

fifteenth-century poet Florencia del Pinar, the first Spanish woman poet known by name, and uses the poet's identification with a captive partridge (symbol of female sexuality) to refer both to the restrictions on women's lives in general and more specifically on their sexuality.

A question was raised about the use of the term "traditional" to refer to works whose texts clearly date from post-industrial times. In ethnomusicological circles, it is customary to use the term to refer to works that have been passed down by oral tradition, and are by unknown authors, even if they are relatively recent. The more recent traditional pieces on this recording include *Una noche al lunar*, which mentions steamships, and *Adiyo kerida*, which is in the style of an early twentieth-century tango.

In keeping with Zorzal's vision of crosscultural and crosstemporal crossroads, the traditional pieces are arranged for historical instruments—many of which would not have been originally used for these styles—within a modern sense of harmony and form. For all of the arranged works that were learned from oral tradition (the Sephardic songs, folk song, and *nueva canción*), the melody and texts were not altered, but the instrumental and vocal harmonies were composed by the Artistic Director. For the Baroque works, the continuo parts (harpsichord or guitar) were added to the preserved composed vocal and bass lines. Percussion parts draw on contemporary Latin American folk practices.

### Carol Barnett: *The World Beloved: A Bluegrass Mass*

VocalEssence Singers and Monroe Crossing, conducted by Philip Brunelle; assistant conductor Sigrid Johnson; piano accompanist Charles Kemper. Clarion Records CLR931CD (2007)

JOAN DEVEE DIXON

In the realm of twentieth and twenty-first century classical music, rarely is a new work declared a "masterwork" soon after its premiere. Such is the case, however, with Carol Barnett's *The World Beloved: Bluegrass Mass*. Commissioned by Mike and Kay McCarthy for Philip Brunelle and VocalEssence in 2007, this vibrant work successfully blends the bluegrass band Monroe Crossing with one of America's best choral ensembles. Performances of Barnett's *Bluegrass Mass* have spread like wildfire across the USA.

The libretto by Marisha Chamberlain is, in and of itself, a treasure. Imagine standard mass movements (*Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei*) interspersed

with verses of a folk ballad, a *Gloria* praising God "for feather, fur, for scale and fin," and a *Credo* affirming "Oh, I do believe a place awaits us far across the Jordan." This is not the text of the Roman Missal! The ballad recounts the Biblical story of Adam and Eve in a manner similar to an Appalachian storyteller. The work begins, "They say, They say God loved the world so dear, He set aside His crown," and ends, "They say **God** loved the world so dear, **She** set aside **Her** crown," leaving some listeners perplexed and others in shock!

The pairing of Chamberlain's texts with Barnett's music makes an inseparable team (imagine Rodgers without Hammerstein). The music uplifts the poetry and interweaves the chorus and band into a masterful patchwork. One might expect simple harmonies and chords from a bluegrass piece for choir, but this is not the case. The harmonies are intricate and the rhythms are complex and, at times, rapid-fire. The *Kyrie* begins with a *fortissimo* "Mercy! Mercy!"—far from a quiet, repentant tone. Shifting meters and accented banjo chords propel the music forward. The *Sanctus*, set entirely in Latin, is anchored by a syncopated soprano/alto ostinato—again, not what one might expect. The musical setting of the opening ballad is expanded between subsequent movements, first adding a female voice and, eventually, the entire chorus. The lyrical and poignant *Agnus Dei*, sung a cappella, could easily stand on its own (as could several of the movements). Balancing the *Agnus* is a melancholy instrumental interlude, "Art Thou Weary?"

Hearing the work on the CD, one might not realize the female soloist (narrator) is from the band, not the choir. In true bluegrass style, Lisa Fuglie (lead vocals, fiddle, and mandolin), brings her distinctive voice to the forefront, while sharing the microphone with Mark Anderson (string bass and mandolin), Art Blackburn (vocals and guitar), Benji Fleming (banjo), and Matt Thompson (vocals, fiddle, and mandolin). One can only imagine how much Bill Monroe (the group's namesake) would have enjoyed this ensemble.

The liner notes describe how strange it was for the Monroe Crossing musicians to receive a printed score. They largely learned the piece by rote from MIDI files provided by Barnett. One player's score arrived from Kinko bound backwards (and he still uses it that way!). Regardless of their discomfort with notated scores, these folk musicians are as finely-tuned as any classically trained ensemble.

