me to continue. I am happy I persevered, and I thank Rob LaPorta and Richard Price of MSR Classics and Candlewood Digital, respectively, who did a superb job on the final mastering and packaging, and I thank Roy Christensen of Gasparo Records, who started and believed in the recording project.

I'm particularly curious about the various repeated movements that you enumerated in your liner notes to the Soler set: Sonata 96 duplicating Sonata 41, and movements in sonatas 42, 45, 54, and 60 being recycled in later sonatas. Do you suspect, as I did, that Soler himself might have actually done this? And if not, why include the duplications?

I wrestled and struggled with whether or not to include the duplicates, and decided that whether Soler put the duplicates together, and/or Rubio did, it seems to make the sonatas more complete when they contain the duplicates. On the lighter side, perhaps Soler or Rubio had so many sonatas and movements to contend with that they forgot they had included them earlier!

I'm wondering how on earth you balance all your activities in the course of a year. I can't imagine that it's particularly easy to be a teacher, researcher, performer, editor, and composer. Somewhere along the line, there has to be less time for one of these activities. How do you manage it?

A good question! Luckily, I am a morning person and start work, whether composing, rehearsing, preparing syllabi/tests, or proofing an article or

manuscript, early in the morning before the flood of emails, phone calls, and disturbances (usually by my four cats!). Summer is a good time for academics to recharge and do all the creative endeavors that had to be put off during the academic year. I like to do projects that I can become passionate about—women in the arts and mentoring students. Like all of us, if we enjoy what we are doing, it's not work, and we might even get paid for it!

Do you have any immediate plans, as performer or in the recording studio, that you would like to share with our readers?

I have some excellent 18th-century manuscripts tucked away of women and men composers that seem to be insisting I should introduce them to the listening public, so I will begin the editing, publishing, and recording process with them.

Thank you for your stimulating questions and letting me recall the gentle past, which none of us does in these aggressive and motivating times.

REVIEW

This massive 14-CD set of 120 sonatas ostensibly written by Antonio Soler was a labor of love for harpsichordist Harbach. As she points out in the extensive liner notes, there are multiple problems identifying how many sonatas Soler actually wrote as well as their dating because none of these works exist in his own hand. They were all written down by copyists, and the scores are rife with errors: missing or wrong notes, missing pages of music, and missing or added bars of music. Both Padre Samuel Rubio, whose edition is used here (originally published in 1957 by the Spanish Music Union), and Frederick Marvin did their own independent cataloguing of Soler's music in the 20th century; later there were Robert Gerhard and Macario Santiago. Harbach doesn't say why she chose this edition over the others, but admits that there are duplications of movements within it: "Sonata No. 41 also exists as No. 96, Movement II; No. 42 as No. 96, Movement IV; No. 45 as No. 94, Movement III; No. 60, Movement I as No. 99, Movement I; No. 60, Movement II as No. 99, Movement III; and No. 54 (transposed from C major to D major) as No. 92, Movement I."

I suppose Harbach chose to stick to these duplications and idiosyncrasies not only to present Padre Rubio's work intact, but also because, as one reads into accounts of Soler's life and personality, he may actually have done these things himself. He entered the Escolania of the Monastery of Montserrat at age seven to study music and took holy orders at age 23, where he spent the rest of his life, and apparently had zero ego and didn't really care if his music was published and admired or not. He never assigned numbers of any sort (neither opus nor catalog numbers) to his works, nor

did he date them, so when he died in 1783 everything was in a state of disarray. Some handwritten copies of his sonatas are dated 1786, which meant that he apparently wrote them posthumously.

But as careless as Soler was in the business end of music, he was just that meticulous on the musical side. Harbach mentions that in one of his rare surviving treatises, *Llave de la Modulaci3n* from 1762, he mentions Domenico Scarlatti, so he certainly knew and admired the Italian's equally brief sonatas and possibly even studied with him. And there is something more, as Harbach notes: "The later sonatas were written for a wide range, such as F1 to G6 (or as high as C7 as in the fourth movement of Sonata No. 61)—well out of the range of the harpsichord and early pianoforte." So there go the best-laid academic theories of the historically informed crowd, right out the window. If Soler's music was composed for a harpsichord, but neither the standard harpsichords nor the early pianofortes of his time had this range ... *what did he play them on?* Harbach commissioned harpsichord maker Willard Martin of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania to build a two-manual instrument for her that could reach G6, "a copy of an 18th century two-manual French double designed by Franois Blanchet." The amusing part of this story is that Martin delivered the new harpsichord to Harbach at her home in St. Louis in a long black hearse, prompting many of her neighbors to drop by "over the next few days to offer their condolences!" But here we go again: How did an 18th-century Spanish monk, who obviously took a vow of poverty, end up with a fancy, state-of-the-art French harpsichord to compose his sonatas on? Maybe he won it on *Let's Make a Deal?*

As for the performances, they are bright, lively, and beautifully articulated, recorded very well so as to capture the full range of the instrument with just enough natural room ambience. Harbach, who also plays quite a bit of modern music (I previously reviewed her CD of music by Arnold Rosner and Daniel Pinkham on MSR 1443), takes a very modern approach to phrasing, which is to play everything in a straightforward tempo with no modifications of *rallentando* or *rubato*. Certainly the music can take this approach; after all, Soler is not Domenico Scarlatti or Diedrich Buxtehude, whose music cries out for such modification of the line. We must remember that Soler was Spanish, that a great deal of his music was based on Spanish dance rhythms, and thus a lack of tempo modification would be appropriate, particularly in the fast movements. That being said, a little gypsy swagger now and then would have been welcome. As in the case of Scarlatti's sonatas, extended listening to this set, as I had to do in order to review it in time, is not recommended. Listen to a sonata, hit pause or stop, and let it sink in before moving on to the next one. This will give you a chance to absorb the multiple beauties and the sparkle of Soler's music. Despite the brevity of most of these works, Soler uses a surprising amount of repeats of

themes, so within their four-to-five-minute length one hears quite a bit of music that sounds alike.

Harbach made a list in the booklet of the sonatas she particularly liked, and by and large I agreed with her. Like many composers who wrote a lot of music—even J. S. Bach—not all of Soler's sonatas are of equal value. Some were probably written for his royal pupil, the Infante Don Gabriel, who was the son of King Carlos III (and who may also have been one of the principal scribes who jotted some of these sonatas down), and thus would be fun to play without being especially challenging. Think of this massive collection as being a combination of imaginative works written for Soler himself to play and simpler études composed for his royal student ... and possibly other students we don't know much about as well. Too often people seem to think that composers have some sort of divine channel to the deity who inspires them to write Music For The Ages. In the real world, it just doesn't work like that. Some of these sonatas may even have been dinner music.

To my mind, there is a lot more of the Baroque in Soler's music than the Classical, but this probably stemmed from his admiration of Scarlatti and his cloistered life. I don't know if he ever heard or knew of the more modern music written in the 1770s and early 1780s by Haydn, Mozart, or C. P. E. Bach. Although his later, multi-movement sonatas are a bit more Classical, they still rely on such traditional Baroque devices as repetition an octave lower or higher, canons, and fugues. Some musical prodigies grow and develop and others stay within their comfort zone. Little of his music is harmonically adventurous, not only for his time but also by comparison with Scarlatti or Bach. Yet Soler was apparently a happy person, because most of his music sounds happy.

As I said earlier, listening to all these CDs sequentially over a period of several hours is not a recommended way of savoring this set, but I had to do it. Among the more interesting sonatas is No. 3 with its quirky use of arpeggios and appoggiaturas, the wide musical leaps and odd key changes in No. 5, the rising scale passages in thirds and descending scales in the right hand of No. 11, and the "strumming accompaniment and Bolero rhythms" of No. 12. Although Harbach makes it clear that the harpsichord is not able to make many dynamics changes, I detected occasional louder passages here and there in these performances, which were welcome in order to break up the repetitions of themes. (Harbach explains this: On a two-manual harpsichord, one can play soft passages on the upper manual to achieve an echo effect.) In Sonata No. 41, I also heard a few *Luftpausen* as well as an interesting metallic or chime-like sound (I'm not sure how she produced that), and in the second movement of Sonata 98 she uses the damper pedal to make the harpsichord sound almost like a Spanish guitar.

As I said, even when I didn't know exactly which sonata was coming up next, I found myself agreeing with Harbach on the quality of various works. For instance, she describes Sonata No. 15 as "Spanish sounding with great Soler artistry," but what I liked about it was the way he continually "bounced" his themes around from hand to hand and used syncopation to propel the music. I also heard syncopation in Sonata 18 that, if played with a little more looseness, could have approached a jazz beat. Sonata 20 also has an interesting, loping beat, and Sonata 21 has a lot of swagger with its rollicking triplets and asymmetric rhythmic feel. Other sonatas I liked, for various reasons, were Nos. 24, 26, 30, 35, 38, 40 (which almost sounds like a little symphony), 44, 48, 52, the last movement of 61, 69, 72, 73, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 88, 90, 92, 93, 98, 100-101, 104-106, 108, 110, 113-114, 116-118, and 120. Several of the others start off with good musical ideas, but then suffer from too many repetitions and/or not enough interest or development (e.g., Sonata No. 85). Incidentally, I should mention that several of his sonatas are, unusually for that time, written in the Dorian mode: Nos. 15, 18, 19, 25, 32, 36, 39, 47-49, 57, 100, 102-104, 114-115, 117, and 120.

Pieter-Jan Belder, in his set on Brilliant Classics, divides the sonatas between harpsichord and fortepiano. He plays with enthusiasm but has a tendency to "mow 'em down," driving the rhythm so hard that it resembles a semi on the interstate with a load of potatoes to get to market by midnight. Gilbert Rowland, in his set of the sonatas for Naxos, has a peculiar sound, both very dry *and* overly resonant (whether due to the instrument or the mike placement I'm not sure), and plays them in a style similar to Harbach except that he "rounds off" the ends of choruses with decelerandos whereas Harbach does not. Sometimes these sound good, at other times affected. But there are other differences: Rowland apparently goes up to Sonata No. 130 and his slow tempos are generally (but not always) slower than Harbach's and his fast tempos faster (Sonata No. 81 almost twice as fast!). Rowland's set is also (at the time of writing) only available as 14 single CDs in thick jewel boxes, each selling for \$8.99 on Amazon, and the sonatas were released all out of order (Vol. 7, for instance, including Sonatas Nos. 3, 10, 39, 81, 108, 113, 11, 80, 82, 97, and 112), whereas Harbach's set is fully integral and comes in an attractive box with each disc in a cardboard sleeve. Each CD presents the sonatas in Rubio's original order, running sequentially from Sonata 1 to Sonata 120, and sells on Amazon for \$96.42 which breaks down to \$6.88 per disc, so it is the better value. Whether you are a Soler fanatic who wants it all or a performer or scholar who wants a handy reference to this music, this set is a valuable resource.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 38:1 (Sept/Oct 2014)
David DeBoor Canfield (Orchestral II)

HARBACH *Night Soundings. Gateway Festival Symphony. A State Divided - A Missouri Symphony. Jubilee Symphony* • David Angus, cond; ¹Nicholas Betts (tpt); London PO • MSR 1519 (61:03)

**INTERVIEW and REVIEW: Fanning the Flames of Tonality:
The Music of Barbara Harbach**

Fanfare readers have met Barbara Harbach in interviews by Robert Schulslaper in 33:3 and Colin Clarke in 35:6. In the latter issue, I also reviewed three CDs of her engagingly tonal music, expressing my considerable admiration for her compositional gifts. This is not, however, a one-sided woman, as she is also well-known as a keyboard player, most recently specializing in the organ. That she is still busy as a composer is evidenced by the CD on which I interviewed her in late May of 2014, attempting not to re-walk the paths explored by my two colleagues.

Q: Barbara, in the earlier interviews, you mention having worked with, and having been influenced by, Samuel Adler and Mel Powell. Yet your music sounds nothing like theirs. Who or what formed your Romantic musical aesthetic and language?

