

Richard Nunemaker
(Career highlights)

Gave Houston Symphony Orchestra premieres of the Ingolf Dahl, *Saxophone Concerto*, Pierre Max DuBois *Saxophone Concerto*, Glazunov, *Saxophone Concerto*, Ibert, *Concertino da Camera*, Villa Lobos, *Fantasia* for soprano saxophone. Also, commissioned arrangements for clarinet and orchestra for a *Benny Goodman Tribute*, *Artie Shaw Medley* and the *Artie Shaw Clarinet Concerto*. Nunemaker recorded and did live television broadcasts of all three with The Houston Symphony Orchestra.

In 1994 performed in Carnegie Hall with William Thomas McKinley and bassist Peter Herbert as part of the New and Improvised Music concert. At that concert performed *Alone Together* by Janice Misurell Mitchell, a piece Nunemaker commissioned. Following that concert toured Austria with bassist Peter Herbert and the Camerata Bregenz performing Mitchell's *Alone Together* along with a new piece by William Thomas McKinley, *Golden Petals* (which he recorded on his CD *Golden Petals*) and another new piece by Christoph Cech, *Jazz Suite for Bass Clarinet, Contra-bass and Chamber Orchestra*. This tour culminated in Vienna at the Grosser Musikvereins.

Commissioned over 100 compositions and arrangements. This included large scale commissions, arrangements and original music for my quartet *Airmail Special* and compositions for my annual studio recitals (14) clarinet choir and mixed ensembles. Many of these were Houston composers.

Served four years as president of Houston Composers Alliance, Music by Living American Houston Composers. In this capacity, we presented four annual concerts of new music by Houston Composers.

Recordings produced featuring music Nunemaker commissioned are:

The Louisville Project, Arizona University Recordings, LLC, AUR 3127
Between Silence and Darkness, Arizona University Recordings, LLC, AUR CS3119
Magical Place of My Dreams, Arizona University Recordings, LLC, AUR CD 3118,
Multiplicities, Red Mark CD 9213
Golden Petals, MMC 2005.

(Nunemaker)

Other recordings Nunemaker has participated in are:

From The Great Land with Suzanne Summerville, Mezzo Soprano, Arts Venture, University of Alaska, featuring the music and poetry of Alaska.

Logo I, New World Records 80382-2 featuring the Continuum Percussion Quartet and Eugene Kurtz's *Logo I* for clarinet, percussion quartet and piano.

Janice Misurell Mitchell's *Vanishing Points* Southport Recordings featured in *Deconstruction Blues for Bass Clarinet and Hammond B3 Organ*.

Projects for ICA have included two commissions:

ClarinetFest 2011 set up and organized the D'Addario/Rico Reeds commission: Arthur Gottschalk's *Kaleidoscopic Pocket Hockets Boogaloo* for 8 bass clarinets and 2 contra bass clarinets.

ClarinetFest 2016 gave the world premiere of Arthur Gottschalk's *Four New Brothers* for Four Bass Clarinets and Orchestra with Stephan Vermeersch, Rocco Parisi and Sauro Berti. This on the D'Addario Gold Sponsored Concerto Concert with the Kansas Sinfonietta, David Neely, conductor.

ClarinetFest 2017 co-commissioned Daniel Adams *Transitory Liaisons* for four bass clarinets and five percussionists to be premiered in Orlando, Florida.

Some of the composers Nunemaker has commissioned and recorded.

Paul English

Janice Misurell Mitchell

William Thomas McKinnley

Jody Rockmaker

David Colson

Richard Lavenda

Arthur Gottschalk

Daniel Adams

John Eaton

Robert Nelson

Brad Sayles

Bob Dorough

Donald Elam

Dan Welcher

(Nunemaker)

Joe LoCascio

Russell Sarre

Thomas Helton

M. William Karlins

John Anthony Lennon

Marc Satterwhite

Daniel Kramlich

John Harbison

Reynaldo Ochoa

Lynette Westendorf

Meira Warshauer

In 2002 Nunemaker was awarded the permanent title of Alumni Fellow from the University of Louisville.

Reviews:

FANFARE

The Magazine for Serious Record Collectors

November/December 1993

Volume 17, Number 2

By William Zagorski

Of the four CDs submitted for this article, I found the one titled *Golden Petals* the most intriguing. It is a collection of five pieces showing five distinct and distinctive permutations of jazz — the idiom as practiced by Artie Shaw in his Concerto for Clarinet (as arranged by Newton Wayland and transcribed by Paul English for live clarinet and synthesizer); as filtered through Igor Stravinsky’s musical sensibility in his *Ebony Concerto* (also transcribed for the forces mentioned above); and as practiced by Janice Misurell-Mitchell in her paradoxical and often haunting *Alone Together* for bass clarinet and double bass (used in the jazz mode), and Paul English’s bluesy and more accessible *The Saxophone, For Solo Saxophone and Female Narrator* — both of which are quirky; explore the outermost possibilities of instrumental timbre and technique; and push the concept of thematic variation to impressive heights. I found the disc not only musically refreshing, but often revelatory. Hearing Stravinsky’s music being played by a machine that was able to imbue it with an unearthly metrical evenness, I got a new sense of the reason for his dictum that music should be “realized” not “interpreted.” The rhythmic and metrical precision limned out his complex and

