

Lament in the Trampled Garden: Chamber Music by Marjan Mozetich. Performers: Penderecki String Quartet; Gryphon Trio; Erica Goodman, harp; Shalom Bard, clarinet; Christopher Dawes, harmonium; Nora Shulman, flute. Toronto: Centrediscs, 2009. 1 sound disc + 1 booklet in English & French. Contents: *Angels in Flight* (17:58) – *Lament in the Trampled Garden* (13:02) – *Hymn of Ascension* (13:18) – *Scales of Joy and Sorrow* (18:16). CMCCD 14009 \$17.98*

Marjan Mozetich (born 1948) has been one of the most sought-after composers in Canada over the past quarter century. Although he studied with John Weinzweig, Franco Donatoni and Luciano Berio, Mozetich's own music is tonal, lush, and full of quiet intensity. Often, it touches on issues of spirituality. Featuring some of Canada's best instrumentalists, the present release contains four works composed between 1987 and 2007. Throughout, one is struck by the beauty of Mozetich's music and his masterful handling of timbre and texture. Also notable is the CD booklet, which contains interesting programmatic interpretations of each work by Alexander Colpa. Although I sometimes disagree with Colpa (see below), the booklet does demonstrate the wide variety of readings these works can generate.

The earliest work, *Angels in Flight* (1987), is also the one that requires the biggest ensemble (string quartet, harp, flute and clarinet). Inspired by an Annunciation scene painted by the Italian Renaissance artist Filippo Lippi, this piece is a triptych. The picturesque first "panel," entitled "Arrival and Dialogue," opens with an extended section that appears to depict angels (melodic instruments) floating with and above the wind (the arpeggios). After the movement slows (landing on earth), a dance-like segment – which Colpa takes to be a depiction of "communal dancing" – sounds to me more like the beginning of the dialogue between Mary and the angels. The second panel is a brief and tender "Song to the Eternal," and the final panel, "Departure," contains both angelic flight music as well as big reflective melodies that suggest the ruminations of humans on the angels' message. At several points in the work, the subtle timbral changes – the way one instrument takes over the melody from another, the addition and subtraction of doublings, and so on – are breathtaking. Kudos to the performers for bringing off these effects so well!

Lament in the Trampled Garden was commissioned to be the mandatory piece at the 1992 Banff International String Quartet Competition, and it explores the many different ways a person can grieve. There are individual laments (opening), communal laments (1:39), angry cries (3:09), hopeless sighs with its downward-sliding pizzicatos (6:34), and, to use Colpa's words, the burying of sorrow "in feigned exuberance" (7:51). In almost all these tiny sections, the Penderecki String Quartet captures the mood perfectly. My one wish is that the "feigned exuberance" section had sounded wilder and less controlled.

For me, the most moving work on this album is *Hymn of Ascension* (1998) for string quartet and harmonium. This sprawling one-movement work begins with a series of short sections with varying textures, all held together by a slow but flexible pulse, that build toward a tremendous climax about three-quarters of the way through the work. For Colpa, this peak is "unnerving"

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and “nightmarish,” but to this listener the long buildup might equally express a moment of religious ecstasy. After the climax, the pulse subsides, and a calm coda – perhaps nostalgic, perhaps simply reflective – leads to a slow fadeout.

The most recent work on this CD, *Scales of Joy and Sorrow* for piano trio (2007), is a beautiful piece, but it is ultimately less successful. The most gripping elements of the earlier works are the constantly varying textures and timbres. Given the unsustained nature of the piano sound, the medium of the piano trio simply does not allow for that type of subtlety. Nonetheless, the excellent Gryphon Trio provides a heartfelt and energetic rendition of the work.

Overall, this disc contains important works by one of Canada’s leading composers. Given the excellence of the playing, I urge anyone with an interest in Canadian or contemporary music to obtain this CD. All four works are worth a listen, and those who are studying these pieces will find plenty of food for thought with these performances. My one major reservation is the great similarities between these four works. In the future, I see myself pulling out this CD to listen to single works, but probably not the entire CD in one sitting.

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