A: I was fortunate enough to take classes with Mel Powell at Yale University as well as a semester with Sam Adler at the Eastman School of Music. From Mel I learned to appreciate improvisatory ingenuity and from Sam rhythmic athleticism. Composers often write what they like to hear, and I adore listening to Howard Hanson, Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Mary Howe, Thea Musgrave, Gian Carlo Menotti, Adolphus Hailstork, and, of course, Ralph Vaughan Williams, as well as many others. Many of the mid-20th-century composers studied with one of my heroes, Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979) in Paris. She was an outstanding pedagogue, composer, organist, and pianist. Some of my favorite pieces are Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel's Overture (c. 1830), Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto, and the operas of Ethel Smyth.

Q: Do you feel vindicated, now that tonal music has been embraced by most of the best-known current American composers? I sometimes joke to people that I was writing tonal music before it was fashionable. Is this your sentiment too?

A: I am delighted to hear the growing trend towards tonal music among contemporary composers! It has seemed that most awards and competition winners are given to more dissonant and atonal music, but the resurgence of tonality is refreshing. I believe that performers and audiences like lyrical and melodic sections that relieve the edginess and nervous tensions of other sections. I like your response that you were writing tonal music before it was fashionable, and I feel the same way. I have tried to write pieces that were

closer to the “beep and squawk” style, but they never came to fruition. I guess it’s difficult to write against your own type and style.

Q: You would seem to be a soul sister to your predecessor American composers, women such as Amy Beach, Peggy Stuart Coolidge, and the English-born Rebecca Clarke. Have these women influenced you, and are there others?

A: Yes, they are all wonderful composers! I mentioned earlier Mary Howe, Thea Musgrave, and Ethel Smyth. There are other terrific contemporary composers from the late 20th and early 21st centuries such as Emma Lou Diemer, Beth Anderson, Joan Tower, Libby Larsen, Cindy McTee, Judith Statin, Shulamit Ran, Melinda Wagner, Jennifer Hidgon, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, the first woman Pulitzer Prize winner in 1983. I am especially drawn to the works of Grace Williams and the string quartets of Elizabeth Maconchy, as well as the music of her daughter, Nicola LeFanu. And who can forget the music of the French composer Germaine Tailleferre? These are just a few composers whose aesthetic ideals we all share; there are many more women creators writing stunning and exciting music, and I wish I had space to list them all!

Q: In your interview with Robert Schulslaper, you state that you knew you wanted to be a musician from the age of five. How is it that you came to have such a conviction at such a tender age? Did you grow up in a musical family in which you had a lot of exposure to classical music?

A: Like Amy Beach, my mother was my first piano teacher. She and her two sisters had a vocal trio and sang at church services, weddings, and funerals. I grew up in rural Pennsylvania, and my paternal grandparents had an inn that was one of the north-south horse and buggy stops through central Pennsylvania. I would play the harmonium for church services in the inn’s saloon (not an active saloon, because the county was dry) when it was too cold to go to the little church down the road. In the fall, the inn boarded hunters from all over the area, and I would play the pump organ for them. I played my first church service when I was nine years old. The nearest town and little grocery store was eight miles away. When I needed another piano teacher, my parents would drive an hour each way to take me to lessons every Saturday. I owe my parents so much for their support and love, and they never complained about the sacrifices they made for my musical education. Our family was always pleased and proud to claim Otto Harbach as one of our distant relatives.

Q: What gave you the idea for your Night Soundings?

A: Like all nocturnal creatures, I have a tendency to wander about during the night, embracing and relishing in its mysteriousness, unexplained sounds, and thick aura of darkness. As a pianist I was drawn to compositions with the titles of *Nocturne* and *Notturmo*—from Maria Szymanowska’s *Nocturne in B \flat* to John Field and Frederic Chopin’s nocturnes, not to forget the nocturnes of Carl Czerny, Faure, Debussy, Satie, and Poulenc. The night

offers a myriad array of emotions from solace to absolute horror. I tried to infuse some of these terrifying thoughts, as well as the solace that only night can bring, into *Night Soundings*.

Q: The symphonic works I've encountered by you to this point have been smaller-scale works, at least in terms of length. Have you written larger-scale symphonic works?

A: I have written six symphonies, and as you noted, they are smaller-scale works. I seem to emit my themes, work them out, combine and intertwine them, and then come to a close. I usually feel that there are no superfluous extras, but probably most composers feel that way about their works. I have written large-scale pieces such as *O Pioneers! – an American Opera* and *Booth! – an American musical*. *Booth!* won a competition and was presented at Skirball Theatre in New York City for a short run Off-Broadway in 2009. *Booth!* is about a strong man, Edwin Booth, the brother of John Wilkes Booth. The story is about what happens to a family when one of the members commits a horrific deed. That same year in 2009, *O Pioneers!*, based on Willa Cather's novel of the same name, was premiered at the Touhill Performing Arts Center in St. Louis.

Q: How was it that the present CD came to be conducted by David Angus? Did you have a connection with him beforehand? He seems most sympathetic to your work.

A: David Angus is a consummate musician and conductor! I knew of his recordings and liked his style, and also was intrigued that he is the music director of the Boston Lyric Opera and has a true empathy for the voice. I knew he would do well interpreting my pieces since many of them are vocal and lyric in style. In 2011 I went to London to hear him record the London Philharmonic Orchestra in several of my string orchestra pieces. I was thrilled with his conducting and interpretations. Then, when I had my latest four symphonies ready to go in 2014, he was the natural choice.

Q: The present CD features two works, A State Divided - A Missouri Symphony and Gateway Festival Symphony, with connections with your adopted state. Given the symbolism of the St. Louis arch as gateway to the West, do you see these works in any similar light?

A: For some reason I seem to absorb the landscape and cultures where I am planted. *A State Divided* was inspired by the 150th anniversary of Missouri's entry into the Civil War. *Gateway Festival Symphony* was for the 50th anniversary of the Gateway Festival Orchestra in St. Louis, and *Jubilee Symphony* was the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In Pullman, Washington, I love the Palouse region, and its mesas and rugged terrain. I wrote *Frontier Fancies* for violin and orchestra with an Americana flavor in its three movements, "Fiddlefirt," "Twilight Dream," and "Dancedevil." *Pioneer Women: From Skagway to White Mountain* for soprano, clarinet, and piano was about four women who helped settle Alaska, and *Daystream Dances* for oboe and piano showcased

the hot summer air. St. Louis has been an inspiration in many genres for me—the three symphonies that are mentioned above; *Freeing the Caged Bird* for woodwind quintet, inspired by the lives of four St. Louis women (Maya Angelou, Sara Teasdale, Kate Chopin, and Emily Hahn); *Freedom Suite* for string orchestra, inspired by Harriet and Dred Scott; *Lilia's Polka* for string orchestra, based on a polka written by Kate Chopin; *Carondelet Caprice* for chamber ensemble; *Harriet's Story* for soprano, violin, and piano; and *Sounds of St. Louis* for low brass, as well as many pieces not directly related to the St. Louis environs.

Q: Ironically, Maya Angelou passed on just about the time I received your answers. Your music sounds unambiguously optimistic to me. Are you, indeed, an optimist?

A: As all creative people, we have our optimistic side and a darker side. Yes, I would say that I am more optimistic than not. I have written some very lush pieces when I was at low ebb, and some highly energized pieces when carrying a great sadness. It seems that I am getting more optimistic as I get older—life is a lot of fun!

Q: In a previous interview, you stated that you admire "strong women." What in your judgment makes for such a woman?

A: In spite of all the cultural restrictions, in spite of marital or political difficulties, a strong woman continues to create and makes the world go round, such as Abigail Adams and Alexandra Bergson (in *O Pioneers!*), Harriet Scott, and Emily Dickinson all did. History is full of women creators in the arts, many of whom created under oppressive circumstances, including Kassia, Anne Boleyn, Fanny Mendelssohn, the contemporary Chen Yi, and various Soviet and Ukrainian composers.

Q: At the risk of being provocative, may I ask if there is still any place in America for strong men?

A: Absolutely yes! Men have been in the forefront of music for centuries, and they have written glorious music, loved and appreciated by many. In some ways, men are still in the forefront. There is a lot of room for composers of all types of music by both men and women, nowadays. In some ways, it is difficult for contemporary composers to find an audience. Both men and women would love a culture that embraced and hungered for new music, as they did in the Classical period. I tell my students that they should just keep writing, write what pleases you, and don't worry about what people or critics may think about your music.

Q: That is certainly an approach I agree with. Now that so many women composers have achieved international renown, are we past the point of needing to identify or associate composers by gender? It seems to me that the days of discrimination against the music of gifted women are mercifully behind us.

A: Thankfully, it is getting better for women composers. We now have five women Pulitzer Prize winners in music since 1983: Ellen Taaffe Zwilich,

Shulamit Ran, Melinda Wagner, Jennifer Higdon, and Caroline Shaw. When Marin Alsop was asked what it felt like to conduct the Last Night of the Proms, she said, "I am exceedingly proud to be 'the first' but I am also a bit shocked that there can still be firsts for women in 2013!" Is there a gender gap in the music industry? It is true that there are more professional male music creators than female. For some reason, it's taking a lot longer in music than in literature and the visual arts to reach equilibrium. It was almost acceptable by the 19th century for female writers to be published, yet it's only in the last couple of decades, since about 1980, that historical female composers have really emerged. Just a few other statistics: As of 2014, the Metropolitan Opera in New York City has never performed a work by an American woman composer; only five percent of paintings hung in museums are by women artists; and about one percent of pieces played by orchestras in the U.S. are by women, according to the League of American Orchestras. Yes, it is getting better, but we're still working on parity. Perhaps until that time, there is a need to focus on "women composers," competitions for women composers, and conferences that highlight the creativity of women. Or as Nadia Boulanger said, "I've been a woman for a little over 50 years and have gotten over my initial astonishment. As for conducting an orchestra, that's a job where I don't think sex plays much part." Nadia Boulanger was the first woman to conduct many major orchestras in America and Europe, including the BBC Symphony, Boston Symphony, Hallé Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, and Philadelphia Orchestra.

Q: What are your latest compositional projects?

A: Right now I seem to be in a vocal phase, and have just finished three Dorothy Parker poems for soprano, violin, and piano. The poems reflect Dorothy's wry humor and keen observation of urban life. Now I am working on five songs of children's poetry from the Theresienstadt concentration camp, the poetry of which is surprisingly uplifting and beautiful. By July I will begin another silent movie score and then some more orchestral pieces.

Q: You clearly have your projects lined up well in advance! Is there any genre that you haven't yet written in that you hope to someday?

A: I would love to do another opera, but finding the right libretto will be the key. I have also written several musicals other than *Booth!*, and would love the opportunity to orchestrate them for the stage.

Q: Now that your compositional career is flourishing, do you still have as much time to perform as you did earlier in your career?

A: The first part of my career was indeed as a performer and recording artist, and I am still keenly involved with both. While rummaging around in the British Library, I found many delightful and interesting compositions by 18th-century men and women composers. MSR Classics recently released Thomas Haigh's Six Concertos for Harpsichord, op. 1, which are great fun to play. Another 2-CD set by MSR contains Bach's *Art of Fugue* and Pachelbel's

Canon, Chaconnes, and Chorale Preludes. Over my career I have logged many hours on the organ bench playing the works of great Baroque composers such as Bach and Pachelbel. It is a great tribute to their music that it still speaks eloquently to us. I am also looking forward to the release later this year of the integral 120 harpsichord sonatas by Antonio Soler in the Rubio edition, a 14-CD set.

REVIEW

Having previously reviewed three full CDs of Barbara Harbach's music, I feel that I am getting a good handle on her style. The CD under review here continues to cement my opinion that here is a composer in full command of her compositional craft, and who, even though she speaks with an uncompromising conservative and tonal voice, has something worthwhile to say in each of her works. This is not music by a mere musical dilettante, but by someone who is both possessed of a vivid musical imagination, and the craft to set down what she conceives. Her orchestration is masterful, and always "works."

The four works heard on this CD, labeled as volume II of Harbach's orchestral music, are all relatively brief, none lasting more than 18 minutes, and each cast in a three-movement structure. Opening the disc is *Night Soundings*, which was commissioned by Thomas F. George, and is comprised of the movements "Cloak of Darkness," "Notturmo," and "Midnight Tango." Nothing in the work sounds particularly ominous to me, but the work is evocative of the murmurings that characterize the dark hours. The last movement brings a departure from Harbach's usual Americana-infused style, and slips far south of the border in its sultry tango atmosphere.

