

## Lucia Dlugoszewski



<i>Disparate Stairway Radical Other</i> (1995) .....	(21:22)
1. Phrase 1 .....	(2:00)
2. Phrase 2-B .....	(2:34)
3. Phrase 2-C Oblique 1 .....	(5:36)
4. Disparate 12-A .....	(2:08)
5. Disparate 13-B .....	(3:20)
6. Disparate 15 .....	(1:43)

7. *Disparate 16* ..... (3:53).  
 Dedicated to Mikhail Baryshnikov, Erick Hawkins (in memoriam), and Mary Norton Dorazio (in memoriam). Commissioned by The White Oak Dance Project for the dance *Journey of a Poet* by Erick Hawkins).  
 The White Oak Ensemble: Conrad Harris, Margaret Jones, violins; David J. Bursack, viola; Dorothy Lawson, cello

- Exacerbated Subtlety Concert (Why Does a Woman Love a Man?)* (1997, rev. 2000) ..... (17:51)
8. Part I ..... (5:52)  
 9. Part II ..... (5:16)  
 10. Part III ..... (3:12)  
 11. Part IV ..... (3:31)  
 Lucia Dlugoszewski, timbre piano
12. *Tender Theater Flight Nageire* (1971, rev. 1978) (21:52)  
 Gerard Schwarz, Edward Carroll, Norman Smith, trumpets; Robert Rouch, horn, David Langlitz, tenor trombone; David Taylor, bass trombone, Lucia Dlugoszewski, percussion;  
 Gerard Schwarz, conductor
13. *Space is a Diamond* 1970 ..... (10:39)  
 Gerard Schwarz, trumpet

Total Playing Time: 72:05

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## Notes

*"Far-out music of great delicacy, originality, and beauty of sound, also ingenious with regard to instrumental virtuosities and of unusually high level in its intellectual and poetic aspects."*

These remarks from Virgil Thomson's *American Music Since 1910* (1970) introduced many listeners to the music of Lucia Dlugoszewski in the 1970s. A search for LPs on the CRI, Candide, Nonesuch, and Folkways labels turned up continuously intriguing music, four compositions on four separate recordings. Not one of these records was exclusively devoted to her work in spite of the fact that as Thomson reported in 1970 she had already composed more than thirty works since the early 1950s. Throughout the next three decades she continued to compose and perform her works, yet only two compositions were released in the new digital format of compact discs. This CRI disc is the first collection to focus exclusively on her music. The four compositions presented here, two from the early 1970s and two from the late 1990s, offer clear demonstration that Lucia Dlugoszewski is long overdue for rediscovery and recognition as one of the most original and inspired composers of our time.

**Lucia Dlugoszewski** was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1934.<sup>1</sup> There she studied piano at the Detroit Conservatory of Music and later attended Wayne State University, concentrating on physics and mathematics with intentions to continue (at age

15) into pre-med studies. In 1952, she moved to New York to study music analysis with Felix Salzer and piano with Crete Sultan. In 1953, she began her studies of composition with Edgard Varèse (who first introduced her to Ives's experiments with sound in space).

As a teenager she had already begun composing chamber pieces for piano, flute, harp, and violin, but her orchestral work *Orchestra Structure for the Poetry of Everyday Sounds* (1952) indicates renewed dedication to paths forged in Detroit with *Moving Space Theater Piece* (1949), a performance with "everyday sounds." In his 1975 essay, Tom Johnson describes a New York loft performance that drew upon the sounds of "bouncing balls, crashing glass, pouring water, a whistling teakettle, and just about every sound possible with pieces of paper." In true acousmatic fashion (ideas being explored as *musique concrète* by her contemporary Pierre Schaeffer in Paris), "a screen was placed between the performers and the audience, so that the listeners were forced to deal with the sound itself, without visual distraction."<sup>2</sup> Longtime friend, composer and conductor Joel Thome recalls hearing of a concert (attended by visionary architect Frederick Kiesler, Alexander Calder, and Edgard Varèse, among others) where the performance space was near the kitchen and she used every object at hand, various utensils, pots and pans, as her sound sources: "Varèse was very taken with her music."<sup>3</sup> The

sounds of paper were decidedly not *everyday* in her hands: "She did extraordinary things with paper. She loved paper. What she did with paper was a very spiritual statement as well, because she was very drawn to Zen." (JT) Her incidental music for a Living Theater production of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (1952) also drew upon this collection of everyday sounds (performed in the production by Ralph Dorazio and Mary Norton Dorazio), as did her music for Marie Menken's film *Visual Variations on Noguchi* (1953). "With the everyday sounds, I was just fascinated with the idea that you could get sounds that wouldn't stimulate your emotions but would stimulate your sense of wonder."<sup>4</sup>