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subtle rhythms to splendid effect. The largest work, McKinley's *Golden Petals* for bass clarinet (interchanged at key moments with soprano saxophone), double bass, and instrumental ensemble, is full of McKinley's earmarks — sustained ostinatos, telling harmonies, and instrumental flair — it provided woodwind player Richard Nunemaker and bassist Peter Herbert with a fine virtuoso vehicle.

“I've been writing music for Nunemaker for over ten years. When I composed *Golden Petals*, he liked it so much that he wanted it recorded. We recorded it at Rice University with David Colson and the Pierrot Plus Ensemble about five years ago. He, however, couldn't get it onto a label — it was, once again, the old problem of economics. When MMC was formed I told him that MMC would post-produce *Golden Petals*. I'm writing a bass clarinet concerto for him in 1995. It will, of course, be recorded by MMC.” — William Thomas Mckinley

THE CLARINET May/June 1994

CD Review

By Michele Gingras

RICHARD NUNEMAKER: GOLDEN PETALS. Igor Stravinsky, *Ebony Concerto* (1945); Janice Misurell-Mitchell, *Alone Together* (1987); Paul English, *The Saxophone, for Solo Saxophone and Female Narrator* (1991); William Thomas McKinley, *Golden Petals* (1985); Artie Shaw, *Concerto for Clarinet* (1940); Playing time 67:06. MMC Recordings Ltd., 240 West Street, Reading, MA 01867-2847; CD-MMC2005.

Here is a recording perfectly adapted to the beginning of a new century. Depending on different viewpoints, this is either a fantastic breakthrough or simply another step towards a synthetic world....

Richard Nunemaker is a member of the Houston Symphony Orchestra where he performs on the clarinet, bass clarinet and saxophone. This recording displays his admirable versatility and expression on these instruments, and features two important jazz concertos, and three new American Works. What is unique about the making of the disc is the electronic orchestration of both concertos. The works have been given new sonorities through re-orchestration for clarinet and computer-assisted synthesizers by jazz pianist Paul English.

(Nunemaker)

Richard Nunemaker knows jazz. He plays freely and idiomatically expresses a full palette of emotions. His versatility on several instruments is impressive and he has the background to match. He has recorded tributes to Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman with Newton Wayland and the Houston Symphony, two Pro Arte compact discs entitled **STOMPIN' AT THE SAVOY** and **AMERICA SWINGS....**

The new music works on this CD include Janice Misurell-Mitchell's *Alone Together*. Currently on the faculty of DePaul University, Mitchell earned several composition awards and grants. *Alone Together*, a single-movement duo for bass clarinet and double bass (used in its jazz mode) is introspective and quiet, with both instruments in their low range. The style fluctuates from jazz to free jazz to atonality. It is an interesting conversation between players allowing much space for Quasi-improvisation....

...*The Saxophone for Solo Saxophone and Female Speaker* by Paul English. English is one of the most respected jazz pianists in Texas. He performed with such jazz greats as Dizzy Gillespie, David Liebman and Arnett Cobb. He devotes most of his time studying and developing his skills as a serious composer, and already has written numerous works. *The Saxophone* uses a 1924 text by English newspaper correspondent William Bolitho Ryall. Many ideas in this piece work very well. The speaker's phrases often are matched by the sax's expressive playing....

Nunemaker's virtuosic jazz playing is right on....

Golden Petals by William Thomas McKinley is the featured new work on the CD. Born in New Kensington, PA, in 1938, McKinley is one of America's most prolific and sought after composers. He learned jazz piano as a child, and by the age of 12 was a member of the musicians union. He has worked with Richard Stoltzman, who has inspired, commissioned, and performed a host of McKinley's works which mix jazz and classical roots. *Golden Petals* is a large-framed dramatic two-player concerto for bass clarinet plus saxophone and double bass, commissioned by Nunemaker. The accompaniment is refreshing in that a real orchestra is used, The Pierrot Plus Ensemble with David Colson conducting. Along with the Shaw concerto, this is my favorite work on the recording. It has minimalist and improvisatory elements which are precisely notated. Double bassist Peter Herbert is quite amazing with his high harmonics and flashy pizzicatos. Nunemaker sounds terrific on the soprano sax. The piece is intense and interesting, with a great sax cadenza.

