

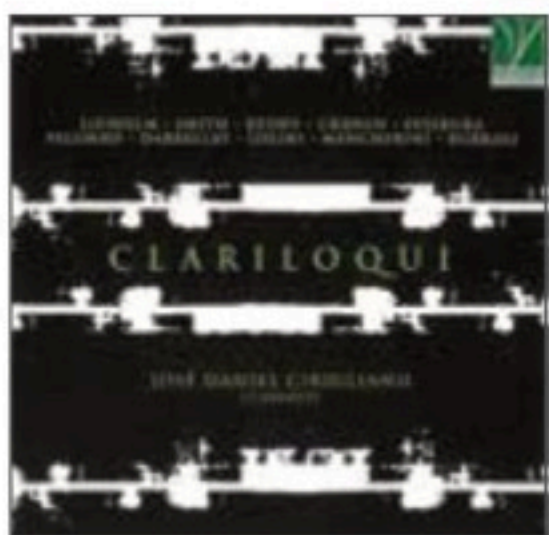
The Clarinet



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Clariloqui. Josè Daniel Cirigliano, clarinets. I. Lidholm: *Amicizia* for solo clarinet; W. O. Smith: *Epitaphs* for double clarinet; S. Reddy: *Game I for Lila* for solo clarinet; S. Cronin: *Angelus* for bass clarinet; D. Fujikura: *Sandpiper* for E♭ clarinet; V. Palumbo: *Pulse* for solo clarinet; J-L. Darbellay: *Flash* for bass clarinet; R. Lolini: *Capriccio* for E♭ clarinet; F. Mencherini:

Crazy Jay Blue for solo clarinet; T. Burkali: *Capriccietto* for solo clarinet. Da Vinci Classics, C00643. Total Time: 56:30.

Recorded by clarinetist Josè Daniel Cirigliano, *Clariloqui* is a wonderful mix of contemporary clarinet literature. According to the liner notes, the artist is an “experimenter of the extended techniques of the clarinet and his ‘family’” and this album definitely showcases that. All the pieces demonstrate a wide range of techniques such as microtones, multiphonics, and slap tongue. Not only that, the album also includes pieces for B♭, E♭, bass clarinet, and even the double clarinet.

The entire album is also a wonderful mix of composers from various locations such as South Africa, Sweden, and Japan. Although the entire selection of pieces was splendid, there were some that especially stuck out. The third piece on the album, *Game I for Lila* by Surendran Reddy, begins with extremely smooth arpeggios before going into a quote from *Rhapsody in Blue*. It then moves into a catchy, syncopated groove and continues to move back and forth between these two motives.

The next track on the album, *Angelus* by Stephen Cronin, starts off with timbral trills within the altissimo range of the bass clarinet that are interrupted by a flourish of more aggressive gestures. Cirigliano has magnificent control within the altissimo range of the instrument, with a full, yet delicate sound. It was so clear, I had to check to make sure it was in fact for bass clarinet.

Another piece that stuck out was *Crazy Jay Blue* by Fernando Mencherini. The piece consists of several gestures resembling “bird calls” that utilize techniques such as double tonguing and multiphonics. Cirigliano plays each of these “bird calls” with such finesse that you feel as though you are outside in nature with actual birds calling to each other. According to the liner notes, the piece was commissioned by Ciro Scarponi who notes that “the effect is poetic.”

Although the variety of selections and the performance by Cirigliano are absolutely stellar, the recording quality could have been improved. Many of the tracks have a different recording quality and overall sound, as if with a different microphone setup or different room. That being said, I was really impressed with the recording quality on *Epitaphs* for double clarinet by William O. Smith. The balance between the two clarinets (played simultaneously by Cirigliano) was exceptional. The liner notes include a great picture of Cirigliano playing this piece with two microphones strapped to his legs, which would explain the well-balanced recording.

Overall this is a great album, and those who enjoy contemporary clarinet music will want to add it to their collection.

—Jeremy Wohletz



American Stories. Anthony McGill, clarinet; Pacifica Quartet: Simin Ganatra, violin; Austin Hartman, violin; Mark Holloway, viola; Brandon Vamos, cello. R. Danielpour: *Four Angels*; J. Lee III: *Quintet*; B. Shirley: *High Sierra Sonata*; V. Coleman: *Shotgun Houses*. Cedille Records, CDR 90000 216. Total Time: 72:58.

With a brilliant blend of virtuosity and intriguing new pieces, *American Stories* is one of the most important albums in recent history for clarinet and strings. This project is storytelling at its finest, both in regard to composition and performance. These are the stories of tragedy and triumph; of pain and beauty blended into an exquisite masterpiece. Anthony McGill and the Pacifica Quartet make their points well in this project, picking compelling and fresh pieces and then championing them in an irresistible and chic style.

These works are so idiomatic and significant for the clarinet repertoire that it’s hard to imagine that they haven’t always existed. The album begins with Richard Danielpour’s exquisite *Four Angels*, composed as a commission for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in April 2020. A profound hymn to the four young girls murdered in a hate crime in a Birmingham, Alabama, church in 1963, the piece is an encapsulation of a dark chapter in our American story, combining moments of light that capture the innocence of the young

girls with glimpses of horror and despair. McGill and the Pacifica Quartet are seamlessly intertwined in their tone and nuance, speaking simple truths in a soul-wrenching musical journey.

James Lee’s *Quintet* for clarinet and strings is a truly American story, spinning a tapestry of voices from “an inverted shofar theme” and sounds of a pow-wow. McGill’s technical mastery and emotional depth as a player is on full display here as he sings, cries, growls, and laughs his way through the piece. He takes care of any fundamental aspects of playing the clarinet so perfectly that it sounds like pure, effortless expression.

Ben Shirley’s *High Sierra Sonata* tells the story of one of the most mercurial and exquisite locations in America, the High Sierras. Spanning desert, alpine terrain, and the highest and lowest parts of the United States, this landscape encompasses the full range of conditions both in nature and human emotions and is evocative of Shirley’s inner landscape.

The music on these tracks reflects the quick changes found at geographical and emotional extremes: sunny in the morning, and ferocious within the hour. This is musical storytelling at the highest level and McGill and the Pacifica Quartet are there for every change in character and emotion, adeptly portraying the internal landscapes that we all experience. McGill’s technical and expressive acumen here are nothing short of breathtaking, displaying the full expressive range of the clarinet with ease.

The album concludes with the brilliant *Shotgun Houses* by Valerie Coleman. Coleman’s compositional genius is on full display