Carol Barnett, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, is not new to the "choral music scene," working for eight years as the staff composer for Dale Warland. Still, this work has brought her to the forefront of American composers. Her prolific list of compositions is gaining new attention as a result, and rightly so ([www.carolbarnett.net](http://www.carolbarnett.net)). The

recording, produced at Studio M, Minnesota Public Radio in Saint Paul, is exceptional. Other recordings by VocalEssence ([www.vocalessence.com](http://www.vocalessence.com)) and Monroe Crossing ([www.monroecrossing.com](http://www.monroecrossing.com)) can be found online, as can their exhaustive tour itineraries.

As one might expect, this “crossover” piece has attracted an unusual audience, bringing bluegrass musicians to choir concerts and causing choral directors to call upon banjo players. If you have any interest in the American choral or bluegrass scenes, this recording is not to be missed.

As if the *Bluegrass Mass* were not be enough (and it certainly could have been), the disc includes several bonus tracks: *O Praise the Lord of Heaven* (1794) by

William Billings, *The Paper Reeds by the Brooks* (1936) by Randall Thompson, *Sing, My Soul, His Wondrous Love* (1955) by Ned Rorem, *Heritage* (1990) by William Bolcom, *I Cannot Dance, O Lord* (1998) by Aaron Jay Kernis, *Zuni Sunrise Song* (1995) by Brent Michael Davids, *Water Night* by Eric Whitacre, and *My Soul's Been Anchored* (traditional, arr. 1998) by Moses Hogan. Other well-known Minnesotans are also represented: *Beneath These Alien Stars* (1988) by Libby Larsen and *The Day is Done* (2006) by Stephen Paulus. These tracks were first recorded for *Saint Paul Sunday Morning*. While these are all enticing and captivating (in addition to being fine works and recordings in and of themselves), after listening to thirty minutes of bluegrass, some of

## Response: CD Review

### Meira Warshauer: *Streams in the Desert*

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra with the Slovak Philharmonic Chorus, Kirk Trevor, conductor. Albany Records, Troy 973.

Reviewed by Susan Slesinger in volume 14, no. 2 (2008).

Thank you for publishing a review of my CD, *Streams in the Desert*, music for orchestra and chorus inspired by the Torah, recently released on Albany Records. I would like to comment on some of the issues discussed in the review regarding the liturgical context for *Shacharit* (Morning Service), a major work on the CD.

*Shacharit* is a personal interpretation of the Jewish morning service which blends Orthodox, Conservative, and Jewish Renewal influences. The reviewer rightly observes that I selected what I felt were the most prominent texts from the much longer service. While this setting with large orchestra and mixed voices is intended for concert performance, portions could be adapted for use during a Sabbath or weekday service, depending on the custom of the congregation. (Orthodox and most Conservative synagogues allow instruments only on weekdays, not on the Sabbath. Reform, most Jewish Renewal, and some Conservative synagogues do use instruments on the Sabbath. All but Orthodox allow mixed voices.)

The reviewer felt that the sections of *Shacharit* seemed unrelated musically. While movements vary stylistically and express a wide range of emotions, the musical language and overall structure for the

composition are linked to the traditional *Ashkenazi* prayer modes for the service. For example, the *Shochen Ad* mode is associated with the early part of the service. Its contour of A-E-C-D provides the underlying harmonic relationship between the major sections, as well as motivic focus in the first two sections, *Baruch Sheamar* (Blessed is the One who spoke) and *Kol Haneshama* (all who breathe). As the composition progresses through the service, other modes are used, referencing the prayer modes traditionally employed in those sections. A more complete description of my use of prayer modes in this setting may be found in the program notes for *Shacharit* at my Website, [meirawarshauer.com](http://meirawarshauer.com).

The reviewer describes the chorus in the *Amidah* (standing prayer) section as “wordless,” noting difficulty in discerning the text. There actually are words, and the text is provided in the liner notes. The chorus sings “*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* (holy, holy, holy)” with an elongated “sh” sound to evoke angel wings or a sense of mystery.

The *Kaddish* (sanctification) at the end of the piece is not the Mourner’s *Kaddish*, but the Reader’s *Kaddish*, which marks the end of the Jewish prayer service. It is celebratory, as the reviewer rightly notes and that the words indicate. The Reader’s *Kaddish* is chanted, usually at a quick pace, while the Mourner’s *Kaddish* (with almost the same text) is spoken. This celebratory *Kaddish* ends with *Oseh Shalom* (make peace), which is followed by a quiet closing prayer reprising *Oseh Shalom*, as described in the liner notes.

I appreciate the reviewer’s attempt to place *Shacharit* in its liturgical context. I hope this explanation clarifies some of the questions she raised. *Meira Warshauer*

the tunes and piano accompaniments seem strangely out of place.

