

that virtually every bassoonist has encountered at one time or another. Some of the *Etudes* are given loosely programmatic titles like “Longing” for No. 5, “Breezy” for No. 6, “Dreaming” for No. 10, and “Celebration” for No. 14 which are helpful hints to interpretation. Number 13 is a “Theme and Variations on a Friendly Home-Made Tune”, and “The ‘Right’ Etude” (based on the Stravinsky excerpt) is No. 16. But the most important quality of this collection is the fact that, like Milde’s *Etudes*, these are also fun, challenging works to play where one can feel that they are “getting better”, both musically and technically, as one works his or her way through them. Buy them! At \$15.00 for a future “classic”, how can one go wrong?



Oboe RECORDING REVIEWS

REVIEW BY ROGER WIESMEYER

Nashville, Tennessee

I would like to share with the readers of The Double Reed the gratitude I feel to the editor, Dan Stolper, for being so open to featuring a kind of musical experience different from the norm. It is because of this openness that some “light” can be shed on the music and the art form - improvisation - thereby making it more available to listeners and players, literally and figuratively in their own lives. I did know Dan to be an extremely kind, helpful, and patient instructor whom I was fortunate enough to study with at the Interlochen Arts Academy and Music Camp many years ago. This time I had the distinct feeling I would be giving Dan yet one more opportunity to further test his patience as a teacher and guide. Quite to the contrary, I found him to be just as I remembered - encouraging, inquisitive, and even nurturing in the process of bringing to light (on paper) this sonic “newborn”. Thank you, Dan, for all the kindness you have shown me and other oboists, now, and over all these years. - Marianne

How The Light Gets In (AG-118)

Marianne Osiel, oboe/English hornist

Robert Barrows (pipe organ)

Denman Maroney (prepared piano)

Jordan Rudess (synthesizer)

John Simon (piano)

Released: June, 2005

I found it a real pleasure to review Marianne Osiel’s new CD of oboe/English horn improvisational duets with keyboard. In taking on the job of “official reviewer”, it encouraged me to take my job as listener more seriously. It has led me to think again and again about the choices that were made, both the spontaneous ones with collaborators, as well as the slower, more deliberate ones, of editing this beautiful offering called, *How The Light Gets In*.*

As I write this, I’m listening to *How the Light Gets In* for the fifth time, each time finding new things to appreciate. When I first hit the play button, I had no idea what to expect. I guess if I were to freely associate on the phrase “oboe improvisation CD”, I would imagine oboe and wind chimes, with lots of whole tone and pentatonic scales that would encourage my brain to make beta waves as I sat in the lotus position, letting go of a thousand minor tensions at the end of my week. While the tempo and mood of much of the album might, in fact, be suitable for a yoga class, *How the Light Gets In* is such a bouquet of surprises as to keep me constantly wondering where I will be lead next and how I will get there. *How the Light Gets In* is not air pudding. It is real music and it is delightful.

When I first met Marianne, she was performing as tenured second oboist in the Nashville Symphony, and as a member of the community of singer-songwriters that is Nashville’s quiet gift to the musical world. I recall her beautiful oboe tone, and then how impressed I was when I finally got to hear her sing some of her original music. My jaw dropped, and in the middle of the fifth listen now, I am still slack-jawed at the beauty, daring, and even humor conjured with her musical co-conspirators.

My favorite aspect of the album is how this music constantly shifts moods. Each of the partnerships with the four keyboardists (Robert Barrows, Denman Maroney, Jordan Rudess, and John Simon) brings out different aspects of Marianne’s musicianship. Playing with Robert Barrows (pipe

organ) was my initial favorite, perhaps because when I was a kid, I wanted to play the pipe organ. Or perhaps it's because of fond memories I have of improvising with an organist friend of mine. Or perhaps it's because organists are trained and expected to improvise "classically". No matter - there is surely a deep grandeur to the expression that is very moving, with an epiphanic quality to the modulations, as if new vistas appear by the deft use of chromatic inflection.

Just when things might have gotten a little too heavy on the album, Marianne presents this lovely, easy dancing, "Unraveling" with John Simon at the piano - a reference to the joyful, harmonic buoyancy of Ravel. There is always an essential clarity and groundedness about the playing with Mr. Simon. *I Hear You Now* is the closest to a ballad on this recording - a sweet three-part song that, even with its slightly off-the-beaten-path "B" section, could easily find a second life in a "pop" setting.

I love the placement of *I Hear You Now* in the album order. Immediately before it, "Peace Chant", another collaboration with organist Robert Barrows, gives the impression of return and closure of the first section. We are transported from a mood of ecclesiastical mystery to a feeling of watching two accomplished songwriters sitting in the living room, connecting, playing, and seeing what comes out. This piece then, serves as the perfect foil for *Never Turning Bach*, the least traditional offering on the album.

Never Turning Bach is the most abstract of the seven collaborations, with "hyperpianist" (prepared piano), Denman Maroney. There is something uncomfortably funny about it. From the word "go" appears the bending pitch of the prepared piano, followed by the first "non"-entrance of the oboe (striking the nerve of every oboist who has gone for a note, only to be met with a "Dean Martin"). There are a couple of lovely Baroque-sounding fragments with Marianne's characteristic gorgeous tone, then she cavorts in her altissimo tessitura accompanied by a cembelom effect, finally putting a tag of an E \flat major chord on the end. *Never Turning Bach* is the musical equivalent of a Dali dreamscape.



Marianne Osiel

Even in the more transparent pieces, she pushes the envelope in unexpected ways, like the non-diminuendo on the last note of *Ode to a Black Widow*. Instead of a traditional taper which is in abundance throughout the album, she lowers the signal-to-noise ratio until the note is drowned in hiss. I imagine this could be one (or more) of these possibilities - an homage to the jazz greats for whom this was a common device, or thumbing her nose at classical convention and stuffiness. Then again it could be an allusion to the fragility of

what we do and how the tone we create, no matter how hard we work at it, are only just a few micro millimeters/seconds/weeks from not being there at all....

In some respects, the musical meetings with Jordan Rudess (synthesizer) are the most immediately pleasing. They have a "new age" quality which serves to help ground this album after some of the more opaque flights of fancy.

I like how the final track, *Offering*, ends the album with a simple gesture. This is paradoxical, as it is the only track that involves over-dubbing (three oboes, English horn, and John Simon on the piano). The tones that are played with sound much like the first stanza of *Wachet Auf* by J.S. Bach (is she exhorting us to awaken after the dream she has given us?). I love how, even though it starts in E \flat and ends up a major third higher, it actually feels *more* settled. No mean feat ... how did these musicians do that?

I highly recommend this album created by Marianne Osiel and these other dextrous and creative musicians as an "alternative" for the listener who has played and listened to everything else, and who finally wants a walk on the wild (yet still beautiful) side.

Roger Wiesmeyer, English hornist
Nashville Symphony Orchestra

*Reference to the chorus of the song by Leonard Cohen, *Anthem*

To order copies of this CD, see ad in back of this issue, or write Marianne directly, at:

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