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The Pierrot Plus Ensemble was formed by music director and conductor David Colson in 1986. The group consists of eight professional musicians, five of whom are members of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. Students at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music supplement the ensemble, enabling Pierrot Plus to present chamber works for any number of players. I give the ensemble and Richard Nunemaker an A+ for their performance on this CD. The Shaw concerto... is a dazzler and is a good reason to acquire the CD.

Sorting Them Out

The Clarinet

The New Music Connoisseur

Barry L. Cohen

RICHARD NUNEMAKER

GOLDEN PETALS, Music of Stravinsky, Misurell-Mitchell, English, McKinley, Shaw, MMC 2005
 'MULTIPLICITIES', Music of Rockmaker, Colson, Lennon, Lavenda, Red Mark CD 9213.

... "Brilliant, technically amazing, and fearless as well.
 "Nunemaker: 'Vibrant and Alive'"

Richard Nunemaker is a member of the Houston Symphony, a top-rated solo performer on clarinet, bass clarinet, and sax, and a musician with lots of premieres and commissions to his credit. Like many a single-reedist, he explores the jazz lit unashamedly and is willing to share that fondness with his CD audience.

The album 'Golden Petals' offers five compositions so different from each other in style and substance the wonder is their juxtaposition makes any sense at all. And, although, we'll accept only one of the selections as bona fide serious new music, the whole album is refreshing just for that alone.... The title piece (date 1985) is another one of McKinley's no-holds barred essays in tension and release, a 22-minute work for bass clarinet, saxophone and percussion that some will find absorbing, others painful— that's McKinley. On another level, his status as the brains behind MMC Records once again assures his being the star of the show, at least the compositional one.

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...The arrangement of the Shaw (Clarinet Concerto) by Newton Wayland, on the other hand, lets the sunlight of strings into the big band mix and gives the work some added class.

Though we should really save the sax for a more appropriate survey, we'll mention that the text for *The Saxophone* is by William Bolitho Ryall, a South African. It's an homage to the instrument that sounds sincere if a bit corny, helped a lot by the smooth and polished narration of Dr. Chris Steele. Also noteworthy, besides Nunemaker's precise, yet always energetic playing (often when time seems to be standing still), is the nimble work (jazz and arco) of jazz bassist Peter Herbert, especially in the *McKinley*, and the all-around fine effort of the *Pierrot Plus Ensemble*, associated with Rice University.

If *'Golden Petals'* shows off Nunemaker's versatility, his *'Multiplicities'* album focuses on his impressive virtuosity. The disc also seems more serious in intent, all of the compositions, for good or bad, emerging from abstract ideas with, perhaps, one exception—John Anthony Lennon's *Spiderdance* of 1995, a 5 1/2-minute piece for clarinet and piano (Scott Holshouser). Mr. Lennon offers no comments on the composition other than this wry verse.

the spider laughs
the spider dances
the spider stalk
with only seven legs

Thus what we get is a happy, but quirky, jerky little dance in a mostly septimal (or triple-square, triple-square, etc.) meter.

We find the title selection, by Jody Rockmaker, hard to grasp in two or three hearings. It begins with spaced, clearly audible morsels for the soloist — swells, brief motives using techniques like flutter-tonguing, multiphonics, etc.—that are later expanded into longer riff-like cadenzas. But much of it contains plumbings in the lower register that are not fathomable to these faltering ears and are heard as virtual rests. We're all for experimentation, but before making that compositional plunge composers ought to ask themselves more often "why?"

David Colson's *Dragon Music* is a multi-stylistic sextet for clarinet, piano (Sylvie Beaudette) and four percussionists (Jay Harper, Kemoki Bunting, Brian Fruechtenicht and Scott Cummings). There are several exciting passages for all six forces that come out of jazz, Latin music and rock, but they last only briefly so that

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the clarinetist can shine in a variety of moods. The work ends on a strangely quiescent note. Mr. Colson leads the forces.

Most ambitious is Richard Lavenda's 33-minute Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet (1997). With so many chamber forms now long fossilized, it is a wonder this combination, going back to Mozart, has endured over the centuries. Don't expect Mr. Lavenda's opus to sound like Mozart; the underlying spirit, however, is there — the sense of apartness and togetherness, the exploring of timbral possibility, the moodiness within the more or less disciplined structure. Typically, it is in three movements with the middle "Serenade" a bit freer than the outer two (marked "Blaze and "Dynamo"), but also excursive of the push and pull character of this combo, Mr. Nunemaker is beautifully supported by the T'ang Quartet.

Overall rating:...Mr. Nunemaker's credentials are firm and his musicianship quite alive and often daring...

THE CLARINET

March 2004

CD Reviews

By Michele Gingras

Magical Place of My Dreams. Richard Nunemaker, clarinet and bass clarinet; with Christie Vohs, clarinet and bass clarinet; Ray Dillard, percussion; Janice Misurell-Mitchell, flute, alto flute and voice. John Eaton: *Concert Music*; Jody Rockmaker: *Magical Place of My Dreams*; Richard Nunemaker/Ray Dillard: *Improvisation IV*; Janice Misurell-Mitchell: *Profaning the Sacred*; Daniel Kramlich: *For 2 Bass Clarinets*; Steve Reich: *New York Counterpoint*.

