

August. Manhattan smells funny, and you don't dare go to a concert, the musicians' psychiatrists are on vacation. Here are some CDs and records people sent me that made me do double takes. I listened to Braxton, Soldier Quartet, and Worlds of Love on good old black vinyl. The rest I heard on CD, save for an advance tape of Nicolas Collins's latest. Since that's not his intended software, I spared him the indignity of MUST TO AVOID.

Anthony Braxton: Quartet (London) 1985. A three-disc live recording from Braxton's tour with pianist Marilyn Crispell, bassist Mark Dresser, and drummer Gerry Hemingway, this is an impressive document. Three things amaze me: the way Braxton's clarinet angles across the universe and zips back to the initial focus, the exact way his players follow every hairpin curve, and Braxton's ability to evenly sustain 12 good ideas across six LP sides, nonstop. Braced by Braxton's "pulse track structures," the music never loses sight of its point, never obscures that point with show-off virtuosity, and that makes for good listening. **A MINUS**

Nicolas Collins: 100 of the World's Most Beautiful Melodies (Trace Elements) No *Reader's Digest* Boston Pops collection, but rather 42 duets with 15 downtown regulars. I had hoped for an improv-imitating computer piece, the way Collins did this work with the Downtown Ensemble. Instead, he's settling debts with Anthony Coleman, Zeena Parkins, Zorn, Sharp, and the rest of the gang. They play their two minutes, Collins recycles their sounds and those of radios, birds, fish, and radiators through his computer-trombone, and the result sounds like rejected tape splices from *Kurzweilen*. You're supposed to use your "random select" button to create a new progression with each listening, but that probably won't make it less dated. **C**

CDCM Computer Music Series Vol. 2 (Centaur) Five intriguing pieces using computer-logic processes. In Richard Teitelbaum's *Golem*, robotic, Hebrew voices and computer drones emerge over an environmental tape of birds chirping, ...

Consumer Guide

B Y K Y L E G A N N

weren't American. Keith Jarrett solos, but it's a rousing, romantic performance, and the flip side, *Suite for Violin, Piano, and Small Orchestra*, is a Javanese soul reincarnated as Stravinsky. **A**

Loretta Goldberg: Tone Over Tone (Opus One) A CD of microtonal works, played by Goldberg on two keyboards at once, it leans heavily on quarter tones, once the king of alternate tunings, now the orphan. The best works here are atmospheric. The electronics in Sorrel Hays's *Bits* stick out disconcertingly at first, but once they're over she sprinkles conflicting notes in DX-7 and piano with happy nonchalance. John Eaton's nerve-cutting *Microtonal Fantasy* for two pi-



PICK: Feldman

anos is the "classic," but Constance Cooper's *Where the River Turns Like an Elbow Into Dusk*, as wandering as its title, invests the medium with more poetry. Quality varies, but the disc drenches you in intervals you're not used to. **C**

The Gyuto Monks: Freedom Chants From the Roof of the World (Rykodisc) For 55 minutes, the monks of Gyuto Tantric University in Kathmandu chant their unrelenting, gravelly, monotone hymns, something everyone should hear at least once. Then, at the monks' request,

repertoire worthy of their lightning-quick sticks and elegant bow pyrotechnics. Even the non-New England works are in a consonant, spirited idiom that harks back to Quincy Porter, most typical in Thomas Oboe Lee's rollicking work named after the duo. Scott Wheeler's Henry Cowellish theme gives a sharp focus to the abstractness of his *Lyric Variations*, while Brooklynite Robert Aldridge adds tabla to his *threedance*, seamlessly merging bluegrass fiddling, classical counterpoint, and Indian drumming. **B**

Michael McNabb: Invisible Cities (Wergo) Following Italo Calvino's dreamlike novel of the same title, this piano-sax-tape work by a Californian stu-



PICK: Oliveros, Dempster, Panaiotis

dent of John Chowning and Betsy Jolas is the most ingratiating release yet in Wergo's digital music series. The score (for a Brenda Way dance that included a robot) has some ear-catching meters, scintillating piano writing, and a Terry Rileyish modality; sort of a second-generation *Poppy Nogood*, though computer-colored with glitzy timbres. Light stuff, sometimes simpleminded, but it's the right weight for dance, and its propulsive rhythm should have a wider audience appeal than the austere cover suggests. **B MINUS**

nary recording, accordionist Oliveros, trombonist Dempster, and conceptual artist Panaiotis descended into a 14-foot cistern, 186 feet in diameter with a 45-second reverberation time, north of Seattle, that once held two million gallons of water. There they played with the harmonic series, leaned on poignant ninth and 11th harmonics, banged pipes to savor the thundering decay, and made a wash of deep, deep, deep tones that, played loudly, will make your floor hum. (Mabou Mines is using one of the improvisations in its new *King Lear* production.) I play this disc with the "repeat" button on, even while asleep. **A**

