

Winged Creatures

Abels, Danzi, Puckett, Saint-Saens
Demarre McGill, fl; Anthony McGill, cl; Chicago
Youth Symphony/ Allen Tinkham
Cedille 187—59 minutes

Seattle Symphony Principal Flute Demarre McGill and New York Philharmonic Principal Clarinet Anthony McGill visit their hometown of Chicago to record another album for Cedille. Members of the Chicago Youth Symphony (CYSO), led by their Music Director Allen Tinkham, lend their talents to the project.

The repertoire for flute, clarinet, and orchestra is small; but the McGill brothers are inspiring composers to expand it. The middle of the program consists of the two best known contributions, both from the 19th Century: the Danzi *Sinfonia Concertante*, written late in his career, and the Saint-Saens 'Tarantella', a youthful effort first presented in Paris at a private party given by the retired Gioachino Rossini.

The opening and closing pieces are commissions for the same medium. The opening work is *Winged Creatures*, a single-movement piece by Michael Abels (b. 1962), a widely respected California-based composer of opera and orchestral works who recently gained fame for his first film score, a chilling soundscape to the Jordan Peele Academy Award winning horror movie *Get Out* (2017). The closing work is *Concerto Duo*, a programmatic three-movement piece by Joel Puckett (b. 1977), a critically acclaimed composer who currently serves as the Chair of Music Theory, Ear Training, and Piano Skills at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

As expected from the McGill brothers, the presentation is very rewarding. The Abels and the Puckett are vibrantly orchestrated cinematic pieces that will immediately grab the listener; and the Danzi and the Saint-Saens are rendered with the delight, charm, and fervor that concertgoers have come to expect. Demarre and Anthony are fully professional as usual, offering beautiful timbres, elegant phrasing, and fluid technique. The CYSO is a bit patchy in the Danzi and the Saint-Saens—even highly experienced players have nowhere to hide—but the ensemble shines brightly in the Abels and the Puckett, rendering these complex scores with skill and conviction.

HANUDEL

Grand Duo

Guastavino, Setaccioli, Weber
Cristina Mateo Saez, cl; Vivian Fan, p
Soundset 1108—61 minutes

The young prize-winning Spanish clarinetist and recent Colburn Conservatory graduate Cristina Mateo Saez teams up with Dr. Vivian Fan, the Director of Accompanying at Colburn, for her first solo album. They begin with Italian composer Giacomo Setaccioli (1868-1925) and his late romantic and rarely heard Clarinet Sonata in E-flat (1921). They finish with Argentine composer Carlos Guastavino's increasingly popular neo-romantic sonata (1970). In between, they perform an early romantic masterpiece for their medium: the *Grand Duo Concertante* of Carl Maria von Weber.

The recital is very strong. Saez boasts an operatic tone, wonderful clarity, expressive phrasing, and nimble fingers; and Fan manages each score with great technique, superb instincts, and an orchestra-size palette of volume and color. Beneath the vibrant charisma, though, much of the presentation says very little and overlooks special moments. Sometimes Fan pushes the music where it needs to go; but the soloist simply needs more life experience. Saez is a huge talent and a potential superstar.

HANUDEL

Palimpsest

Bach, McKinley, Piazzolla, Ravel, Zorn
Richard Stoltzman, cl; Mika Stoltzman, Hector
Del Curto, perc; Pedro Giraud, db
Avie 2409—59 minutes

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines "palimpsest" as "writing material used one or more times after earlier writing has been erased" and "something having usually diverse layers or aspects apparent beneath the surface". Richard Stoltzman explores these concepts in his latest album with his wife, celebrated Japanese marimbist Mika Stoltzman, and Argentine musicians and fellow Grammy winners Hector Del Curto on bandoneon and Pedro Giraud on double bass.

The program includes the Ravel *Pavane for a Dead Princess* arranged for clarinet and marimba; the Bach *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* arranged for clarinet, marimba, and bandoneon; the Piazzolla *Fuga y Misterio* arranged for clarinet, marimba, bandoneon, and bass; and three blues duets for clarinet and marimba by the late American composer and jazz pianist William Thomas McKinley.