ARIZONA UNIVERSITY RECORDINGS AUR CD 3118. Total time 64:03.

(available from Arizona University Recordings, The Pine Grove Studios, 2961 N. Avenida De La Colina. Tuscon, AZ 85749 / Web site: www.AURec.com)

Experimental music enthusiasts are well served with this compilation of historically important contemporary repertoire from the 1960s, mixed in with more recent experimental compositions, including one noticeable gem by Jody Rockmaker with the title track *Magical Place of My Dreams*, as well as a "new" old favorite, *New York Counterpoint* by Steve Reich.

Richard Nunemaker has been clarinetist, bass clarinetist, and saxophonist with the

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Houston Symphony since 1967. As soloist with the Houston Symphony, he has given the orchestra's premieres of works by Ingolf Dahl, Pierre-Max Dubois, Alexander Glazunov and Heitor Villa-Lobos. In addition, he is very active in both jazz and new music and is a member and president of Houston Composers' Alliance (Music by Living American/Houston composers). Nunemaker is a founding member of Airmail Special, a quartet of Houston musicians who perform original material for student and family concerts in the Houston area. During its 12-year existence, the ensemble has presented approximately 250 live performances in the greater Houston area schools. Nunemaker is a graduate of the State University of New York at Fredonia and the University of Louisville.

This is Nunemaker's third new music recording in recent years. He previously recorded **Golden Petals and Multiplicities**, both including music from composers featured on this CD, Janice Misurell-Mitchell and Jody Rockmaker. Like his earlier recordings, **Magical Place of My Dreams** features Nunemaker's remarkable love and ability for performing new music and it includes music he commissioned.

John Eaton was called "The most interesting opera composer writing in America today" by Andrew Porter in *The London Financial Times*. Through his work in a variety of mediums, he has received international recognition as a composer and performer of electronic and microtonal music. Eaton is presently Professor of Composition (retired) at the University of Chicago. His *Concert Music* for solo clarinet was composed for contemporary clarinet pioneer William O. Smith, and must have been considered an extremely daring piece in 1960. Historically, it certainly deserved the top extended techniques pecking order spot for many years. By today's standards, however, it simply contains an array of contemporary techniques brilliantly executed by Nunemaker. It is nice to see a rarely performed piece emerging back from quasi oblivion.

On the other hand, the title track *Magical Place of My Dreams* for two clarinets by Jody Rockmaker (1998) deserves to claim its place as the new history-making composition that marked the clarinet duet repertoire. What a clever piece for an often-challenging combination. Rockmaker manages to intertwine both clarinet sounds in a wonderfully skillful, almost ground breaking way. At times, it is as if the clarinet sounds become synthesized and virtually imitate electronic sounds. All this is done with beautifully played melodies and perfectly blended dialogue by Nunemaker and his former student, Christie Vohs.

Clarinetist Christie Vohs is an active orchestral and chamber musician in the

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greater Chicago area, and is currently the artistic director for Mostly Music at Northwestern Illinois University, and a presenter of chamber music concerts and educational outreach programs in the Chicago area. She earned her music degrees from the University of Houston and DePaul University. Her teachers also include Larry Combs and Gregory Smith. She is Lecturer of Clarinet at Northwestern Illinois University.

Improvisation IV for bass clarinet and percussion (1997) is composed and performed by Nunemaker and Ray Dillard. The title, *Improvisation IV*, definitely holds true. This recorded version is live in front of an audience, and both performers kept secret which instruments they would play on stage before the concert, or even what music they would perform (they eventually settled on bass clarinet and percussion, including piano). The number “IV” reflects that this is their fourth collaboration as musicians. The audience appears to be delighted and amused by the idea, although the audience sounds are a little distracting at first. I’m guessing that visuals were also part of the overall effect, and this makes me wish I had attended the performance. The music seems ideal for a concert venture, but as a recording, I found it beyond my comfort level initially. After I read the record jacket, however, I became much more curious and glued to the headphones.

Janice Misurell-Mitchell’s *Profaning the Sacred* for clarinet/bass clarinet, flute/alto flute/voice (2000) is, to say the least, an experimental piece. Written at the request of Nunemaker, and according to the composer, the work is oriented around the ideas of the sacred as profane, and vice versa. Misurell-Mitchell performs the flute/alto flute/ voice part, and she does so quite ingeniously; she speaks through her flute while playing, and the words are perfectly recognizable, making the effect reminiscent of synthesized voice sounds one may have heard in popular or commercial music. Nunemaker’s experience in both legit and jazz genres serves him well throughout the piece. Often times both parts seem to be randomly exchanging ideas, although multiple listenings prove otherwise. Besides this, I must confess, I found the piece a little out of my reach, although experimental music fans may very well feel compelled to perform it at their next event.