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### ***Soliloquies: New Japanese and Chinese Music for Harpsichord and Organ***

Calvert Johnson, harpsichord and organ.  
Compositions by women composers Makiko Asaoka, Asako Hirabayashi, Pei-lun Vicky Chang, Wang An-Ming, Karan Tanaka, and Reiko Arima. Also featured are works by Isaac Nagao, Chan Ka Nin, and Toru Takemitsu. Albany Records TROY1049 (2008)

#### **HEATHER STROHSCHHEIN**

Cultural and artistic exchanges have existed between East Asia and the United States for centuries. In Meiji Era Japan (1868-1912), attitudes toward Western music were divided between “advocacy of a wholesale adoption of Western music [and] advocacy of modernizing Japanese music by westernizing it while preserving its traditional essence” (Yuko, 777).<sup>1</sup> In early twentieth-century China, composers who had been trained in Europe, the United States, or Japan sought to “combine Chinese melodies with the Western system of major and minor keys and harmony” (Zhou, 339).<sup>2</sup> These ideas are manifested in *Soliloquies*, in which keyboardist Calvert Johnson performs with great technical finesse and rhythmic skill on a 1986 Anderson Duprée French Double Harpsichord 8.8.4 and the Manuel Rosales organ in St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta, Georgia. This review covers the works by the women composers.

Makiko Asaoka’s *Four Pieces for Harpsichord* (1994) begins with *The Prelude*, featuring two contrasting ideas: horizontal “plucking,” reminiscent of the Japanese koto, and vertical chords. The piece explores the melodic range of the harpsichord while the “melodic motive is presented in various transformations, including sequence and inversion” (liner notes). *Les Tourbillions* (The Whirlwind), upbeat and bitonal, seems to stumble over itself in its excitement. Slow, slightly introspective melodies compete with dissonant chords in *Caprice*. *Rio* employs meter shifts “5/8 (3+2 or 2+3) to 7/8 (3+2+2) to 4/8 (2+2), perhaps a reminder of the

large Japanese community of Brazil.” Intense, driving chords and sequential motives create structural continuity.

A more recent piece, *Sonatina No. 1 for Harpsichord* (2001), makes use of similar structural components. Asako Hirabayashi also utilizes sequence and harsh, passionate chords. Barely a minute long, *Energiaco* crunches through snippets of melody. Fugue-like *Scherzando* introduces swing rhythms and explorations on a melody that is restated and expanded in various ranges. The final section, *Fantasy*, is built around a suggestive *idée fixe*.

Pei-lun Vicky Chang uses native folk melodies to introduce the organ to Taiwanese audiences. *Cloudy Sky*, originally scored for clarinet and organ, exploits a clarinet stop to produce a haunting folk tune. *Raining Night’s Flower* begins with a simple introduction which transforms into a hymn. Slow and beautiful, Chang’s *Suite for Organ* is highly accessible and stands out among the more modern-sounding selections. Wang An-Ming says of her *Fantasy for Organ* (1988): “the composition depicts a person’s desire to probe the deeper meanings of life through fantasy and mysticism.” A persistent “mystic” theme is heard throughout in various incarnations.

While Karen Tanaka is “acclaimed as one of the leading living composers in Japan,” this listener is rather ambivalent about her contribution to *Soliloquies*; in each case, her description of the music in no way is reflected the actual music. In *Jardin des Herbes for Harpsichord*, she seeks to portray “the aromatic qualities of three distinct herbs in delicate and evocative terms.” *Rosemary* is built around a rhythmic figure that twitters up and down the keyboard. It is highly repetitive and sequential and left this listener cold. *Sweet Violet* features an unrolling descending melody more evocative of falling petals than “early spring flowers.” *Lavender* is a minimalist piece; it begins with two notes played in rapid succession. From these two notes, Tanaka builds various chords while constantly maintaining the rapid-fire trills. The movement is described as having “tranquility and purity,” but the only tranquility I experienced was when the piece ended.

Inspired by *gagaku* (traditional Japanese court music) and a journey initiated 400 years ago by an ancestor, Reiko Arima composed ‘*Miyabi*’ *Ballad for Organ* (1986). Structurally a rondo, the ballad features imposing chords, a brief fughetta, and a recurring “heavenly voice.”

Women have a long history of musical innovation in East Asia. Chinese mythology attributes the first musical instrument, the *sheng* (mouth organ), to Nüwa, the mother goddess. In Japan, the creation of *kabuki* (theater form) and *kouta* (short song) is usually