Following that comes the *Gateway Festival Symphony*; the opening movement, "Confluency," contains some of the more subtly austere harmonies I've encountered in this composer's music. These sonorities are meant to suggest the merging of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. The second movement, "Sunset St. Louis," has a gentle tango rhythm underpinning its long flowing lyrical lines. "After Hours" begins with a trumpet call to arms which quickly yields to themes of grandeur suggesting to my ears the wide open spaces of the West. The movement is a paean to the people of the State of Missouri, and looks back to the pivotal role that Missouri played in the Civil War. History buffs will recall that the state sent troops to both sides of that internecine conflict between the states, and saw more battles fought on its territory than any of the other states save Virginia and Tennessee. The movement (and symphony) ends on an optimistic note

with plenty of brass flourishes, perhaps meant to suggest the composer's hope that such a conflagration will never again engulf American soil.

A State Divided - A Missouri Symphony is a companion work to the previous one, and is based upon similar themes drawn from the state's history and its divided interest in the Civil War. The opening movement, depicting the Missouri Compromise, is based upon a "folk tune" of Harbach's own composition, which spins forth the movement with harmonies that could be nothing other than American. The second movement, "Skirmish at Island Mound - African-American Regiment," opens with rather ominous harmonies, redolent of impending disaster, but instead of leading into overt battle music, transforms into a square dance-like section that also utilizes another new folk song, this one quite lively. Occasional trumpet calls remind the listener that the piece is indeed connected to war, especially given the return of the ominous sonorities from the opening of the movement. The piece celebrates the first Union engagement (and victory) by a regiment composed of African-Americans. "The Battle of Westport - the battle that saved Missouri" looks back to one of the largest engagements of the War west of the Mississippi. Persistent ostinatos and dramatic figurations including runs in the strings suggest the conflict, and these are augmented by the use of the "military" percussion, including cymbals, bass drum, and xylophone.

Closing the proceedings is *Jubilee Symphony*, a work commissioned by the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Its opening movement features a highly syncopated and irregular rhythmic figure over which Harbach's signature flowing melodies rise. Shortly, a jig-like dance occurs, and indeed, the entire movement is permeated by a dance-like quality. The opening of the second movement provides a brief respite that evokes pastoral images, before returning to new dance rhythms.

Like the music on the previous CDs I reviewed, Harbach's music never strays very far from the optimistic spirit of the American "can-do" mindset. This is music that is easy to love and appreciate, but without the shallowness exhibited by much music that would carry those particular descriptors. David Angus and his colleagues in the London Philharmonic Orchestra bring off these works in splendid fashion. In short, the disc is warmly recommended to those who are convinced that new tonal music still has something to offer the listener. If you're not yet convinced by that premise, give these pieces a try, and see if you don't yield to their charms

**Fanfare Magazine Issue 37:4 (Mar/Apr 2014)
Carson Cooman (Chamber Music IV)**

HARBACH *Incanta*.¹ *Harriet's Story*.² *Phantom of the Dreams' Origin*.¹ *The Sounds of St. Louis*³ • James Richards, cond;¹ St. Louis Chamber Players;¹ Marlissa Hudson (sop);² John McGrosso (vn);² Alla Voskoboynikova (pn);² St. Louis Low Brass Collective³ • MSR 1259 (74:25)

REVIEW

For years Barbara Harbach (b. 1946) was best known as an intrepid harpsichordist and organist, specializing in contemporary music, especially that of women composers. Among the most important of these activities was an excellent series of albums for the now defunct Gasparo label devoted to contemporary harpsichord repertoire. (Two of the best pieces, by Daniel Pinkham and Arnold Rosner, were rereleased on MSR this past year.) Harbach's busy and vital musical life also included the founding of a publishing company (Vivace Press), a record label (Hester Park), and a journal on women and the arts (*Women of Note Quarterly*). After moving to St. Louis in 2004, Harbach began to focus a significantly greater portion of her efforts on composition. Though she had composed a variety of works previously, she credits the arts community of St. Louis with being much more interested in her music than had been the case in previous places she'd lived. The result of the last decade has thus been a large number of chamber and orchestral pieces, joining the keyboard and choral pieces that had comprised the bulk of her catalog prior to 2004. She has also written five musicals and an opera. Feature articles (and generally quite positive reviews) on her have appeared in this magazine in 33:3 and 35:6. MSR Classics is releasing an ongoing series of CDs devoted to her works, of which this disc is both the eighth volume in the complete series and "Chamber Music, Vol. 4." This release contains four pieces from 2011–12: two works for large chamber ensemble, a song cycle about Harriet Scott (wife of Dred Scott) for soprano, violin, and piano, and a very bluesy suite about St. Louis for low brass ensemble with percussion. Harbach's musical style is firmly tonal and lyrical, with a distinctly American flavor and a lot of folk influence. The vast majority of her pieces are either programmatic or poetic in inspiration. Except for the times when it becomes more overtly pop (such as her musicals) or jazz influenced, her music is similar in style and concept to that of Rick Sowash, and the many fans of Sowash's popular recordings would likewise enjoy Harbach's work. Performances by many St. Louis-area musicians are all strong.

Fanfare Magazine, Issue 35:6 (July/Aug 2012)
Maria Nockin
(Orchestral I, Music for Strings, Chamber Music I)

HARBACH *Veneration. Frontier Fancies. Arcadian Reverie.*¹ *Rhapsody Jardine.*² *One of Ours* • Kirk Trevor, cond; ¹František Novotný (vn); ²Cynthia Green Libby (ob); Slovak RSO • MSN 1252 (56:05)

HARBACH Sinfonietta. *In Memoriam: Turn Round, O My Soul. Freedom Suite. 2 Songs from The Sacred Harp. Demarest Suite. Nights in Timișoara. Lilia Polka* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSN 1258 (67:45)

HARBACH *American Solstice.*¹ *Transformations.*² *Forces at Play.*¹ *Carondelet Caprice.*¹ *Fantasy and Fugue on Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.* ³ *Separately Together: Synesthesia.*¹ *Rhapsody Ritmico*⁴ • ¹Istropolis Ens; ²Moyzes Qrt; ³ww qnt; ⁴brass qnt • MSN 1253 (65:32)

REVIEW

Unlike most modern composers, Barbara Harbach writes music that is unapologetically lyrical and melodic. She has an elegant approach to line, and it results in truly beautiful pieces. Often, she states her theme in a straightforward manner and then restates segments of it by having it played in various formations by different combinations of instruments. She maintains a conservative framework, however. Within it she writes joyful tunes and develops them enthusiastically.

Harbach's *Veneration* is a smoothly orchestrated work defined here as paying honor to the ancient goddess Venus and has its own distinct qualities and leaves an indelible impression. Although it is in no way derivative, it has recognizable American sonorities. While the first movement may remind us of rituals, the second is devoted to charity and love as expressed in a soft caress. Harbach is an expert at expressing emotion in her music and she finishes her piece with a rondo that braids various themes into a graceful, lyrical vision of pleasure. *Frontier Fancies* features violinist František Novotný, who plays Harbach's flirtatious music with romantic playfulness and Western pizzazz, despite his European identity. When not performing, he is an associate professor of violin at the Janáček Academy of Music and the Performing Arts in Brno. The "Twilight Dream" tells us of the sunset over high snow-capped mountains that brings an aura of peaceful reverie after a day of hard work. Its sequential passages flow smoothly like a calm river but after a bit of rest the enchantment of the "Dancedevil" draws us to our feet. Then we follow the melodies and the rhythms until we collapse from exhaustion.

From time immemorial, composers have been inspired by the lush beauty and stark power of nature. Both Harbach's soothing *Arcadian Reverie*, with its simple melodic starting point, and her more exotic *Rhapsody Jardine* with its plaintive oboe part follow that path. The emotional range of both these pieces is very impressive. Soloist Cynthia Green Libby's playing in the rhapsody is thoroughly enjoyable. She has excellent breath control, and she phrases with silken, well-shaped tones. At home in the United States, Libby is professor of music at Missouri State University. The Willa Cather symphony, *One of Ours*, is the musical realization of the writer's 1922 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel about a young man and his eventual heroism in World War I. The letters of Cather's cousin, killed in action in 1918, inspired her to write the book. Harbach's grandfather served in that war and she has a definite emotional attachment to the stories of those who came home and those who died in Europe. Harbach's solidly framed, straightforward music tells his story in melodic but contemporary lyrical language.

Her music is accessible to the novice and presents interesting textures and sonorities to the connoisseur. Here it is beautifully performed by veteran recording conductor Kirk Trevor and the Slovak Radio Symphony. Although the sound of the instruments is blended, it never loses its character and solos stand out the way they should.

Much of the music on the second compact disc relates to Harbach's 2009 opera *O Pioneers!*, which is based on Willa Cather's 1913 novel of the same name. Cather's story has all the elements that an opera needs: long-term loving relationships, sibling rivalry, and murder. Harbach has used the music that the novel inspired in other works as well. In the Sinfonietta, the first movement, "Homage," is a version of Alexandra's aria in which she mourns the death of her brother, Emil. For the second movement, "Jeu Jeu," she gives us a new treatment of the "Moon Waltz" from the opera, which she weaves into a colorful tapestry. "Pastiche" contains a melodic mixture that includes an enchanting tango. In the first section of the *Demarest Suite*, "Echoes of Our Youth," she reprises music from the duet Marie and Emil sing at the beginning of the opera. The second movement is the charming "Remember the Ladies Tango," in which the beat is layered with string harmonies, but the dance is still there. For the final section, "Joyous Day," she uses a theme from the opera's wedding scene. It gives the suite a happy and rhythmic conclusion that is bound to win a thunderous round of applause in the concert hall.

In Memoriam is a mourning piece that might well be played at the funeral of a dignitary. The *Freedom Suite* is fascinating in its use of traditional spirituals and their harmonies. The composer even combines one with her

version of a Virginia reel in the first section of the work. Later, she uses themes from the spirituals in her own unique manner to tell the tribulations of Dred Scott's wife and daughters on their journey to freedom. Two Songs from *The Sacred Harp* give Harbach a chance to write her own colorful fugues and acquaint us with American music from the time of the Revolution. *Nights in Timișoara* is a rather multicultural piece that places a tango rhythm in Eastern Europe and is simply fun to listen to or even to dance to. The *Lilia Polka* is Harbach's arrangement of an 1899 composition by Kate Chopin that has the charm of the *fin de siècle*. It makes an amusing finale to this otherwise serious compact disc. David Angus leads the excellent London Philharmonic orchestra and brilliant soloists in sensitive and idiomatic performances.

American Solstice makes use of an old fiddle tune, the rhythms of which almost sound Native American. She uses strings in a clever manner, employing the Moyzes String Quartet in addition to the Istropolis Ensemble. The second theme breezes in with a light heart and gradually crescendos like a growing river that will eventually sweep across the listener's ears with floods of musical color.

Transformations describes the stages an immigrant goes through in order to become an American citizen. The pastorale that begins this piece describes the calm that results from having arrived safely at the destination. In the end, the immigrant will again attain this state of peace, but before that he will have to undergo the changes of attitude and behavior that are a part of the hard work of fitting into the fabric of American life. She tells us far more about these difficult adjustments with music than words ever could. *Forces At Play* is for chamber ensemble and it tells a different type of story, with broad lines that form a background for dance. *Carondelet Caprice*, also for chamber ensemble, has a lovely plaintive section that brings 19th-century rural Mid-America to mind. The Fantasy and Fugue on *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, as worked out for woodwind quintet, follows these works. *Separately Together—Synesthesia* is a set of pieces for chamber ensemble that provide a bit of contrast. The first section, "Lilting Lines and Careening Melodies," is rather jazzy. In the second, her "Spattering Notes" form melodic patterns despite the name. All of these pieces build up to the aptly named "Crescendo of Colors." The *Rhapsody Ritmico* for brass quintet fills out the disc with exquisite brass flourishes.