For 2 Bass Clarinets (1999) by Daniel Kramlich was commissioned by Nunemaker for a series of performances throughout the United States in 1999, as well as for this recording. The work involves a number of extended techniques such as pitch slurring and multiphonics, and both performers (Nunemaker and Vohs) again blend perfectly well together. The work has interesting and gorgeous, however brief, melodic points between improvisatory sections.

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New York Counterpoint by Steve Reich has to be my favorite contemporary piece for clarinet. Published in 1985, I still remember standing in awe after listening to it for the very first time. The work is written for 11 clarinets, including three bass clarinets. Ten clarinet parts are recorded by the soloist who then performs the eleventh part “live” with the recording, although it can also be performed by a group of 11 performers. I find that performing this piece with a recording is very exciting both for the player and the audience. Reich wrote the piece in three continuous movements, each more riveting than the other. He writes in his signature Minimalist style, with a climax that suddenly comes to an end, leaving the listener breathless. Melodies go on and on, and suddenly change to another in a seamless and beautiful fashion. Paul English, sound producer extraordinaire, spent four days working with Nunemaker to layer the 11 tracks. Both did a superb job, which makes this rendition of *New York Counterpoint* particularly distinctive.

Although at first I wouldn't label this CD as a “multi-spinner” candidate, I do recommend its acquisition for the little but fantastic treasure it contains: Rockmaker's *Magical Place of My Dreams*, as well as the impeccable and tight *New York Counterpoint*. This recording is yet one more testimony to Nunemaker's important contribution to new music. Indeed, he has commissioned more than 25 composers for more than 50 original works or arrangements. Richard Nunemaker is a stellar performer, and clever composers already know to actively seek him to put their new clarinet music to life.

CD Reviews

The New Music Connoisseur

Barry L. Cohen

Winds Dancing Across the Fields

BLC ©2006

‘RICHARD NUNEMAKER: THE LOUISVILLE PROJECT.’ Jody Rockmaker: *Rothko Landscapes* (2000) ● Marc Satterwhite: *Clarinet Quintet* (2002); *Las Viudas de Calama* (2001) ● M. William Karlins: *Just a Line from Chameleon* (2001); *Improvisation on “Lines Where Beauty Lingers.”* (2002) ● Meira M. Warshauer: *Shevet Achim* (2001). Mr. Nunemaker, B♭ and bass clarinets; members, Louisville [wind] quartet; guest artists. Arizona University Recordings, AUR CD 3127. (TT=not given)

A challenge to those who posit that liner notes are not needed to understand new music: don't try that with this CD! How can you even begin to judge the opening

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work of Jody Rockmaker until you are made aware that its seemingly mysterious murmurs and sudden multiphonic shrieks have a visual theme underlying the piece and a commissioner's special intentions in terms of its scoring? Maybe the latter fact will prove merely incidental to the listener, but the reference to paintings by a major American painter has to arouse the imagination. There is a long tradition behind this creative choice, encompassing the likes of Granados (Goya) and Mussorgsky (Hartmann) in the 19th century and Gunther Schuller (Klee), Einojuhani Rautavaara (Van Gogh), Morton Feldman (Pollock), Pink Floyd (Dali) and surely many others in the 20th. Occasionally, the individual phenomenon of synaesthesia (the mental appearance of colors produced when hearing specific musical tones) asserts itself, leaving the non-participant in the dark, so to speak. But for the most part composers have successfully created works with musical contours out of their impressions of an inherently static art form. So perhaps in that sense Mr. Rockmaker's landscapes are unsuccessfully drawn. On the other hand, if his intention was simply the evocation of a mood, that is perfectly valid. Unfortunately, we confess an ignorance of these paintings, which disqualifies us from making a reasoned judgment.

Except for Mr. Satterwhite's *Clarinet Quintet*, the remaining selections on this program are also inspired by cross-aesthetic ideas. But even the quintet, after two movements with dynamically contrasting sections, becomes in the end an elegiac statement with an emotionally rich and fully melodic part for each instrument, especially the bass clarinet, leaving one to wonder whom the composer might have had in mind. He does not say.

The quintet is an ambitious 19-minute work. There is a struggle in the first movement between polite and brash elements that remains unresolved. The second movement is delicate and scherzo-like. We think the third movement ends this work satisfyingly, and that Mr. Satterwhite wisely chose not to go on to a previously planned fourth movement. This decision brings to mind Schubert's two-movement "Unfinished Symphony," which many critics consider one of the most complete works ever written.