Henri Pousseur: Couleurs Croisees (Ricercar) Pousseur, musico-phenomenologist, always struck me as the most individual and progressive of the serialists, and this, his first recorded orchestral score (though written in 1967), confirms it. Inspired by an American residency and drawn (inaudibly until the final minute) from "We Shall Overcome," *Couleurs* is Pousseur's *Sinfonia*, a sprawling collage integrating tonal and posttonal materials with a clarity and smoothness rarely equaled since. Under Pierre Bartholomee, the Liege Orchestra also plays the similar *Aquatilis* by Jean-Louis Robert, who died at 31. **B PLUS**

Soldier String Quartet: Sequence Girls (Rift) This is the Soldier's strongest work I've heard, free of the balance problems that plague them in concert. The first violin wails in the gospel number *If I had it to give*, and in the title cut the upper strings mimic speech inflections humorously. Dave Soldier's Delta blues arrangements, especially Skip James's *20-20* with its sprung rhythms and well-tuned glissandi, are more convincing than the Kronos's because he works within his medium's limitations; use of a trap set in rock numbers frees them from wasting energy trying to do what strings can't. I especially like the Schoenbergian rock of *Five Little Monsters*, whose good ideas deserve longer development. **B**

Richard Teitelbaum: Concerto Grosso (Hat ART) Strictly 21st century stuff here. In the Baroque concerto grosso, soloists and orchestra alternate; here, Brax-

Kurzweilen. You're supposed to use your "random select" button to create a new progression with each listening, but that probably won't make it less dated. **C**

CDCM Computer Music Series Vol. 2

(Centaur) Five intriguing pieces using computer-logic processes. In Richard Teitelbaum's *Golem*, robotic, Hebrew voices and computer drones emerge over an environmental tape of birds chirping, an enchanting futuristic dawn. *Lady Neil's Dumpe* by Martin Bresnick digitally disintegrates a Renaissance keyboard piece into lively abstract tunes. Less linear, Neil Rolnick's *What Is the Use?* transforms sampled words into a hesitant plucked samba. Scott Lindroth's low-key *Syntax* evolves minimalist patterns of noises like a cat saying "hello" into dancelike electronic-blip textures, and Rick Baitz's *Kaleidocycles* spins perky computer rhythms. **B MINUS**

Morton Feldman: Three Voices (New Albion)

"Who'd have thought that snow falls?" sings Joan LaBarbara over and over in whispering counterpoint with herself in this 50-minute continuum of chromatic motives. At 90 minutes, her early performances were slower than the marked score, but in this incredible vocal tour de nonforce she's crept up to correct tempo. Feldman's soft music has been begging for CD release, and the final gliding vocal waltz on Frank O'Hara's words is as surprising (and as gorgeous) as anything he wrote. Moving suddenly between static crystallization points, *Three Voices* sounds minimalist one moment at a time, which is to say it's not minimalist at all—it's just Feldman. **A PLUS**

Lou Harrison: Piano Concerto (New World)

Brahms is Harrison's model, he says, for his Northwest Asian (European) mode, and there's an affinity with the D Minor Concerto in the opening trills, but there's also plenty of gamelan patterning in this concerto for justly tuned piano, and a lot of good old '30s Americana. The broad-arched Allegro is generous with great tunes, the closing *moto perpetuo* is a jewel, and the thing would be standard repertoire tomorrow if the composer

title, invests the medium with more poetry. Quality varies, but the disc drenches you in intervals you're not used to. **C**

The Gyuto Monks: Freedom Chants From the Roof of the World (Rykodisc)

For 55 minutes, the monks of Gyuto Tantric University in Kathmandu chant their unrelenting, gravelly, monotone hymns, something everyone should hear at least once. Then, at the monks' request, they're followed by Kitaro, Philip Glass, and Mickey Hart playing a cosmic chorale of minor triads, spooky drumming, and whooshing sounds. It's awesome, transcendent, and, well, cheap. If minimalism had been around in the days of Constantine, would Christianity have survived? No one sophisticated enough to discover Buddhist chant will fail to see through this marketing ploy. **C PLUS**

David Hykes/Djamchid Chemirani: Windhorse Riders (New Albion)

Recent ingestion of red meat may interfere with appreciation of Hykes's Harmonic Chant, a Tibetan-inspired whistling of overtones above a sung fundamental. But Hykes is an awfully suave singer, his technique newly ornamented and perfectly honed, and the tabla and tambura of his multinational ensemble recapture the Arabic-tinged solitude of pre-Trobador Provence. It tries to be haunting, and if you'll leap into lotus position and play along, it succeeds. **C PLUS**