Treating the piano itself as an everyday object transformed, she began in the early 50s to experiment with what came to be called the timbre piano. Along with preparations of the piano strings, Lucia Dlugoszewski actively engaged the strings from inside of the piano using glass, wood, cloth, plastic, and metal objects as slides, bows, and strikers. Thus, she reinvents the piano more as an extended string orchestra than as the two-handed percussion ensemble of John Cage's works, which predate the timbre piano by more than a decade. In 1952, she scored music for a performance of Picasso's play *Desire Caught by the Tail* utilizing voice and timbre piano, and she employed her timbre piano innovations to music with dance in the *Here and Now with Watchers* (1954).

In the late 1950s, Lucia Dlugoszewski designed over 100 unique percussion instruments, constructed for her by sculptor Ralph Dorazio (in whose Chelsea studio she had presented her early everyday sounds event). This new percussion arsenal included ladder harps, closed rattles, unsheltered rattles, tangent rattles, wave rattles, quarter-tone gongs, and square-shaped drums, all from a wide variety of materials including wood, plastic, metal, glass, and paper. These were created for her *Suchness Concert* (1958) which became the score for her early collaboration with choreographer Erick Hawkins: "In 1958, when Erick created *Eight Clear Places*, I felt I should not write music in which my piddling emotions would interfere with the dance. That's when I began to invent percussion instruments."<sup>5</sup> Over succeeding years, compositions focused exclusively on these percussion instruments (a quintet for unsheltered rattles titled *Delicate Accidents in Space*, 1959, the dance score *Geography of Noon*, 1964, and music for Ruth Stephan's film *A Zen for Ryoko-in*, 1971, (filmed by Maryette Charlton), combined them with timbre piano (*Archaic Aggregates* in 1961), or organized this vast panoply of new sounds with conventional instruments (*Concert of Man Rooms and Moving Space*, 1960 and *Kitetail Beauty Music*, 1968). She did not at any point abandon writing exclusively for conventional sound sources, as in her film music for Jonas and Adolfo Mekas's *Guns of the Trees* (1961), *Naked Flight Nageire* (1966) for chamber orchestra, and in solo instrumental works, most notably the dramatically innovative writing for brass in *Space is a Diamond* (1970). Her innovative experiments with unique sound sources extended her conception of the possibilities of conventional instruments and *Space is a Diamond* on this disc is no better example. As Virgil Thomson observed, it "seems to virtually exhaust the technical possibilities of the instrument without becoming didactic."<sup>6</sup>

The richness of these works within the first two decades of her life as a composer exemplify the dedication of her interests in theater, dance, sculpture, poetry, and philosophy, as well as music. She consistently developed associations with writers, poets, philosophers, filmmakers, choreographers, and dancers. As Joel Thome reports: "She was at the center of everything." (JT) She received early critical support from

poets Frank O'Hara and John Ashberry. One of her first public concerts took place at the Five Spot Cafe in 1958, an event sponsored by several avant-garde New York painters and sculptors including David Smith and Robert Motherwell. From 1960 on, she taught periodically at New York University and the New School for Social Research. She won the Tomkins Literary Award for Poetry in 1947, published a book of poetry *A New Folder* in 1969 and wrote numerous thought-provoking essays about her ideas on music, sound, and the relationship between music and dance.

In the 1970s, Lucia Dlugoszewski's work achieved much critical success. *Abyss and Caress* (1975) was commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts in conjunction with the New York Philharmonic, with its first performance conducted by Pierre Boulez. In 1977 she was the first woman to receive the Koussevitzky International Recording Award for *Fire Fragile Flight* (1973), recorded for Candide by Joel Thome's Orchestra of Our Time. In the early 1950s, Lucia Dlugoszewski formed a collaborative relationship with choreographer Erick Hawkins, whom she later married. Throughout the next forty years she continued to compose music for his dance company, over the years becoming increasingly involved, specifically as a composer; but also in arranging performances of other composers' work and assisting with fundraising. After Hawkins's death in 1994, she remained with the company as both a composer and choreographer, presenting several retrospective concerts along with performances of new works. Of the Erick Hawkins and Lucia Dlugoszewski collaboration, Deborah Jowitt wrote: "Dlugoszewski created aural landscapes, [Hawkins] choreography doesn't simply play in them, it echoes or alters their contours." Dlugoszewski frequently performed these scores herself on stage, playing her percussion instruments or the timbre piano: "And what a performer she is! In the opening night *Heyoka*, she fairly danced over the piano—striking keys, brushing the strings, moving little objects in the works to produce windy sonorities and muted ringing."<sup>7</sup>

In 1973, she published "What Is Sound to Music?" in the periodical *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, cogently examining her perspective on sound exploration, nurtured by her readings of Basho, F.S.C. Northrup, Herbert Marcuse, and Chang Chung-yuan, among others.