Fanfare Magazine, Issue 35:6 (July/Aug 2012)
Colin Clark
(Orchestral I, Music for Strings, Chamber Music I)

HARBACH *Veneration. Frontier Fancies. Arcadian Reverie.*¹ *Rhapsody Jardine.*² *One of Ours* • Kirk Trevor, cond; ¹František Novotný (vn); ²Cynthia Green Libby (ob); Slovak RSO • MSN 1252 (56:05)

HARBACH Sinfonietta. *In Memoriam: Turn Round, O My Soul. Freedom Suite. 2 Songs from The Sacred Harp. Demarest Suite. Nights in Timișoara. Lilia Polka* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSN 1258 (67:45)

HARBACH *American Solstice.*¹ *Transformations.*² *Forces at Play.*¹ *Carondelet Caprice.*¹ *Fantasy and Fugue on Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.*³ *Separately Together: Synesthesia.*¹ *Rhapsody Ritmico*⁴ • ¹Istropolis Ens; ²Moyzes Qrt; ³ww qnt; ⁴brass qnt • MSN 1253 (65:32)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW: Meeting Barbara Harbach

At first, the title for this interview might seem amusing, perhaps even wrong, given the circumstances, for I have never met Barbara Harbach in the flesh; but after hearing her music, and reading her replies to my questions (set out below), I feel as if I have. Her music speaks with an open honesty that is rare in music today. I point out to her that her music is exquisitely crafted and also remarkably pleasant to listen to. More than once, it was her use of counterpoint that impressed (in *Venerations*, for example, or in the third movement of *One of Ours*). Where did this interest in counterpoint spring from and how was it developed, I wonder.

"I am largely self-taught (for better or worse!)," she replies, "and I did have some composition lessons with Samuel Adler at Eastman as well as Mel Powell at Yale University. I also studied organ with Helmut Walcha in Frankfurt. I had the privilege of observing, listening to, and learning from both Powell (jazz) and Walcha (Baroque) improvise superb compositions. Many of my compositions begin as improvised pieces, and then become enlarged and codified to paper. My interest in counterpoint stems from logging many hours on both the organ and harpsichord bench, and playing and performing a wide range of composers, which gave me a chance to assimilate their styles. Studying scores becomes a composer's passion."

And on her recordings, Harbach has been blessed with some tremendous soloists: František Novotny in *Frontier Fancies* and Cynthia Green Libby in the oboe *Rhapsody Jardine*. Her writing seems to me to be very gratefully written for the instruments. "I have been very fortunate with the soloists

and performers on my recordings such as the ones you mentioned as well as trumpeters Barbara Butler and Charles Geyer at Northwestern University, William Preucil of the Cleveland Orchestra, the St. Louis Chamber Players, and the Arianna String Quartet at UMSL," she says. "If I have a question or a questionable lick, I check with the expert players to determine if it is playable. It is one of my priorities to make instruments sound the best that they can. I enjoy listening to solo literature for each instrument and hearing the nuances of the instrument."

In Harbach's own sound world, there is a pronounced pastoral element to some of the music, almost like an American equivalent to the English school of Vaughan Williams, Butterworth, and the like. I ask if that is a parallel she will allow? Does this element come from a love of nature and environment? "Absolutely," she responds. "I am delighted and humbled to be likened to the English composers such as Vaughan Williams and Butterworth. I am also thrilled to be considered an American romanticist in the Copland-Hanson-Harris mold. Love of nature has inspired several pieces: *Frontier Fancies* came out of the Palouse region in the state of Washington with its rich topsoil and rolling wheat-covered hills; *Nights in Timișoara* came from the vibrant, cosmopolitan city of Timișoara in the Romanian part of Transylvania." Another technique is to reuse previous material (for example, the 2010 Sinfonietta uses material from *O Pioneers!*, as indeed does the *Demarest Suite* in two of its movements). "Often when I write a melody, I try to write it in such a way that it can transcend any genre, but still work well within its original context. A vocal aria can be an instrumental tune and vice versa. Sometimes I find that after I have written a melody, I am not yet finished with it, and it might pop up in another form in another genre. I try to make a melody as appealing in its original form as well as in its newly morphed version."

In keeping with this spirit of adaptability, Harbach can also take music by other composers and arrange it: In the case of the discs under consideration, Kate Chopin's *Lilia Polka*. "I am often inspired by strong writers like Kate Chopin (*The Awakening*), Willa Cather (*O Pioneers!* and *One of Ours—A Cather Symphony*), and the strong women who settled Alaska in my *Pioneer Women: from Skagway to White Mountain*," she says. "I was commissioned to write a piece for the Equinox Chamber Players in St. Louis, and I wrote *Freeing the Caged Bird* for woodwind quintet. While working on the piece based on women from St. Louis, I discovered that Kate Chopin composed *Lilia Polka* as a piano piece for her daughter that was published by H. H. Rollman in St. Louis. Polkas were quite popular in the German and German-American communities in St. Louis in 1899. In my arrangement of *Lilia Polka*, I tried to showcase each instrument in the woodwind quintet, as well as in the string-orchestra version."

As an aside, I suggest that perhaps I'm biased, being U.K.-based, but the London Philharmonic makes a truly gorgeous sound on the disc *Music for Strings*, and that it particularly captures the pain of bereavement in *In Memoriam*. "I often am told that some of the absolute best string playing in the world is found in London, especially the London Philharmonic Orchestra," Harbach says. "David Angus and the LPO did a marvelous recording of my pieces. Their talent, outstanding technique, and musicianship were a thrill to experience. Their interpretations flowed easily from jaunty dance tunes in *Demarest Suite* to poignant reflection in 'Hommage' from the *Sinfonietta*." Returning to the heart of Harbach's music, I am intrigued by the composer's description of *The Good Lord Is Comin' for Me* as a "new spiritual." In the next movement Harbach uses two very famous ones (*Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child* and *Go Down Moses*), while the chamber disc has a lovely set of variations on *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*. Again, in *Two Songs from The Sacred Harp*, she uses material by Benjamin Franklin White (1800–79), compiler of the hymn book *The Sacred Harp* (another tune from this collection appears in *American Solstice* on the chamber disc) and Billings's *Chester*. "I have always been fascinated with early American composers and their compositions from early psalm tunes to spirituals," she explains. "I grew up in the hills of Pennsylvania, and the rural singing community sharpened and shaped my appreciation of both spirituals and early American pieces. When I was writing my musical, *Booth!*, I searched and searched for a spiritual that would fit the spirit and mood of the lyrics. Finally, I gave up searching for a spiritual and wrote my own spiritual—newly composed, *The Good Lord is Comin' for Me*. I enjoy writing 'new spirituals' and always try to find innovative ways to develop and enrich the sound."

I'm also fascinated by the string quartet piece *Transformations*, inspired by a 1912 silent film. I love the idea of the film stretching across the decades and linking to a piece of chamber music. Also, it adds another dimension to the diversity of Harbach's music. Similarly, *Carondelet Caprice* references a 1913 silent film. "I became enchanted with the 1912 film *Making an American Citizen*, directed by Alice Guy Blaché, a French director who moved to the United States in the beginnings of narrative film. The plot centers on an Eastern European couple who come to the United States and through a series of incidents he learns to respect his wife. This captured my imagination. I scored the silent film for string quartet which became *Transformation*. It was a musical challenge to underscore the film with the appropriate emotional ambience for the eight segments. *Carondelet Caprice* (for chamber ensemble) began life as the score to the 1913 silent film *How Men Propose*. A young writer accepts marriage proposals from three different men and she compares their techniques! I enjoyed writing this short comedy piece. I also wrote the 45-minute score to *Judit Simon*, a

1915 Hungarian film, which later became my *Echoes from Tomorrow* for chamber ensemble.”

And now, as they say, for something completely different: the impetus of the harpsichord disc Harbach recorded of Anna Bon de Venetia (the op. 2 of 1757). I knew Harbach is an active keyboardist, but why this music? “I had been performing the music of Anna Bon for several years after finding a copy of the manuscript and believed that the music of this young composer needed to be recorded. I have championed many historical and contemporary women composers, as well as men, including anonymous 18th-century women composers, Elizabeth Weichsell Billington, Elisabetta de Gambarini, Elizabeth Hardin, Vivian Fine, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, and Libby Larsen to name a few.

“Soon to be released is a disc of the six concertos of the English composer Thomas Haigh (1769–1808). These pieces can be played by one performer on the harpsichord or fortepiano. He wrote them at the time when the piano was just emerging, but there were still many harpsichords being played. Later this year or early next year, MSR Classics will be releasing a 12-CD set of the keyboard sonatas of Antonio Soler, which I have recorded on my Willard Martin harpsichord.” This, surely, will be a remarkable achievement. As is, of course, the ongoing series of discs of Harbach’s music on MSR. There are various questions this raises: not only how many more volumes are planned, but also given that Harbach is known as a prolific composer, just how much of her music remains to be recorded? “I am working on my *Chamber Music IV*,” she says, “which will include *Harriet’s Story* for soprano, violin, and piano, inspired by the life of Harriet Scott, who with her husband, Dred Scott, sued the United States government for their release from slavery. Their suit was unsuccessful but it helped to catapult the United States into our Civil War. Also on the CD will be *The Sounds of St. Louis* with a funky version of the St. Louis blues; also in the works will be another orchestra recording of my symphonies.”

Plenty to look forward to, then. Harbach’s music is refreshing in its sound world, yet stimulating in both its intellect and its sense of endless discovery.

REVIEW

One should not, perhaps, be so naïve as to dismiss the *Venerations* as music that is simply easy on the ear. As the music progresses, one gets a sense of the expertise involved here: the skilled but subtle use of counterpoint that never calls attention to itself. The second movement, “Charity-Caress,” started life as a piece for cello and voice (I am not sure I would have guessed), although there is an undeniable sense of ongoing dialog. Again, one is in danger of missing the composer’s craft in the final “Grace: Pleasure Heart” (which, as the booklet notes claim, is a “spirited frolic”).

The piece for violin and orchestra, *Frontier Fancies*, is memorable for its sense of longing as well as the caprice of the final "Dancedevil." Harbach is blessed with magnificent soloists, both here and in the oboe pastoral *Rhapsody Jardine*, in which Cynthia Green Libby pipes most appealingly. The symphony (inspired by Willa Cather) is notable for Harbach's ability to make her point swiftly (none of the three movements last over five minutes) and effectively. The Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra plays with great belief in the music; recording quality is of top quality.

But if the Slovak RSO plays with *élan*, it is the London Philharmonic that really excels in the disc *Music for Strings* (MSR 1258). Rarely have I heard the orchestra's string section play with such golden tone as in the lush and lavish "Homage" first movement of the *Sinfonietta* (2010), a part of which reuses material from Harbach's opera *O Pioneers!* (Alexander's aria, "In the Cold in the Deep in the Dark"). Conductor David Angus judges both tempo and textures perfectly. Harbach's interior, deep side is heard in the *In Memoriam: Turn Round, O My Soul* (how perfectly judged are the low string pizzicatos around a minute in), while the *Freedom Suite* owes much to Harbach's interest in strong women (here Harriet Scott). The use of spirituals is to the forefront here, and Harbach weaves them miraculously into her tapestry.

The Two Songs from *The Sacred Harp* exude confidence, both from composer and performers. They are highly atmospheric miniatures, too. The *Demarest Suite* takes its name from the place where its commissioners, the Northern Valley Regional High School, N.J., is based. Again, music from the opera *O Pioneers!* is reused (this time Marie and Emil's duet in the first movement and a theme from a festive wedding in the opera in the finale). Charm is the watchword here.

Interestingly, *Nights in Timișoara* invokes the Romanian people and the city that is known as "the city of flowers." It is a more sophisticated piece, contrasting with the final item, an arrangement of Kate Chopin's *Lilia Polka* for strings. Delightful.

The chamber-music disc brings a more Coplandesque slant, with *American Solstice*. Taking as her basis (loosely) an American fiddle tune (it is easy to hear the rusticity), Harbach crafts a real sense of joy, an impression only underlined by the excellent performance. The *Transformations* for string quartet is inspired by a silent film, the 1912 *Making an American Citizen*. There are eight short movements, each lovingly delivered here by the Moyzes Quartet. *Separately Together* is again based on an early film (1913 this time), and is a score full of layfulness; *Carondelet Caprice* (another

1913 film provides the inspiration) is charm in the shape of simple yet effective counterpoint. The skillful Fantasy and Fugue on *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* for winds is just waiting to enter the repertoire, I would think. It must be so much fun to play, as well as to listen to. The dance element that shaped the genesis of *Forces at Play* is very evident here.