Annea Lockwood: A Soundmap of the Hudson River (Lovely Music)

Thoreau would have regretted that he didn't live to hear this music. Lockwood once made thunder from a cat's purr; now she's recorded the Hudson River at 15 locales and blended them into a tactile tone poem. Feldspar Brook is a vivid trickle, the Opalescent River is a dense roar, Stuyvesant's tugboat horns offer an intermittent drone, and at 30:41 a nearby bird vocalizes. Indifferent Nature's magnified liquid friction will tickle you into an un-Manhattanish state of mind. **A**

Marimolin (GM) This Boston-based duo, Nancy Zeltsman on marimba and Sharan Leventhal on violin, has commissioned a

(for a Brenda Way dance that included a robot) has some ear-catching meters, scintillating piano writing, and a Terry Rileyish modality; sort of a second-generation *Poppy Nogood*, though computer-colored with glitzy timbres. Light stuff, sometimes simpleminded, but it's the right weight for dance, and its propulsive rhythm should have a wider audience appeal than the austere cover suggests.

B MINUS

Meredith Monk: Our Lady of Late (Wergo)

Recorded in 1973, this charming work supplies a missing seminal point in Monk's recorded career. As fans may recall, Monk here sings harmonics over a drone she makes by drawing a wetted finger around a crystal goblet's rim, the pitch of which gradually rises, over 43 minutes, from a quarter-tone flat E to G as she sips the water. Though these vocal-sound songs were 16 years in the can (an allegedly inferior performance was once issued in limited edition on Minona), they sound remarkably like what she's doing today. Why change when you got it right the first time? **A MINUS**

R. Carlos Nakai: Sundance Season (Celestial Harmonies)

The Navajo-Ute flutist's sixth CD; this is his first move away from the American Indian specialty Canyon label. It being a quasi-debut, Nakai steers away from the New Ageism of his more commercial work and pulls out every stop. He sings the most Gregorian-sounding native chant I've heard (accompanied once by rain), improvises myriad agile flute arabesques, drums gently a cappella, and closes with a sweet demonstration of his famous bone whistle made from the ulna of a golden eagle. That whistle only has five notes and I could've stood less reverb, but Nakai's stoic melodic sense is doubly anchored in tradition and individuality. **B**

Pauline Oliveros/Stuart Dempster/Panaotitis: Deep Listening (New Albion)

When I put this on, I was in a foul mood, the kind in which it first occurs to a person to become a critic. Within half an hour, my *contemptus mundi* had been vibrated away. To make this extraordi-

medium's limitations; use of a trap set in rock numbers frees them from wasting energy trying to do what strings can't. Especially like the Schoenbergian rock of *Five Little Monsters*, whose good ideas deserve longer development. **B**

Richard Teitelbaum: Concerto Grosso (Hat ART)

Strictly 21st century stuff here. In the Baroque concerto grosso, soloists and orchestra alternate; here, Braxton, Teitelbaum, and George Lewis are answered by an orchestra of computer-run pianos and synthesizers. If our heroes improvise beautifully, the computer seems slow-witted, yet its colors are exotic, and trying to catch it in the act of regurgitating its tone-food will bend your brain. Still, the most beautiful Teitelbaum piece I know is on the CDCM computer disc listed above. **B**

Claude Vivier: Zipangu (Les Editions Doberman-Yppan)

Canadian music is in naive, vigorous good health, and Vivier, murdered at 34 in 1983, was one of its most promising figures. A Stockhausen student and Asian traveler, he patterned his idiom after gamelan and Islamic chant, yet retained the serialists' exquisite sense of texture. The title cut is a mercurial string orchestra work of evaporating melodies, and *Paramirabo* is a colorful recitative for flute, ensemble, and whistling. Whirling energy, calm as a dervish. (Address: C.P. 2021, Saint Nicolas, Quebec, Canada GOS 3L0.) **A MINUS**

The Worlds of Love (Review)

If ballads of sexual dependency are your thing, David Garland's improv group, with Cinni Cole on banjo and synth and Ikue Mori on drum machines, creates an ingratiating digital-folk-love-song tradition. "One of Two" states the case against loneliness, "Carousel d'Amour" has all the allure of a '50s movie about Paris, and "Holding Hands" is a nonsynchronous folk improv I can't hear often enough. Garland is somehow both mild-mannered and totally uninhibited, Cole is homey, and the electronic/banjo arrangements (very well recorded) are funky enough to chase away self-pity. Only problem here is, Mori sings, and she can't. **B PLUS**