The Widows of Calama is based on a poem by Marjorie Agosin. From the excerpts quoted and translated into English, we sense it is a touching and perhaps painfully beautiful statement dedicated to the women whose husbands were taken from them ("disappeared") to be slaughtered in the desert by a cruel Chilean dictator. The stanza that grabbed us by the throat is this:

The widows danced with a feather
of the silent sand
That is what the desert widows did
They made paper flowers
To fill the empty shoes
One of them gave me the hand of

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a dead child
 And as I took it, it changed
 Into a flower of the wind.

The dance she refers to is the *cueca sola*, which these widows are said to perform in their anguish in the town's central square as they cry out for justice. It is the major section of this near-ten-minute work. The dance is designed as a *valse triste*, and it is terrifyingly grotesque music which is not at all in three-quarter time. When it cannot be played out any longer, the pleading, the awful distress of the dance seems to subside and the dance simply comes to an end. Injustice has prevailed.

We have criticized composers before for venturing into territory that should not be trespassed, i.e., the very personal ideas expressed in poetry whose vocal music is already there. But to underline the sentiments of poetry with instrumental music is quite another matter, and we can see that Mr. Satterwhite was truly moved to write such music. It most powerfully commemorates a horror and the poetic chronicling of that horror, and we applaud him for it.

There is another work on this disc that grows out of strong and timely political roots. It follows the "Widows" and ends the CD. *Shevet Achim*, by Meira Warshauer, is translated from the Hebrew as "Brothers Dwell" and implies an ironic observation which the composer has seized on. It is that Israelis and Palestinians are descendants of Isaac and Ishmael respectively, the sons of Abraham, the patriarch of both Judaism and Islam. And she backs that up with the words of Psalm 133: "May these brothers and sisters, these two peoples, soon dwell together in harmony and the unity of peace." The music follows that notion faithfully, the two bass clarinets at first in a serious musical confrontation, brandishing their weapons – multiphonics, quarter-tones, flutter-tonguing, tremolos, extreme register leaps, raspberries that seem to shout profanities – before finding the overtones in the low end [sic] of the instrument so that the struggle comes to an end and the music transcends into a harmonious mode. Ah, were it so that music could resolve our political dissonances.

The titles of the two compositions by Mr. Karlins are actually drawn from other musical compositions of his. *Just a line from Chameleon* derives from a piece called *Chameleon* by Karlins. It has two contrasting sections, one more or less slow and long lined, the other much more staccato and rhythmic. The music has a few nice touches.

We found his other piece far more interesting, however. The "Improv" starts out with music that has no vibrato or rubato, a kind of blah prelude to the jazzier section to come. Although the composer makes it clear he wants everything to be played as written, he also throws in a sort of mixed signal, that the player is free to stylize his passages. With the music getting very rhythmically quirky this gives Mr. Nunemaker an opportunity to really shine and then some. This is not solo music for someone

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seated comfortably on a bandshell; this is music for a tightrope artist, for a world-class player who knows only too well that the slightest slip will send him crashing down into ignominy. None of that! Nunemaker's bass clarinet playing here is simply breathtaking.

And so was his playing elsewhere, as well as that of all the musicians. We should cite the on-target piano performance of Krista Wallace-Boaz in "Widows," the unwavering partnership between Nunemaker and Timothy Zavadil in the Warshauer piece, and the playing of the Louisville Quartet in the *Clarinet Quintet*, especially in those final soft solo turns.

It is a worthy project that Mr. Nunemaker has undertaken with his longtime associate Paul English and should be recognized by every devotee of contemporary American music as such. Some will no doubt contend that documents like the Louisville Project come much too late in the game, that the musical elements and styles used here are now passé. But wasn't it Beethoven who brought Classicism to its highest art? Weren't the Romantics pretty much wrapped up in themselves until Wagner, Bruckner and Mahler and the Gurrelieder of Schoenberg brought the movement to its ultimate lofty state? If they say it's time to move on we may agree. But move onto what? We happen to believe that in the late 20th century dodecaphony, atonality, dissonance, multiphonics and those other modern practices were not the problem at all but rather how they were misused. Listening to this disc should convince that those approaches have been resurrected to great effect, and we heartily recommend this CD.

The Clarinet

Volume 34 Number 2

March 2007

by Dileep Gangolli

The Louisville Project. Richard Nunemaker, clarinet and bass clarinet; with Dallas Tidwell, clarinet; Timothy Zavadil, clarinet and bass clarinet; Andrea Levine, clarinet; Krista Wallace-Boaz, piano; and The Louisville Quartet (Peter McHugh and Marcus Ratzenboeck, violins; Christian Frederickson, viola; and Paul York, cello). Jody Rockmaker: Rothko Landscapes; Marc Satterwhite: Clarinet Quintet and Las viudas de Calama; M. William Karlins: Just a Line From Chameleon and Improvisation on "Lines Where Beauty Lingers"; Meira M. Warshauer: Shevet Achim. ARIZONA UNIVERSITY RECORDINGS CD 3127. Total time 75:08. (available from Web site: www.aurec.com or tel. 520-749-9895/fax 520-749-9893)

(Nunemaker)

I have a great admiration for Richard Nunemaker. Rather than settling into a well respected career as the bass clarinetist of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, Nunemaker has embarked on expanding the clarinet and bass clarinet repertoire by commissioning and performing works by leading composers of our time. These works are usually quite challenging, requiring fervent dedication and inordinate amounts of practice time to bring to gestation. Accomplishing this feat is not easy, especially while holding down a fulltime orchestral position with one of the leading orchestras in the United States.