Finally, *Separately Together—Synaesthesia* for chamber ensemble (for the 1913 film *A House Divided*) includes some fascinating pages (the shiftingly playful “Dancing Rhythms,” for example). But they have saved the best until last: the *Rhapsody Ritmico* for brass quintet is a blast (literally as well as in *Affekt*). Again counterpoint (here a full-blown fugue) is a vital part of the mix.

All three of these discs include vibrant, stirring music that begs to be heard. Harbach is an individual voice of great skill.

Fanfare Magazine, Issue 35:6 (July/Aug 2012)
David DeBoor Canfield
(Orchestral I, Music for Strings, Chamber Music I)

HARBACH *Veneration. Frontier Fancies. Arcadian Reverie.*¹ *Rhapsody Jardine.*² *One of Ours* • Kirk Trevor, cond; ¹František Novotný (vn); ²Cynthia Green Libby (ob); Slovak RSO • MSN 1252 (56:05)

HARBACH Sinfonietta. *In Memoriam: Turn Round, O My Soul. Freedom Suite. 2 Songs from The Sacred Harp. Demarest Suite. Nights in Timișoara. Lilia Polka* • David Angus, cond; London PO • MSN 1258 (67:45)

HARBACH *American Solstice.*¹ *Transformations.*² *Forces at Play.*¹ *Carondelet Caprice.*¹ *Fantasy and Fugue on Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.*³ *Separately Together: Synesthesia.*¹ *Rhapsody Ritmico*⁴ • ¹Istropolis Ens; ²Moyzes Qrt; ³ww qnt; ⁴brass qnt • MSN 1253 (65:32)

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach is a prolific composer, whose music achieves an immediate emotional connection to the listener. None of this cerebral “written for other composers” mentality for her! Yet a traversal of the three discs under review here has convinced me that she has her own voice, and has something significant to speak in musical terms to anyone willing to listen. She has made her mark as a touring organist and harpsichordist, the organ (especially) seeming to have lent something of its textures to her orchestral music. She teaches at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, having obtained degrees from Pennsylvania State University (B.A.), Yale University (M.M.A.), and the Eastman School of Music (D.M.A.). Her pedigree, to be sure, is impressive.

Mind you, her music is very tonal, and will not offend ears even slightly sensitive to dissonance. I am happy to say that Harbach proves that there is still something valid to say in a tonal musical language. This shouldn't be surprising in light of the fact that the Baroque era, after all, lasted a good 150 years. Why should neoromanticism be stifled more quickly than that? If you enjoy the music of such composers as Bohuslav Martinů, Walter Piston, Jean Sibelius, and John Ireland, Harbach will definitely be worth checking out.

Veneration opens the first CD, which contains several of Harbach's orchestral works. A short symphony that forms a paean to the goddess Venus, its three movements are exuberant throughout. *Frontier Fancies* is a work for violin and orchestra with the clever movement titles of “Fiddleflirt,” “Twilight Dream,” and “Dancedevil.” Here the mood is a bit more subdued, albeit as

optimistic in tone as her music in general. The violin charms and seduces through its lovely meandering romantic lines. The solo part is well performed by František Novotný, whose name used to appear quite frequently on various Czech and Slovak LPs that came through my hands.

Harbach's *Arcadian Rhapsody* is a lush work for string orchestra. If you enjoy the fantasias by Vaughan Williams, this work will resonate with you. The tempo picks up in the middle section, which features a rollicking tune in 6/8 meter. *Rhapsody Jardine*, scored for oboe and strings, through its harmonic richness evokes a musical landscape of resonant colors and aromatic counterpoint. Soloist Cynthia Green Libby is possessed of a piquant, sweet, and somewhat haunting tone—perfectly appropriate for the style of the work at hand.

One of Ours—A Cather Symphony is a work cast in three fairly brief movements. The symphony is based on the novel of the same name by Willa Cather, whose work deals with a hero of World War I. You'll find no sounds or effects of war in this work: Like the other pieces on this CD, its tone is unceasingly full of optimism and life. Its three movements, "On Lovely Creek," "Autumn in Beaufort," and "Honor at Boar's Head," all remind me of short tone poems rather than movements of a symphony, as there is little symphonic development contained in any of them. This is no slight on the music, which is unfailingly ingratiating and fun to listen to.

The second MSR CD under review, a disc devoted to Harbach's recent—all of the works on it were composed in 2009–10—string-orchestra music, begins with her *Sinfonietta*. Its opening movement, "Homage," invokes a gentle and lyrical mood, and exhibits more contrapuntal writing than some of her works. The homage gives tribute to all those who have lost love or loved ones. "Jeu Jeu," the second movement, is a much livelier exercise that plays with rests, slurs, and staccatos in a five-part form. "Jeu" is of course the French word for "play" or "game," but the notes do not explain why the word is used twice. "Pastiche," the concluding movement, combines several melodies in an imitative and syncopated structure. The whole of the *Sinfonietta* invokes a nostalgic aura.

In Memoriam: Turn Round, O My Soul, through its sadness and beauty, is a moving tribute for All Souls' Day, on which departed friends and relatives are remembered. The harshness of grief is portrayed by a dissonant (or about as dissonant as Harbach gets in her music) chord toward the end of the middle section.

Harbach's *Freedom Suite* celebrates the lives of Harriet and Dred Scott, and their two children. Scott, you will remember, sued as a slave for his freedom

on the grounds of his having lived for a time in states where slavery was illegal. The infamous Dred Scott decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1857 denying Scott's petition still has reverberations more than 150 years later.

Harbach's music seeks to portray the era and its inhabitants through the use of spirituals, Virginia reels, and the like. Thus, lively sections form a contrast with others containing sober and melancholic music. The third movement ends with an affirming quote of the spiritual *Many Thousands Gone*.

The composer's longstanding fascination with shape-note singing is reflected in her Two Songs from *The Sacred Harp*. The first of these, "The Morning Trumpet," contains several sections, alternating between unison and lush chordal writing. The second is based upon William Billings's well-known tune *Chester*, most famously used by William Schuman in his *New England Triptych*. Harbach's version of this tune is set in three sections, which draw upon such musical devices as syncopation and canonic/fugal treatment. The tune makes its appearance first in the cello and basses, and branches out to the other instruments from there.

The *Demarest Suite* is a cousin to Holst's *St. Paul's Suite*, not only in its instrumentation, but in having been written for a school orchestra. In Harbach's case, the school was the Northern Valley Regional High School in Demarest, N.J., conducted by Jonathan Harris, who commissioned and premiered the work. In this work, the composer has attempted—successfully, I think—to portray the youthful emotions of insecurity, joy, and nostalgia. Some of its material is loosely based on a duet from her opera *O Pioneers!*

Nights in Timișoara seeks to evoke the "essence of the Romanian people in the eastern city of Timișoara," according to the notes. Since Timișoara is in the very *western* part of Romania, *eastern* must refer to its being part of Eastern Europe. I'm not sure that *any* piece of music can truly make a serious claim to encompass the essence of a particular people. I've been to Romania several times (the closest I've gotten to Timișoara is Oradea, which boasted a good record store, about which I shall tell some good stories if I ever get around to writing a book on my years as a record dealer). Nothing in this work particularly reminds me of Romania and its people, but it's a tuneful, well-crafted piece of music, so never mind that.

The CD closes with the playful (and brief) *Lilia Polka*. The title is well chosen, and pretty much gives the idea of the piece in its 10 letters. Apparently, either the piece itself or the inspiration for it—the program notes are not clear on that point—is drawn from a piano work by Kate Chopin (1850–1904), who is completely unknown as a composer, and somewhat better-

known as an American author. Harbach's original version of this work was scored for woodwind quintet.

The third of the three MSR CDs under review opens up for us another facet of Harbach's compositional focus, her chamber music. Most of the works are for rather large chamber forces, the smallest number of instruments in any of the pieces being the four strings in her string quartet. These works, like the orchestra and string-orchestra works, are sunny in their disposition, and free of any but the mildest dissonances. The opening work, *American Solstice*, at 11-plus minutes, is the longest single movement of any work on the three discs, and also calls for the largest forces (two winds, string nonet, and piano). It is loosely based on an original fiddle tune, and seeks to capture something of the spirit of the American frontier. A short motive of two eighth notes followed by a quarter note a major second lower pervades the piece.

Transformations for string quartet drew its inspiration from Alice Guy Blache's 1912 film *Making an American Citizen*. Its eight brief movements span a gamut of emotions from nostalgia to agitation, and from pathos to tranquility. *Forces at Play* is another more substantial work, conceived by the composer as a modern ballet or "a landscaped musical journey conveyed through dance." Each instrument's distinctive voice weaves its way around all the others, sometimes colliding, sometimes dancing, but always interacting in aurally pleasing ways. Scored for eight instruments, the piece evokes something of the spirit of the original chamber version of *Appalachian Spring*. It is certainly American through and through, as indeed are most of the works on these CDs.

Like *Transformations*, *Carondelet Caprice* was inspired by a film by an American woman director, in this case the 1913 film *How Men Propose* by Lois Weber, while *Separately Together: Synesthesia* looks once again for its inspiration to a Blache film, specifically *A House Divided*. Its movement "Dancing Rhythms" is one of my favorite pieces in the collection, its catchy tunes and bouncy, tango-influenced rhythms combining to make a most memorable work. Both of these film-inspired works are scored for woodwinds, strings, and piano.

With *Fantasy* and *Fugue* on *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, we shift to the medium of the woodwind quintet. The piece juxtaposes a rather dramatic fantasia with a fugal treatment of the tune in its concluding section. Another quintet, this time for brass, closes the CD. *Rhapsody Ritmico* opens with a majestic fanfare-like movement, which yields to a gentler lilting lullaby over an ostinato figure in the lower instruments. A lively fugue is introduced by the horn, and the work—and the CD—concludes with a dramatic flourish.

Although I like some of the 19 pieces included on these three discs better than others, there is not a weak work in the lot. My journey through the ingratiating and amiable music of Barbara Harbach has been a pleasant one. Don't expect the profundity or angst of a Gustav Mahler or an Allan Pettersson here; rather, treat your ears to several hours of enjoyable and uplifting music by a sure craftswoman in the art of composition. Recordings and performances all serve to present the music in a most favorable light.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 34:5 (May/June 2011)
Lynn René Bayley (Chamber Music III)

HARBACH *Frontier Fancies*.¹ *American Dialogues*.^{2, 3} *4 Dances for 2*.^{4, 5} *3 Danzas*.⁶ *Phantasy and Phugue*.³ *Spaindango*.⁶ *Rustic Scene*.^{3, 8} *Perambulations*.^{7, 9} *Daystream Dances*.^{3, 4} *Emanations from the Sacred Harp*.^{3, 10} • ¹John McGrosso (vn); ¹Ruth Price (pn); ²Paula Kasica (fl); ³Alla Voskoboynikova (pn); ⁴Cynthia Green Libby (ob); ⁵David Gillham (vn); Barbara Harbach (⁶hpd, ⁷pn); ⁸Joanna Mendoza (va); ⁹Paul Hecht (tpt); ¹⁰Kurt Baldwin (vc) • MSR 1257 (65:09)

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach's name and music were completely unfamiliar to me prior to hearing this release...*American Dialogues* immediately made me sit up and take notice. This was a much more interesting piece, combining folk-like themes with open fourths, close seconds, clashing sevenths, and "the devil's fourth" to add harmonic interest.

4 Dances for 2 is a series of four short pieces for oboe and violin, starting with a "Rococo Promenade" built on the French Baroque overture style before moving on to a calm lullaby interrupted by bursts of frenetic energy, an energetic reel, and a finale that teases the listener with a clockwork-precise piece featuring interpolated glissandi. Even better are the *Tres Danzas* for harpsichord, played by Harbach herself. She swears that it was influenced by flamenco guitar music, but the second-movement Andante, to my ears, is more heavily influenced by jazz.