"In 1954, I began the immense journey in search of a Logos for music. I was also more aware than ever before or since of the fragility of sound when it is music. I was committed to a pure radical empirical immediacy, beyond Classicism and Romanticism—a commitment to make music itself, to make music sound, to make music alive...and I began to realize how hard this was to achieve."<sup>8</sup>

This essay is a remarkable melding of aesthetic analysis, intellectual biography, and intense poetic reverie. She chronicles the evolution of her reaction against musical artificiality: "Notice how quickly pitch-interval melodic juxtapositions (movie and TV music) recede from the open-aired largeness of immediate hearing into the egocentric, cramped interiors of our emotional life." (WS5) Her search for music as itself led her, in the late 50s and early 60s, to strive for "intense, more sudden immediacy," in other words "the very nature of sound, the way it flashes—seemingly from nowhere—across the ear and quickly dies away." (WS8) She sought "sound that is not denotative, connotative, casual, postulated" and called this "pure suchness." (WS8) Her conception of "suchness" evolved over the succeeding decades of her musical life. In the early 90s, she acknowledged her debt to the Zen poets, but also linked "suchness" with

Artaud's "thusness" and James Joyce's "quidditas," as a current, the "thusness suchness quidditas nakedness of sound" running through all of her work from the 60s through the early 80s. The essay draws to a close with brief discussion of new works including *Fire Fragile Flight* (1973) and ends with a rousing call: "And, the unexpected!"

Her quest for musical immediacy, the unexpected and strange surprise, is not solely embodied in new sounds, but equally, perhaps even more vibrantly, in new forms. "My music is constantly trying to put the mind into a ritual so it never stops listening. You know how people talk about hearing for the first time? That's a religion to me" (SP66) Reading "ritual" as form, "form is how the ears listen." (WS8) In the title to her composition for unaccompanied timbre piano *Exacerbated Subtlety Concert (Why Does a Woman Love a Man?)* heard on this disc, the keyword perhaps is "exacerbated," key to the development of her ideas beyond "suchness" in the 80s and 90s into an expanded awareness of "otherness's." Exacerbated, exquisite, luminous, and, another variant, strange, signify this musical leap beyond the ordinary. "But you don't have to call it otherness—that can be kind of chic French intellectual, right? You can call it strangeness. And why the strange, why the surprise? Gertrude Stein—a good apple-pie American—said you've got to put a little strangeness in a sentence to make the noun come alive." (SP67)

"Otherness" is crucial to understanding the formal structure of the compositions on this compact disc. *Disparate Stairway Radical Other* (1995) was commissioned by The White Oak Quartet for the dance *Journey of a Poet* by Erick Hawkins and premiered in March of 1997 as part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's spring season. The title alludes to a strategy of disparate elements "to practice otherness" and "to give the mind immediacy:" "When you have immediacy, you're again deeply in aliveness, you've shed the non-alive past as well as the non-alive future for the very alive immediate. I remember seeing a Japanese architecture where, for no reason, there was off to the side a stairway. It was just there. And I always call it the disparate stairway." (SP69)

The composition unfolds in three parts which she terms Phrases. Phrase 2 has several lettered divisions and Phrase 3 consists of twenty-two Disparate sections. In the first of the seven track divisions of this recording (which encompasses Phrase 1 and Phrase 2 of the score), dense *arco* unison statements give way to the percussive tapping of thimbles on strings and tailpiece. Track 2 (Phrase 2-B in the score) opens with elegant glissandos (mimicking the percussive actions of Phase 2) which echo and multiply, then careen to a sudden halt. Phase 2-C Oblique 1 (track 3) alternates screeching glissandos with abrupt pizzicato and thicker *arco* ruminations. The Disparate sections of Phrase 3 flow through the final four tracks of this recording. Track 4 continues from track 3 without interruption, marking the beginning of Disparate 12-A as we hear the sound of combs bowed across the strings of all the instruments. She favored a particular style of Swiss comb and had used it in earlier works such as *Fire Fragile Flight*. Glass slides produce the delicate koto-like tones, percussive taps, and gentle glissandos at the end of this Disparate passage. These various strategies alternate throughout the balance of this performance, creating an atmosphere of agitated movement. Sounds collide and cascade, sigh and shout, leap into space, land at the same point for a second of rest and repose (the delicate "sea gull glissandos" that conclude Disparate 16), then float away as the bows of the four string players lightly ricochet into distant space (at the end of Disparate 22). "Boredom dissolves at the

touch of our hearing." (WS 10)