Nunemaker's fifth solo CD, titled *The Louisville Project*, is a joyful collaboration with several colleagues, consisting of music he commissioned and premiered in Louisville and Chicago. It was recorded in Louisville in 2003 with musicians based in Louisville, including clarinetists Dallas Tidwell, Timothy Zavadil, and Andrea Levine - all members of the Louisville Orchestra. Most of the compositions were recorded under the supervision of the composers.

The first selection heard is by Jody Rockmaker (b. 1961), entitled *Rothko Landscapes*. Written in 2000 and inspired by two abstract paintings by the famous painter Mark Rothko, this composition, for four clarinets, employs extended techniques including an emphasis on multiphonics. The performance by clarinetists Nunemaker, Tidwell (on Bb clarinets) and Zavadil, Levine (on A clarinets) is accurate and refined. The performers approach the music with a keen sense of blending and texture—as important in this musical composition as it is in Rothko's visual masterpieces. This threemovement work shows off the dynamic possibilities of the clarinet, especially its ability to play in the softer dynamic range. With an emphasis on suspension, tight harmonies, and parallel melodic lines, Rockmaker, who teaches at Arizona State University, has added an interesting and inspired work for clarinet quartet.

The *Clarinet Quintet* by Marc Satterwhite (b. 1954) was written in 2002 and consists of three movements. Satterwhite, a faculty member at the University of Louisville School of Music, employs the standard combination of clarinet and string quartet, but adds an unusual quirk by asking the soloist to perform on bass clarinet in the final movement. The first movement is angular, using dramatic register leaps to emphasize the wide range of the clarinet. An intense rhythmic motion powers the momentum of this movement from beginning to end. The short second movement, a scherzo marked "Presto delicato," acts as a playful bridge to the third movement. An understated atmosphere is created through the use of clarinet grace notes and string pizzicatos. In the third movement, Satterwhite demonstrates his understanding of the timbre and tenor of the bass clarinet. Rather

(Nunemaker)

than being obvious by exploiting the low notes of the instrument, the bass clarinet is scored in its resonant middle range, creating a haunting falsetto luster to the accompanying string quartet. Kudos to the Louisville Quartet, quartet in residence at the University of Louisville School of Music, for taking on the demanding task of learning this score with obvious dedication and enthusiasm.

Composer M. William Karlins (1932-2005) died while this recording was being mixed and it is dedicated to his memory, giving the project an emotional poignancy. Karlins, a longtime faculty member at Northwestern University, had compositions performed by leading international institutions, and he was especially proud of his works for clarinet and saxophone. The composer is represented by two selections on this CD, *Just a Line From Chameleon* (2001) and *Improvisation on "Lines Where Beauty Lingers"* (2002). The first work is a duet for two clarinets performed by Nunemaker and Tidwell. The second work is scored for solo bass clarinet and dedicated to Nunemaker. The theme is taken from a jazz composition written by a friend of Karlins and requires the performer to interpret the piece in a "cool jazz" style while adhering to the explicit directions regarding pitches, rhythms, and dynamics indicated by the composer in the score. Nunemaker makes good use of the artistic license afforded the performer by creating an intimate jazz atmosphere evocative of Eric Dolphy or Gerry Mulligan, while maintaining a Classical sense of proportion and measured restraint. Nunemaker's flexibility on bass clarinet shines in this work.

The music of Marc Satterwhite is repeated in *Las viudas de Calama* (The Widows of Calama), a composition written in 2000 as a homage to the victims of the purges by Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Inspired by a poem by Marjorie Agosin, this work is scored for bass clarinet and piano. As would be expected by the title and subject matter, this is a brutal and violent composition. The performance is dispatched with abandon and despair by Nunemaker and pianist Krista Wallace-Boaz.

Completing this CD is a work for two bass clarinets by composer Meira M. Warshauer (b. 1949). Based in South Carolina, Warshauer has won numerous prestigious awards and has had compositions recorded and performed by illustrious soloists such as Richard Stoltzman and Paula Robison. Mining her rich Jewish heritage, Warshauer's music draws from spiritual themes expressed in a taut, contemporary style of writing. Her composition on this CD, *Shevet Achim* (Brothers Dwell), is scored for two bass clarinets and is inspired by the troubled relationship between the descendants of half-brothers Yitzchak and Yishmael (sons of Abraham) who are now Israelis and Palestinians. A soulful outpouring of

(Nunemaker)

resignation and hope, this composition is performed with intensity and introspection by bass clarinetists Nunemaker and Zavadil. Contemporary techniques such as glissandi, flutter tongue, and micro tones are employed to evoke both the sorrow and shared promise of the future of this chronically troubled land.