The *Phantasy and Phugue* (I like her whimsical titles!), after a thunderous opening, moves into a mysterious atmosphere until the tolling of low octaves introduces a hypnotic middle section. The very excited and excitable fugue changes its course through augmentation, texture, and range. *Spaindango: Caprice for Harpsichord*, also played by Harbach, opens in 11/8 time with rapid, punctuating chords, producing sound clusters a half-step apart that evolve into a Spanish dance figure with rolling glissandos.

Perambulations is a trumpet-piano duet with a slight blues tinge, more in the piano part than the horn part. The trumpet's role is lyrical and relaxed, though technically challenging, covering the full range of the instrument even into the low range. The piano seems to lead both the creation of themes and their development, with the trumpet tagging along for the ride. Indeed, as the piece continues, it is the piano part that becomes busiest and densest as the trumpet is relegated to commentary followed by a relaxed cadenza in each section. The final melody reminds me of *Simple Gifts*.

With *Daystream Dances*, we again move into music with a unique lilt and swing. Yet perhaps because she is a keyboard player, Harbach gives the “swing” to the piano, though in all fairness it’s exceedingly difficult to make an oboe swing (ref: Paul Lavalle’s *Woodwindy Ten*, Charles Mingus, Gil Evans, or just about anyone else who has ever tried to write an oboe part into a jazz or jazz-classical composition). The second movement has a little less of a swing and a little more thematic and harmonic complexity—this piece sounds like something out of Les Six in the early 1920s. *Emanations from the Sacred Harp*, written for cellist Robert Haskins, who has a great interest in early American sacred music, is based on five hymns from the Revolutionary and Federalist periods (*How Firm a Foundation*, *The Morning Trumpet*, *Jordan*, *Morning Hymn* and *Chester*). Its brevity (the two movements take only a little more than eight minutes to play) helps Harbach compress her ideas into contrasting moments of quiet and busyness. The second movement, after an introductory fragment, completely states the theme of *Chester*, followed by a section where the piano counterpoint becomes a fugal subject that weaves the tune into its fabric. Hymns, another fugue, reels, and more hymns work their way in and out of the music before being brought together in a celebratory climax.

...there is a tremendous sense of centeredness. Harbach balances her moments of harmonic or improvisatory exploration with moments of relaxation that give one a sensation of calm mixed with playfulness.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 34:2 (Nov/Dec 2010)
Michael Cameron (Vocal Music)

HARBACH *Abigail!*¹ *Pleasure Flow, Tender Mist.*² *Emily!*³ *Light Out of Darkness.*⁴ *Cherish-Caress.*⁵ *Pioneer Women: From Skagway to White Mountain.*⁶ *21st Century Pioneer*⁷ • ¹⁻⁷Stella Markou (sop); ¹Paula Kasica (fl); ²Paul Garritson (cl, b cl); ¹Donita Bauer (bn); ¹Ayako Watanabe (hp); ¹David Gillham (vn); ¹Joanna Mendoza (va); ^{1, 5}Kurt Baldwin (vc); ¹James Richards, cond; ³Paul Hecht (tpt); ⁶Diana Haskell (cl); ^{2, 3, 4}Alla Voskoboynikova, ⁶Barbara Harbach, ⁷Thomas F. George (pn) • MSR 1256 (68:23 )

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach's route to her current status as a highly respected American composer has been somewhat circuitous, and is well documented in a *Fanfare* 33:3 feature by Robert Schulslaper. Unlike her other discs, this one is wholly dedicated to vocal music, and shows a keen grasp for choosing texts that lend themselves to musical treatment and setting those texts with dramatic insight.

The text for *Abigail!* is culled from letters penned by John and Abigail Adams in 1762. Abigail was a true pioneer for equality for women, and though (or perhaps because) she received little formal education herself, she described the necessity for "learned women" if American society were to have "heroes, statesmen, and philosophers." Harbach's strength is her sensitive method of molding melodic contours and rhythms to fit her text, and soprano Stella Markou matches her syllable for syllable with diction so clear the reproduction of the words in the booklet is almost superfluous.

I reviewed another performance of *Emily!* in *Fanfare* 33:3 and enjoyed this performance every bit as much. The contrasting timbre of the trumpet is a perfect choice for Dickinson's poetry, while Markou and trumpeter Paul Hecht play off each other nicely. *Pleasure Flow, Tender Mist* uses texts of Jonathan Yordy, and Harbach is right at home setting words like "wind," "breeze," "cooling," "breath," "misting," and "calm." Pentatonic scales play a large role in this set.

There is much to admire in this collection of vocal works, especially the choice of the text and her refusal to compromise the clarity of the messages behind the words. Yet there is a sameness to many of the songs that suggest that the best way to appreciate their charms would be mixed in a concert with other works. Many have identical accompanying patterns that begin in the left hand and ascend in a similar way song after song. The disc

is almost entirely tonal, diatonic, reliant on simple chordal patterns, moves with tempos that range from moderately slow to moderate, and tempered more often than not with wisps of nostalgia. It is an approach that is well integrated and idiomatic for instruments and voice alike.

A couple of notable exceptions to this pattern come near the end of the disc, first with the cycle *Pioneer Women*, which ramps up the dramatic effects considerably for the first two songs, portraits of the fascinating Catherine Van Curler and Cordelia Nobel. The other change of pace comes in the disc finale, *21st Century Pioneer*, a sassy blues number. Markou steps into these very different roles with nervy gusto.

Overall the mood can best be described as a gentle and joyful triumphalism, certainly welcome stances in music (and life), but the minimal appearance of struggle or conflict in the music dulls the impact of her optimism over the long stretch of the recording. Recommended, but perhaps best heard in individual cycles.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 33:3 (Jan/Feb 2010)
Michael Cameron

FACETS 3 • John Holt (tpt, flugelhorn⁴); Igor Borodin (vn);¹ Julia Bushkova (vn);¹ Katrin Meidell (va);¹ Johannes Kleinmann (vc);¹ Natalia Sukhina (pn);² Sophia Grech (mez)³ • *CRYSTAL 768 (63:19)*

WINTLE *Distant Voices*.¹ HARBACH *Perambulations*.² *Emily!*^{2, 3} TRESTER *4 Thoreau Songs*.^{3, 4} Sonata.² JOSEPH KLEIN *Die Königskünderin*. KAY *Tromba*²

REVIEW

We don't hear the trumpet featured in chamber music nearly as much as in other settings, but here John Holt makes a strong case for its viability in intimate music-making. The opening work for string quartet and solo trumpet by James Wintle neatly skirts the balance issues that could easily arise from the instrumentation. The composer employs a language that is atonal for the most part, but uses texture, dynamics, and skillful melodic manipulation to give shape to each of the four movements. The title *Distant Voices* refers to quotations from The Beatles in the second movement, although they are subtly employed as vague reminiscences rather than literal, complete statements. Holt's sound is warm, clear, and very accurate in pitch and articulation. He plays expressively, if cautiously so, and his string colleagues match him with burnished tone and impressive accuracy. *Perambulations*, by Barbara Harbach, is composed in a markedly different style from the disc opener, with a clearly tonal idiom marked by an abundance of ostinatos and repetitive figures that give a subtle nod to minimalism. *Emily!*, Harbach's other work, is composed in a similar vein, with little chromatic coloring and boasting a distinctly American flavor. Mezzo-soprano Sofia Grech gets to the core of the Emily Dickinson texts with rich tonal shadings and a deep feeling for the poetic essence. There is also a decidedly American flavor in Francine Trester's *Four Thoreau Songs*, but the tonality wanders more freely than in the previous work, with chromaticism adding touches of ambiguity. Holt's mellow flugelhorn lends an appropriate air of melancholy and nostalgia to this lovely work. Trester's Sonata is composed in a similar vein, and is particularly adept at capturing the lyrical potential of the trumpet. The middle movement includes a few romantic surges that are especially attractive. Here and in other works on the disc, pianist Natalia Sukhina provides strong, capable support. Joseph Klein's work for solo trumpet, *Die Königskünderin*, stands out from the rest of the program with a more advanced treatment of pitch and color and a markedly disjunct melodic profile. Holt meets the considerable challenges of this absorbing work with complete fluency and persuasive

expressivity. Ulysses Kay's *Tromba*, like most of the music on the disc, doesn't attempt to break new ground, but succeeds admirably as an idiomatic character piece and for both piano and trumpet. There are fanfare motifs, cadenza-like statements, lyrical musings, and march segments, all assembled with clarity of purpose and technical skill.

Before this disc, I was unaware both of the playing of Holt and the music of four of the five American composers, Ulysses Kay being the one exception. It is a fine recording indeed, presenting a cross section of deserving lesser-known composers with clear and lucid recorded sound.

Fanfare Magazine Issue 33:3 (Jan/Feb 2010)
Robert Schulslaper (Chamber Music II)

HARBACH *The Soul of Ra*.^{1, 2} *Freeing the Caged Bird*.² *Transformations*.^{1, 2} *Echoes from Tomorrow*.⁴ K. CHOPIN *Lilia Polka* (arr. Harbach)³ • Kirk Trevor, cond;¹ Bratislava CO;² Bratislava Ww Qnt;³ Ens Istropolis⁴ • MSR 1255 (69:41)

INTERVIEW and REVIEW

In an interview for *Missouri Life*, Barbara Harbach confided that she was “one of the fortunate (or unfortunate) people who knew what I wanted to do since I was five years old—I wanted to be a musician, in particular, a concert pianist.” How could this be an unfortunate aspiration? “I guess because I was just laser focused onto being a musician and concert pianist. As I evolved through my early career, other keyboards began to fascinate me, and I enjoyed them very much. And then all of a sudden all I wanted to do was play in Carnegie Hall; at that time I was majoring in organ. I was pretty naive; Carnegie Hall didn’t have an organ then. So, that dashed that hope for a little while. [Laughs.] But overall, it’s been a wonderful ride. It’s been a lot of fun; I never thought my career would be where it is today.”

A composer, organist, and harpsichordist, Barbara no longer performs or records on the piano. What happened to redirect that “laser focus?” “I love the piano, I love hearing piano music, and I play it a lot in my various jobs. But I just felt a bigger and better affinity for an organ. Also, it’s loud. [Laughs.] I played Strauss’s *Also Sprach*—that was a thrill. I did it in Woolsey Hall at Yale University. And I’ll tell you, that organ—there’s nothing like drowning out an orchestra!”

The organ and the harpsichord are both keyboards, but in a sense they’re distant cousins. Still, Baroque composers like Bach and Handel were virtuosos on both. “Yes. And while it’s true that the respective techniques differ, they share one thing: no matter how hard you pound on those keys, it doesn’t get any louder.” Laughing, she adds, “of course you don’t really pound, I’m just speaking metaphorically.”

One of the fascinating things about organists is that they’ve preserved the art of improvising fugues, toccatas, and other pieces “whole.” Does she ever try her hand at it? (The notes to “Toccatas, Flourishes and Fugues,” MSR 1254, refer to the third part of *Land of Rest* as a free improvisation on *Amazing Grace*.) “I do a little bit, not in the same scope as Marie-Claire Alain, or somebody who at the end of a concert can make up an entire piece out of four notes. With *Land of Rest*, as I was thinking about it, ideas arose

as my fingers were moving over the keys, so in some ways it was an improvisation that became a piece. And then I combined the two themes (the original hymn tune and *Amazing Grace*). I like doing that, but I don't really improvise in public. I may have a little Bach in my name, but it's not *the* Bach." [Laughs.]

Barbara is primarily self-taught as a composer, although she did have some lessons with Samuel Adler. She's been playing for church services since she was nine, and has held positions as music director for religious institutions of all denominations, so many of her early works were written with a practical purpose in mind. "I think you start with what you know the best, so I wrote for choirs and organ and slowly started expanding. I did small ensembles, then a string orchestra piece, until finally I felt comfortable enough to tackle a full orchestra. Of course, I still keep the Kennan book, *The Technique of Orchestration*, right by my side. [Laughs.] And now the technology is incredible, you can do a range check with Finale." (Finale is a type of notation software often used by composers and arrangers.) Does she use Finale in other ways? "It depends on what I'm writing. I guess over the years we all get a way that we do our hieroglyphics. I usually do a melodic sketch on the piano with one-note harmony, and if I hear the countermelodies, maybe a little bit of that. And then, I just go to the computer and do it.