*Exacerbated Subtlety Concert (Why Does a Man Love a Woman?)* is a composition for solo timbre piano composed in 1997, extensively revised in 2000 for the January 17 recording session recorded earlier this year by Lucia Dlugoszewska. "Exacerbated" signals *otherness, strangeness, and intensity*, here coupled with *subtlety*. "In 1992 I began to think of something totally different. I found myself saying, 'I want to love and will and otherize and also subtilize the world.' This concept of subtlety! I think music is capable of more subtlety than any other art: it just blows past your ear, it's elusive, it's ungraspable. I think the height of elegance is what is ungraspable; I call it the elegance of the ungraspable." (SP68) Recording session producer Jonathan Schultz recalls Lucia Dlugoszewska describing the opening gestures of the piece as "like gentle kisses of foreplay." Her piano preparations were meticulous and exhaustive, continually making minute changes to give the sounds their strongest and best character. Joel Thome observes that it would be easier to list what she didn't use on the strings of the piano. All varieties of paper, hairpins, rubber wedges, thimbles, Gerbers' baby food jars, tuning forks, flexatones, and various combs are among the implements of this transformation of the familiar.

The vivid detail of this recording offers a unique and unforgettable vantage point onto the physical action of these implements and their emerging sounds, an intimate glimpse into a world where anything may happen next, where the piano is made strange and newborn.

*Tender Theater Flight Nageire* was begun in 1971 and revised in 1978. It received its premiere in April of 1978 performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonic under Lukas Foss. It is scored for brass sextet and non-pitched percussion, unfolding in five continuous contrasting parts, which she describes as "a series of musical rituals involved somehow with the poetic roots of erotic experience."<sup>9</sup> Her solo percussion opens and closes the performance and, recorded with effective stereo separation, we clearly hear her moving quickly from one hand percussion device to another. Soft rattles, louder wooden ladders, frame drums, rotating drums, delicate glass chimes, flexatones, wobble boards, and larger tubular chimes burst forth like startled birds throughout the entire performance. The four words in the title represent the piece's structural principles. *Tender* characterizes "the imprint of *Amor*,...almost bottomless sensitivity, ...a seductive loosening." *Theatre* suggests "...feeling the sound travel strangely in space." *Flight* identifies "...a perilous hanging by the ears,...vulnerable, dangerous, tender, unsupported, naked." *Nageire* is a term drawn from Japanese flower arranging meaning "flung into" and Hawkins (1969–1970), and *Space is a Diamond* (1970), composed for trumpet virtuoso Gerard Schwarz.

*Space is a Diamond* (1970) was composed for trumpet virtuoso Gerard Schwarz and may be her best known composition to date. Few brass players could navigate the rigors of this composition (one of the reasons for the few performances of her work outside of the circle of collaborators which included trombonist David Taylor, percussionist William Trigg, violinist Linda Quan, and conductor Joel Thome). She told Cole Gagne: "What I do always is find an adventuresome musician who's willing to take a chance, who's poetically inclined and will follow me on my creative adventure." (SP64) William Bolcom's notes to the original release of the recording *The New Trumpet* (an LP anthology released by Nonesuch in the mid 70s) describe Lucia Dlugoszewska's "new sound world": "The trumpet suddenly has become a four-and-a-half octave instrument: in

its new incarnation, with the use of several mutes, unusual tonguing techniques, high swooping glissandos, and simultaneous playing and singing through the mouthpiece, an instrument emerges capable, in the composer's words, of : 'gusts of delicate rain' and 'violent plateaus,' of 'pure transparency, tenderness, nakedness, and radiance.'"<sup>10</sup> Within the "continuum of constant change" of all these works from 1966–1972, Dlugoszewski clearly invents some of the most animate sounds imaginable. In spite of the severe expectations placed on performers, sounds emerge as natural, not forced or artificial, recalling the voices of storms, rushing water, feral cries and murmurings, without any sense of direct reference or programmatic development. This is the "aliveness" that she aspired to in her music, the ferocity that she identified in the imagery of poets like Basho, who she felt were mistakenly characterized as writing "charming little nature poems." (SP65)

"This otherness strategy is forever shaking things up. It takes a special kind of courage to match otherness with form—something that is probably improbable and usually impossible and yet true. The other consequence of otherness is the constant anxiety of nothingness—you're always plunging into the unknown. But what better way to live, in terms of spiritual refinement? What better way to live, than this resumption of the world as freedom. I think the haiku poets are just constantly in the anxiety of nothingness. I probably am too. But the stakes are terrific!" (SP70)