This CD is a wonderful testament to how an individual musician can make a difference in creating a body of literature for our instrument through artistic collaboration with composers and colleagues. The sound and audio quality on this recording is very good, with special emphasis on capturing the soft, pianissimo volume that the clarinet is so good at accomplishing. The performers are all dedicated to the task that such an ambitious endeavor entails. My only criticism, more a reflection of personal tastes, is that much of the music sounds too similar in aesthetic and approach, and does not display enough variety. Given that Nunemaker has selected composers whose music he champions, it is understandable that the music would lean toward similarity rather than contrast. Perhaps future CDs by Nunemaker will reflect composers whose musical voices reflect the broader spectrum of contemporary music.

Audiophile Audition Review

AUDIOPHILE AUDITION - web magazine for music, audio & home theater

The Louisville Project = JODY ROCKMAKER: Rothko Landscapes;
 MARC SATTERWHITE: Clarinet Quintet, The Widows of Kalama; M.
 WILLIAM KARLINS: Just a Line from Chameleon, Improvisation from "Lines
 Where Beauty Lingers"; MEIRA M. WARSHAUER: Brothers Dwell –
 Richard Nunemaker, clarinets/ Dallas Tidwell, Timothy Zavadil, Andrea Levine,
 clarinets/ Krista Wallace-Boaz, piano/ Louisville Quartet – Arizona University
 Recordings AUR CD 3127, 75:08 ****:

This album had more of an impact than I expected. Richard Nunemaker is longtime clarinetist of the Houston Symphony, and here he calls on his clarinet and string friends of the Louisville Orchestra to assist him with compositions by four different composers who all attended the premieres of these performances. Rothko Landscapes is a marvelously evocative piece for four clarinets that keeps you glued to the music with the variety of sounds that the clarinets produce, including tasteful demonstration of the often dreaded multiphonics, here used to terrific (and musical) effect instead of the usual cheap "something different" theatrics of lesser

(Nunemaker)

composers. Satterwhite's Clarinet Quintet is a beautiful and pleasantly modern take on an old form that adds to the integrity of the repertory's form.

The other pieces use mixed clarinets in small ensemble (two), including the last three pieces listed that make a wonderful showing for the bass clarinet, a Nunemaker specialty, here given in an excellent presentation that is far overdue for this much-maligned (and underused) instrument. Overall, a fine way to spend an hour and 15 minutes, and I can see the attraction of the production seeping into those segments of the classical music populace that would normally shun such a listing. Give it a try—you won't be sorry!

-- Steven Ritter

R E C O R D B O X

A Driving Force

Music commissioned and played by Richard Nunemaker, reviewed by PATRIC STANDFORD

Arizona University Recordings AUR CD 3127



Clarinetist, bass clarinetist and saxophone player (Houston Symphony since 1967), Richard Nunemaker has long been a driving force in the expansion of the clarinet repertoire in the USA. This is his tenth recording project, the third for Arizona, and he is currently working on a sixth solo album. He has commissioned over twenty composers who have produced more than fifty works for him, work that was recognised in 2002 with a Fellowship from the University of Louisville. Here he plays in all the pieces.

This CD features the music of four composers, one of which -- M William Karlins -- died in 2005 at the age of 73. His was a quiet meditative world; *Just a Line from Chameleon* for two clarinets, a Nunemaker commission in 2001, is typical.

(Nunemaker)

Marc Satterwhite (born 1954), a professional double bass player before devoting himself to composition, is Professor of Music at Louisville and director of the Gawemeyer Award. *Las viudas de Calama* is a searing ten minutes for bass clarinet and piano after a poem by the Chilean poet Marjorie Agosin, dealing with Pinochet's regime of *desaparecer*, the execution of thousands who disagreed with him. In contrast, his clarinet quintet inhabits fairer ground, with a light central presto and more sombre finale, now a bass clarinet weaving through the elegiac violin melody.

Meira Warshauer (born 1949) is represented with a bass clarinet duet, *Shevet Achim* ('Brothers Dwell') reflecting the more personal family conflicts that arise between Israeli and Palestinian families. The instruments in their lowest registers rise, entwined in turmoil.

The youngest composer is Jody Rockmaker (born 1961) who, in his Nunemaker commission of 2000, chose to explore three Marc Rothko paintings with four clarinets. *Maroon on Blue* begins with striking sonorities and contrasts.

Some tracks are rather dry, but the performances are, as can be expected, excellent.