"I lived many years in small rural areas like Pullman, Washington, and Oshkosh and Stevens Point in Wisconsin, and continued to write music, knowing that there would be few performances, if any. I have been very fortunate in St. Louis with the many excellent musicians, and have found that there is a place for my music, and that audiences enjoy listening to it." Speaking of technology, Barbara has done her bit to bridge the gap between science and art. "I was an associate professor in the Department of Mathematics and Computing at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. But what I was emphasizing was how to create art with the technology. I would teach the students how to make a video, or how to underlay a score, a little bit about film. We'd have certain assignments, for example, how to make an electronic holiday card. It was kind of a catchall, because I was teaching computer majors who basically never left their computers, trying to get a little of the arts into them."

Barbara has often found herself promoting culture in one form or another, and once hosted a TV program for a few years. "It was called *Palouse Performance*, and it was when I was professor of music out at Washington State University, over in Pullman near the Idaho border. The time was right, and it was really a musical variety show. We'd do a lot from all over that part of southeastern and even up into central Washington. People would come and we'd tape them. We'd have a good time. These were local performers; we had bluegrass, jazz, and pop. One of the singers was so

great—she wrote a song called *I'm gonna fax my baby some love*. I performed, as well. For one program, we went out of the studio so that I could give an organ concert, and I took three keyboards with me: my clavichord, my harpsichord, and my pump organ."

That would have been something to see, especially for the clavichord, which is so rarely played in public (or anywhere else, for that matter). Conventional halls are just too large for its tender voice. "It's very intimate, believe me. I once gave a concert where a thunderstorm came up. I had to stop because you couldn't hear me! But I'm not a purist, because I've been known to amplify. Even with the harpsichord, it's so hard for strings these days to play softly enough, so I'm all for a little gentle enhancement." Barbara is very involved in educating the public about women's contributions to music. She founded Vivace Press after a publisher's plans for manuscripts she had unearthed didn't mesh with her own vision. She was excited about her finds, and wanted to have everything printed complete, but was told that only separate movements would appear and would have to be edited in a way that ran contrary to her ideals. Also, the publisher brought out an edition printed in pink, with a picture of a demure young woman seated at a piano on the cover. Today, Barbara is no longer offended by such stereotyping, but at the time it convinced her to go her own way. "It was the 1980s; we [feminists] were struggling away. [Laughing.] I'm probably a bit more mellow about it now. But back then, just to have to edit this early music. You know, we edit Bach, but we really don't, we use the *Urtext* if we're really into it. So, that was kind of my thinking, leave the music the way the composer intended it.

"By the way, *Fanfare* readers might like to know that we also made our own CDs under the Hester Park label. The label takes its name from Maria Hester Park, an 18th-century London composer and one of my first reclaimed historical women composers. We put out seven at one point. One of them that I really liked was called "Classical Prodigies." It focused on Mozart and a little girl by the name of Elizabeth Billington. They were about the same age and they wrote music around the same time. So half was Mozart and half was the little girl. She was very good and went on to become England's supreme diva. She reputedly had a beautiful voice and a great sense of ornamentation, but as soon as she started concentrating on singing the creativity lapsed. Just a quick aside: she was very, very interesting. She was married to her teacher, and when he passed away, she married an Italian (she was English, from London). They separated—they had this kind of tumultuous back and forth affair—but he wanted to reconcile, so he took her to Italy and murdered her. It's an opera waiting to happen. Really, what a wonderful story it could be with a high, great singer. [Barbara has written an opera and several musicals: more about them anon.] Anyway, I recorded

her op. 1, written at the age of eight. Her second, her mature works, date from when she was 11. That was delightful. And the Mozart, of course was wonderful. But he had the extra-added dimension of Leopold correcting it. When the Billington family found out that I had published and recorded her music, they were thrilled. They actually called me and wanted to see the scores and hear the music.”

Vivace Press also published a quarterly, *Women of Note*. Was this perhaps available online so that readers could sample the contents? “No, it’s not. We’re just reviving it. Vivace Press has been taken under the wing of the University of Missouri as part of the Women in the Arts program I initiated. Women in the Arts is a natural outgrowth to all my passion of rediscovering, bringing to light neglected women composers. I’ve done a fair amount of men composers, too, who have written wonderful music and who sadly get tossed by the wayside and maybe not even looked at. And I so enjoy bringing that to the public and I let the public choose. Let the public decide the music’s merits and where it stacks up in the musical canon. I mean, there are some really sharp people in the listening audiences.

“And so, I had my Vivace Press and my *Women of Note Quarterly*, and then in the year 2005, I was in Saint Louis and I decided that I would like to do a Women in the Arts 2005, and see if we could get together a few concerts, exhibitions, film screenings, all those kind of wonderful things, sculptures, paintings. I was hoping I could get 100 events throughout the Saint Louis region. I got over 850, and I couldn’t even go to them all. The time was right for celebrating women creators. So that seemed to have been a good thing. And then Women in the Arts at the University took off and I became the director. And so, it’s going gorgeously!”

With seven CDs of her own coming out on MSR, Barbara has written enough to host her own mini-festival, but she only recently added an opera to the list. “I based it on Willa Cather’s *O Pioneers!* I’m drawn to strong women, and Willa Cather writes very strong women. *O Pioneers!* is this wonderful story of a woman who inherits the land; she makes it prosperous, the best farm in the Nebraska region, much to her brothers’ chagrin, who are always kind of biting on her. And yet she never found love. In mid-life, she found that she thought that friends make the best lovers. And the other side of the story is illicit love, where a young Bohemian woman married the wrong man but fell in love with the strong woman’s brother. And so, our illicit lovers meet for the very last time, they’re parting, they’re saying goodbye, and her husband finds them and shoots them both. Writing an opera is very complex, but luckily I have a great artistic director and conductor who put it together. I don’t think I could do it. I’m not the impresario type.”

Before embarking on an opera, Barbara had written five musicals, each with more than 20 songs. Any favorites? "I'm very fond of *A Mate for Kate, Tom and Sally* (based on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings), and *Booth! A Mate for Kate* is Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, so that was fun. And *Booth!* is based on the famous family of actors, the Booth family. It won a competition and then it had a short run on Broadway—off-off-off-Broadway, actually. The lyricist was very good, he's funny, the words worked well. I often find that even a few words can be so evocative. Sometimes, I have a melody in mind while I'm walking to the piano to start work, and at other times, the melody is there after looking at the words. Anyway, the musical focuses on Edwin Booth, who is the older brother, the most famous Shakespearean actor of his day. And it includes John Wilkes: of course, you have to touch base with him. John Wilkes was the most handsome man in America. He was a real lady's man. *Booth!* told the story of what happens to a family when one of its members does something heinous. Asia, Edwin and John's sister, was almost hanged by an incensed mob, even though she was innocent of any wrongdoing, but when they discovered she was pregnant they let her live. And when Edwin Booth could finally go back on stage, there were several assassination attempts while he was acting. It's a fascinating story."

Never one to pass up a dramatic opportunity, Barbara has written an orchestral score that was performed live as an accompaniment to a silent film. Today we picture a lone pianist or organist improvising the music on such occasions, but the reality is that complex arrangements for pit bands or even full orchestras were quite common. "That was a really strange film [*Simon Judit*]. It was a Hungarian Jewish film from 1916 about a young woman who falls in love. She is of the working lower class—her father is a tinker, selling things, always going and coming—and she falls in love with the son of the estate. She becomes pregnant and somehow has the baby without anyone finding out. She takes the baby and goes down to the rushing water—today the depiction would probably be more graphic—but you see her come back without the baby. She cuts off all her hair, which is a terrible thing for a Jewish woman to do, and goes to see her Rabbi, who puts a curse on her—that she may never kiss any of her children to come. And so it goes on from there; it's a real melodrama. She's eventually cast out by her husband and becomes a beggar, but not before she's borne a daughter. On the day of the daughter's wedding, the mother appears—the daughter recognizes her from a painting that hung in the family parlor—kisses her and falls dead; it was based on a ballad by Joseph Kiss, who was a Hungarian poet. Writing for film was fun, but was also really nerve wracking. You time it out just so, and it's put on CD. But then they bring in the film, and it stretches, the timings aren't quite the same, so sometimes it's a little faster and the conductor has to be very alert to keep everything synchronized."

Barbara's interest in strong women found another fortuitous opportunity for expression when she was commissioned by the Equinox Chamber Players to write a piece with a Saint Louis theme. She obliged by writing music inspired by four Saint Louis literary natives (*Freeing the Caged Bird*, for woodwind quintet—see review below): Maya Angelou, Sara Teasdale, Emily Hahn, and Kate Chopin. Of the four, Emily Hahn led perhaps the most exotic life. "She must have been an amazing woman. She smoked opium, she was the concubine of a Chinese poet, and spent many years writing for the *New Yorker*—what a woman! I met her daughter in 2005. I had her come in for our Women in the Arts festival. Sara Teasdale was fascinating in another way. She was a poet; her poems are very dark, which I think expresses her feelings in life. Sadly, she committed suicide in 1933 (one of Teasdale's poems is printed in the booklet notes for "Chamber Music II," MSR 1255). Kate Chopin—Chopin was her real name, by the way—became famous for writing *The Awakening*. This was a book that just stood the literary world on its ear because it was a coming of age of sexuality in a woman. And that was *not* something one talked about at the end of the Victorian period. She wrote a delightful polka for her daughter, which I've arranged for woodwind quintet. Although she wasn't a musician, coming from the upper middle class as she did she would have studied piano, painting, embroidery, and all the other little accoutrements that went into the making of a nice young woman. The quintet's title, *Freeing the Caged Bird*, was a response to Maya Angelou's autobiographical novel, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. In addition to acquiring fame as the first African-American woman to have her screenplay adapted to film and to being the first black female director in Hollywood, she was also the first female cable-car conductor. She overcame an abused childhood to speak five languages, win a Pulitzer Prize, and march alongside Martin Luther King and Malcolm X—a marvelous story that I've tried to interpret in music."

Barbara is a prolific composer with a varied list of works in her portfolio. Is there any genre she prefers? "I keep coming back to organ music, writing organ pieces because they cleanse my palette between projects. Playing the organ in church has the same effect, as it's a different environment from the academic world. It's serene. It's peaceful. And I like playing traditional organ music. But getting back to composition, I like to write for different ensembles. Small chamber ensemble is one of my favorites; string orchestra is also, and of course, orchestra. And I love voice. I guess I like to write for all of them, to stretch myself and do things I haven't done."

REVIEW

Barbara Harbach identifies herself as "an American voice," and that capsule description holds true for most of the music here. Without access to a score,

I won't try to explain how her melodic and harmonic tendencies could be construed as American except to refer to her appreciation of folk music and a superficial resemblance to Copland and others of similar bent. *Transformations* for string orchestra—inspired by *Making an American Citizen*, a silent film directed by Alice Guy Blanche in 1912—exemplifies her approach to our national idiom. The opening "Pastorale" is lyrical, perhaps emphasizing the gentler side of a bucolic early America. There's a transition to a rhythmically pronounced or dance-like theme before the movement subsides. "Towards Liberty" is more assertive, but optimistic strains are followed by "Restrain," in which dramatic intensity and darker harmony imply struggle, no doubt correlated to episodes in the film. "Commandment" combines the lyrical "Pastorale" element and the striving implicit in "Towards Liberty." All told, the eight movements continue in the same vein as these first four, encapsulating, in the composer's words, "moods . . . from nostalgia to agitation to resolution." It's not uncommon for composers of film scores to compile suites to allow their music to be heard in the concert hall—Harbach has done so herself in *Echoes from Tomorrow* for chamber orchestra, adapting material she wrote for another silent film, *Simon Judit*—so, reversing that procedure, I suspect Harbach's music would provide a moving and meaningful accompaniment for *Making an American Citizen*. *Echoes*, compared to *Transformations*, shows the same hand at work, insofar as the melodies and harmonies sound familiar, but the instrumental color is more diverse, as it's scored for piano, winds, and solo strings (violin, viola, cello). There also seems to be more interplay among the instruments. The opening movement, intended to portray "the joy and exuberance of young love," pulses with buoyant "Anticipation." The spare violin and piano that begin "Changes" introduce a vaguely anxious motif that alternates with happier, dance-like episodes and a sweetly nostalgic violin solo—the fluctuating form is no doubt an attempt to convey the central character's confusion and sorrow in the midst of life-changing circumstances. While sometimes bittersweet, the music doesn't dwell on the film's tragedy. Harbach, as her notes reveal, is more interested in the central character's psychological evolution, and she finds hope even in a darkly oppressive story. "Transitions" alternates between major and minor and between themes implying struggle as well as cheerfulness, while "Remembrances" is reflective, sad perhaps but not somber—the price of hard-won wisdom?