At the time of her death in April 2000, Lucia Dlugoszewski was in the final stages of preparing the choreography and music for the mid-April premiere of *Motherwell Amor*, dedicated to her friend, painter Robert Motherwell. "We had great fun in discovering the high risk of elegance—a torn non-linear wild elegance of space that irises make of the world," she wrote for the evening's program notes.<sup>11</sup> From its very beginnings her work imaginatively and triumphantly celebrated the struggles of life vs. death, of the fully experienced moment vs. a nostalgic past

or romanticized present, of the life-affirming renewal of invention and discovery vs. timid restraint and stagnation. She is one of the most inventive and forceful voices of the late twentieth century, deserving her place alongside such visionary composers as Harry Partch, Ornette Coleman, and John Cage. Among the concluding lines of her speculations on "what is sound to music?" she writes:

"What strange risk of hearing can bring sound to music—a hearing whose obligation awakens a sensibility so new that it is forever a unique, new-born, anti-death surprise,

created now and now and now ...a hearing whose moment in time is always daybreak" (WS8)

—Hal Rammel, June 2000

<sup>1</sup> There have been discrepancies and inconsistencies in a number of dates surrounding Lucia Dlugoszewski's biography, e.g. her date of birth has also been reported as 1931. This essay uses dates provided in Cole Gagne's 1991–93 interview with Lucia Dlugoszewski published in *Soundpieces 2: Interviews with American Composers* (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), pp. 53–84. Quotations from this interview are cited in the text using the abbreviation SP.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Johnson, "Musician of the Month: Lucia Dlugoszewski," *High Fidelity/Musical America* (June 1975), pp. MA-5.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Joel Thome, June 12, 2000. Quotations from this interview are cited in the text using the abbreviation JT.

Conductor Joel Thome has been an accomplished supporter of contemporary music for many decades. He has been the music director of Orchestra of Our Time and The Philadelphia Composers Forum, both of which he founded, and of the Erick Hawkins Dance Company. Vox has issued a 2 CD set (Vox Box CDX 5144) of the Orchestra of Our Time performances of music of George Crumb, Pierre Boulez, Arnold Schoenberg, and Lucia Dlugoszewski's *Fire Fragile Flight*.

<sup>4</sup> Lucia Dlugoszewski, interviewed by Cole Gagne in *Soundpieces 2: Interviews with American Composers* (London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), pp. 53–84. Quotations from this interview are cited in the text using the abbreviation SP.

<sup>5</sup> "And Miss Dlugoszewski Experiments—A Lot," Allen Hughes. *New York Times*, Sunday, March 7, 1971, Section 2, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Virgil Thomson, *American Music Since 1910*. (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1970), p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> Deborah Jowitt, "Shedding Light," *The Village Voice*, March 14, 1995, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> Lucia Dlugoszewski, "What is Sound to Music?," *Main Currents in Modern Thought*, Volume 30, Number 1 (September-October 1973), p. 8. Quotations from this essay are cited in the text using the abbreviation WS.

<sup>9</sup> Lucia Dlugoszewski, program notes to *Tender Theatre Flight Nagiere*. On the LP *Sonorous Explorations* (CRI SD 388).

<sup>10</sup> William Bolcom, liner notes to *The New Trumpet* (Nonesuch H-71275).

<sup>11</sup> Lucia Dlugoszewski, program notes to *Motherwell Amor*.

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## Production Notes

Executive Producer: Joseph R. Dalton

CD mastered by Robert Wolff, engineer at Sony Music Studios, NYC.

*Disparate Stairway Radical Other*: Produced and engineered by Jonathan Schultz.

Quartet recorded on August 16, 1999 at Concordia College in Bronxville, N.Y.

*Exacerbated Subtlety Concert (Why Does A Woman Love a Man?)*

Produced and engineered by Jonathan Schultz, Jonathan Schultz Production.

Recorded January 17, 2000 at the Summer Center, Concordia College in Bronxville, New York.

A & R Administration: Allison Wolf.

*Tender Theater Flight Nageire*: Originally released on CRI SD 388 in 1978.

Produced by Carter Harman.

Recorded May 1978 at The Brotherhood Synagogue, NYC.

This original release was made possible partially by a grant from the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, Inc.

*Space Is Diamond*: Originally released on Nonesuch H-71275. BMI

Photos of William Trigg showing example of Lucia Dlugoszewski's style, (pg. 13): © 2000 Allison Wolf. All other photos courtesy of Composers Recordings Inc.

Cover/Interior Design: Brenda Wolf CRI Production Manager: Allison Wolf

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