Harbach's wind quintet, *Freeing the Caged Bird*, opens with a jaunty theme that could be heard as an introductory fanfare. Each of the four movements is named for the literary woman who inspired it: "Maya Angelou," "Sara Teasdale," "Kate Chopin," and "Emily Hahn." Teasdale's adagio follows Angelou's allegro, with Chopin and Hahn's flowing allegrettos comprising the last two movements. Hahn is a trifle spicier than Chopin is, but also partakes of Harbach's considerable lyricism (I only use the Italian terms as a

convenient reference for readers as such tempo indications aren't listed on the CD). The quintet's prevailing mood is sunny, even though the subjects' lives were hardly free from struggle, depression, or opprobrium. Although I fundamentally agree with Harbach that she's immediately recognizable as an American composer, oddly enough, I thought of Mahler when I heard *Soul of Ra's* second subject; it's "a soaring melody of hope and heart's ease" that closely follows an elegy, "In Memoriam," intended to honor "all our lost love, loved ones and the many war dead." *Soul of Ra's* energetic second movement, "Phoenix Rising," "personifies the indomitable human spirit that transcends loss and this world's suffering." The composer symbolically repeats themes from the first movement to stress that even "Amidst our joy there is always a reminder of 'In Memoriam' and the gentle ache of remembrances past."

The final track, Harbach's delightful transcription for wind quintet of Kate Chopin's *Lilia Polka* for piano, provides a whiff of ragtime and 19th-century Americana to end the CD. Conductor Kirk Trevor, the Bratislava Woodwind Quintet, the Bratislava Chamber Orchestra, and the Ensemble Istropolis play Harbach's music in direct, communicative ways that never compromise the music's integrity with uncalled-for tempo alterations or interpretive distortion of any kind. This is a fine disc of appealing music by a talented composer.

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Walter Simmons

TWENTIETH-CENTURY HARPSICHORD MUSIC, Volume I. • Barbara Harbach, harpsichord. • KINGDOM KCLCD 2005 [AAD/DDD1]; 71:20. Produced by John Proffitt.

PERSICHETTI Harpsichord Sonata No. 7. ADLER Harpsichord Sonata. ALBRIGHT Four Fancies. MARTINŮ Sonate. Deux Pièces. Deux Impromptus. TEMPLETON Bach Goes to Town. SOWASH The Unicorn¹. Theme with Six Variations¹. THOMSON Four Portraits¹.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY HARPSICHORD MUSIC, Volume II. • Barbara Harbach, harpsichord. • GASPARO GSCD 266 [DDD]; 70:40. Produced by John Proffitt.

ROSNER Musique de Clavecin. BORROFF Metaphors. LOCKLAIR The Breakers Pound. HARBACH Spain-dango. G. NEAR Triptych. V. FINE Toccatas and Arias. THOMPSON Four Inventions.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY HARPSICHORD MUSIC, Volume III. • Barbara Harbach, harpsichord. • GASPARO GSCD 280 [DDD]; 68:38. Produced by Roy Christensen. (Distributed by Allegro.)

REVIEW

If listening to these three CDs, containing three and a half hours of twentieth-century harpsichord music, doesn't prove the instrument's viability as a modern musical medium, nothing will. Barbara Harbach, a faculty member at the State University of New York at Buffalo, tours and records extensively as both harpsichordist and organist. Her enthusiastic, wide-ranging involvement in expanding and promoting the modern harpsichord repertoire can be gleaned simply by perusing the above list of works, many of which were composed with her in mind. Except for the few criticisms noted during the course of the following review, Harbach plays with precision and a refreshing verve, while exhibiting a healthy, exuberant musicality. Sixteen composers are represented—all of them American but MartinŮ. The pieces she has chosen embrace a wide and varied stylistic range, from those that trade, either seriously or parodistically, on the harpsichord's association with the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to more mainstream neoclassical efforts, from some surprisingly effective examples of romantic lyricism, to a few offerings that are wildly *sui generis*. In an

attempt to accommodate the reader, I will comment on the contents disc by disc, in the order that the pieces are listed above.

Volume I originally appeared (minus the Thomson and Sowash pieces) on LP (Gasparo GS-251) a few years ago, and was reviewed in *Fanfare* 9:5 (p. 305). The most substantial works on this disc are those by Persichetti, Adler, and Albright. During the last years of his life, Vincent Persichetti concentrated intensively on the harpsichord, which he described as "a whole universe in itself." The seventh of his nine sonatas for the instrument was composed in 1983. Its three brief movements are terse, concise, and thoroughly abstract in structure, featuring graceful, thin, linear textures idiomatic to the instrument. While the first two movements are quite austere in tone, the finale explodes with an exuberant rhythmic vitality.

Samuel Adler is a prolific German-born composer now in his sixties who currently heads the composition department at the Eastman School of Music. Adler's neoclassical sonata of 1982 is more rhythmically and texturally aggressive than Persichetti's, with the kinds of forceful, dissonant sonorities one does not expect from the harpsichord. These create a jarring, but invigorating, effect. The slow movement, however, provides some tender moments. This is a brilliant, substantial work that becomes more engrossing with each hearing.

A rather bizarre piece that seems to be developing a following among harpsichordists is a wacky stylistic hodgepodge called *Four Fancies*, composed in 1979 by Michigan-based William Albright. Most striking are the first movement, a maddeningly abrasive takeoff on a Baroque French Overture, and the finale, a "Danza Ostinata" that the program notes link to near-Eastern music, boogie-woogie, Soler, and Terry Riley. The inner movements are more subdued, but mysterious and imaginative. The piece is often irritating, but intriguingly stylish nonetheless.

The three works by Bohuslav Martinů are rather disappointing. *Deux Pièces* dates from 1935, while the sonata and *Deux Impromptus* appeared during the composer's last years, 1958 and 1959 respectively. At best they display some modest, neo-Baroque charm, but, for the most part, are flimsy, routine, and uninteresting.

"Bach Goes to Town: Prelude and Fugue in Swing" is a movement from Alec Templeton's 1938 *Topsy-Turvy Suite*, originally composed for piano. By now, the notion of jazzing up the Baroque idiom is not new, and this example sounds banal and dated, though it certainly loses nothing on the harpsichord.

Rick Sowash is a forty-year-old composer who studied at the University of Indiana. What I know of his music has been sweetly and simply tuneful, with an identifiably American flavor. Both pieces presented here follow that description. *The Unicorn*, composed in 1976, suggests a sentimental pastorate—pretty, but extended beyond its durability through mere changes of registration. *Theme with Six Variations* was written a decade later and is too simplistic to take seriously.

Virgil Thomson's *Four Portraits* were originally written for piano. Like most pieces by this vastly overrated composer, some moments are pretty, others are banal, but all are vacuous.

If a listener wished to sample only one of these CDs, I would recommend Volume II, as the one with the most interesting program.

Worthy of special attention is Arnold Rosner's *Musique de Clavecin*, one of the most eerily fascinating compositions for harpsichord I have ever heard. As many *Fanfare* readers already know, Rosner has fashioned quite an original means of expression, using a language rooted in the distant past—in particular, in the idioms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Not that this is so remarkable in itself—after all, the same can be said for Respighi's suites of *Ancient Dances and Airs*, Gordon Jacob's *William Byrd Suite*, Warlock's *Capriol Suite*, and any number of other examples by Poulenc, Vaughan Williams, et al. But what makes Rosner's music special is that, in most of his works, its stylistic atavism does not exist merely to provide quaint antiquarian charm, but rather, serves as a basic medium to convey a wide range of emotional states—some quite intense and powerful. This is more clearly illustrated by the 1974 *Musique de Clavecin* than by any other music of Rosner to appear on disc thus far. The work is in five substantial movements: The first is a grim, stately sarabande; the second, a sardonic, grotesque dance; the third is a macabre nocturne, somewhat reminiscent conceptually of Scriabin's *Vers la Flamme* in its reiteration of a simple but haunting chord progression that grows gradually from a soft and mysterious opening to a climax of nightmarish intensity and back; the fourth movement is a lovely Elizabethan dance of benign character; the work concludes with a somber passacaglia. Lasting twenty-two minutes, *Musique de Clavecin* contains virtually nothing a contemporary audience would describe as “dissonant,” but is full in texture and weighty in content—a challenge for the performer that Harbach meets admirably.

Also worthy of attention is a work from 1987 called *Metaphors*, by Edith Borroff, a New York-based composer in her mid sixties, currently on the faculty of SUNY Binghamton. Described as a set of variations on a tone

row, *Metaphors* is an expertly shaped, richly expressive piece— abstract in conception, but not at all forbidding.

Dan Locklair is a composer from North Carolina, now in his early forties. *The Breakers Pound*, composed in 1985, was inspired by a poem of Stephen Sandy called *Freeway*. This is an entertaining, parodistic sort of piece, with wild stylistic incongruities—from Baroque to boogie-woogie—somewhat along the lines of Albright's *Four Fancies*, but lighter in weight and more approachable.

Barbara Harbach's own *Spaindango* is a rather ferocious little *tour-de-force*, with a faintly Spanish flavor. Despite its brevity, it makes a distinctly indelible impression.

Gerald Near (b. 1942) is a noted church musician based in Minnesota. His *Triptych* is simple and direct, with a melodic warmth reminiscent of Hanson and Crestón.

Veteran composer Vivian Fine's 1986 *Toccatas and Arias* is described as “a meditation on Baroque forms.” Though imaginatively constructed, it is rather dry in effect.

Randall Thompson's *Four Inventions* originated as classroom exercises in counterpoint. Although much of Thompson's music engenders warm affection, these Anna Magdalena-like trifles are too slight to warrant attention—or inclusion in a serious recital program.

III adds a couple of new names to Harbach's program, while delving further into the works of some composers previously sampled. Massachusetts-based Daniel Pinkham, now in his late sixties, has long been associated with the harpsichord—both as performer and composer. (His 1955 Concerto for Celeste and Harpsichord is a long-time favorite of mine.) The *Partita* offered here is an ambitious work in six substantial movements, composed in 1964. Perhaps the fact that the music was originally written as part of a television documentary accounts for its apparent lack of stylistic balance. Much of it is difficult to characterize—serious in tone, light in texture, cool, dry, and rather impersonal in effect. Though several of the movements strike me as excessively academic, others are delightful, especially an ebullient Scherzo and Trio, and a strangely Debussylike (imagine!) Envoi.

Samuel Jones, now in his mid fifties, is a professor of composition at Rice University in Texas. His *Two Movements* from 1988 are abstract, serious, solidly crafted, and conservative, as one might expect of an Eastman graduate from the Hanson years. In common with the Adler sonata and the

Borroff *Metaphors* discussed earlier, Jones's piece does not make a strong personal impression, yet promises further rewards on subsequent hearings.

Dan Locklair reappears on this disc with another oddly entertaining piece, this one called *Fantasy Brings the Day* (1989). Like much of the music presented here, it exhibits virtually no Baroque reference, yet exploits the harpsichord's characteristics most effectively.

Arnold Rosner's 1987 *Sonatine d'Amour* is rather less interesting than his *Musique de Clavecin*. It is in two movements—the first, an incantatory recitative punctuated by broken chords; the second, a gentle, graceful dance. Part of the problem may lie with the performance: The melismatic melodies of the first movement are played rather metronomically, while the second movement is paced a bit slowly. In any case, the result seems monotonous and overextended.

Samuel Adler composed his *Bridges to Span Adversity* in 1989, in memory of Jan deGaetani. Its two movements, though skillful, are awfully dry.

On the whole, this beautifully recorded set of CDs represents an impressive accomplishment, ensuring for Barbara Harbach an important place among today's generation of harpsichordists—and a preeminent one among those who specialize in music of the twentieth century.