

CRI SD 388
Sonorous Explorations

Lucia Dlugoszewski
Tender Theater Flight Nageire (18:00)
Gerard Schwarz, Edward Carroll, Norman Smith, trumpets;
Robert Rutch, horn; David Langlitz, tenor trombone;
David Taylor, bass trombone;
Lucia Dlugoszewski, percussion;
Gerard Schwarz, conductor

C. Curtis-Smith
Unisonics (1976) (16:25)
Trent Kynaston, alto saxophone;
C. Curtis-Smith, piano
Music for Handbells (1976-7) (8:10)
Handbell Choir
C. Curtis-Smith, conductor

Lucia Dlugoszewski (*b* Detroit, 1931) studied physics and mathematics at Wayne State University and planned to go into medicine before she took up a professional career in music. She studied piano with Grete Sultan, analysis with Felix Salzer, and composition with Edgard Varèse in the early fifties, and during that time was also active writing poetry and collaborating with the philosopher F.S.C. Northrop on aesthetical writings.

In her music Dlugoszewski has always been concerned with exploring new sounds—both from conventional instruments, for which she has written highly virtuosic music—and from her own pitched and non-pitched percussion instruments which now number over 100. Jamake Highwater recently wrote “. . . even in this era of avant-garde for the masses Lucia Dlugoszewski remains special and separate—the composer of music too eloquent to be called ‘difficult,’ too fragile to be called ‘bold,’ and too significant to be called ‘experimental.’

Dlugoszewski’s music was much admired and supported in the fifties and sixties by New York painters and poets but was generally avoided by the musical establishment. One lone voice, that of Virgil Thomson, described her music in his *American Music Since 1910* as “Far-out music of great delicacy, originality, and beauty of sound.” It was only in 1975 that her music began to emerge from relative obscurity when Pierre Boulez commissioned *Abyss and Caress* for the New York Philharmonic and its soloist Gerard Schwarz. Leighton Kerner dubbed Dlugoszewski “one of the most original composers before the public today” after hearing the performance. Other well-known conductors have taken up the cause—Gunther Schuller has conducted *Abyss and Caress* at Tanglewood, and Dennis Russell Davies and Joel Thorne have both conducted *Fire Fragile Flight*, the latter on Vox Records.

Dlugoszewski has recently been honored with Guggenheim and Thorne fellowships, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and Creative Artists Public Service Program, and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund grant that made this recording possible.

Tender Theater Flight Nageire is dedicated to Jennie and Floran Orvis, and was first performed by the Brooklyn Philharmonia under Lukas Foss in April 1978. The piece was begun in 1971 and revised in 1978. About it, the composer writes:

“The first concern of all music in one way or another is to shatter the indifference of hearing, the callousness of sensibility, to create that moment of solution we call poetry, our rigidity dissolved when we occur reborn—in a sense, hearing for the first time. *Tender Theater Flight Nageire* is actually a series of musical rituals involved somehow with the poetic roots of erotic experience. Its nakedness of spirit requires a special courage all its own, the courage of vulnerability in terms of letting out feeling, something perilously real with a fierce fragile ambience of elegance, sensitivity, and that radiance of the highest energy release in the mind we call passion. Rituals of sound involving both immediacy and *Amor* combine to create the musical structure.

“The four words *Tender Theater Flight Nageire* are poetically chosen to identify structural principles that embody the reality of this music.

“*Tender*: the ‘imprint’ of *Amor*, investigating possibilities of almost bottomless sensitivity, this strange proportion of the mind, a seductive loosening, so to speak.

“*Theater*: immediacy in space and time, seeing the sound created as well as hearing it, feeling the sound travel strangely in space.

“*Flight*: the generic translation of ‘fugue,’ that element of aesthetic elusiveness that we associate with elegance, shedding the gross, heavy, oppressive in favor of the subtle, light and free. The principle of *Flight*, musically, is a kind of perilous hanging by the ears, where everything is like a hanging bridge, vulnerable, dangerous, tender, unsupported; naked.

“*Nageire* is an oriental aesthetic principle of nondevelopment, of non-linear or ‘leap’ progression. It uses constant and extreme surprise. The literal translation is ‘flung into.’ *Nageire* embodies the oriental aesthetic delight in the courage of the delicacy of daring constructions. It is a kinesthetically inspired system of leaping into unknown material—a braving of the known, a distance-reckless freedom of absolute movement leaning for the flexibility of the mind

“Structurally, there are five parts in which *nageire* ratios are translated into irrational numbers, one more definition of the elegance of the ungraspable, as is the elusiveness of the dissonant counterpoint throughout. The fulcrum phrase includes mathematical ratios of alternating *nageire* and *transparency*—in other words, leaps to points of high energy (*nageire*) and sudden releases into varieties of transparent densities (*flight*). This is expressed in dynamics, registers, and timbral shifts through sophisticated tonguing and muting and new percussion instruments.

“Both the second and fourth parts are a hush of sheer sensibility, the first and fourth are short *nageire* leaps, celebrations of high energy, dangerous architectures of extreme speed, and the third is pure *flight* in extensive glissando counterpoints. The ambience of *Tender* permeates and unifies all five parts.

“In the impact of the mythic ‘imprint’ of *Amor* our senses become abnormally alert: We embody that strange risk of hearing whose moment in time is always daybreak.

“The world is literally transformed. Even the moon suddenly is the most naked thing there is because the mind is suddenly naked. The moon suddenly hangs wet in my throat and my swallowing is silver, and one drop of water can unhinge my throat into miracles of swallowing, the sudden shiver of a delicate paper rattle or an unusually sensitive tonguing on a brass instrument becomes transparency utterly alive.”

C. Curtis-Smith (b 1941 Walla Walla, Washington) studied composition with Kenneth Gaburo (University of Illinois) and Bruno Maderna at Tanglewood. He has degrees from Northwestern University, and studied piano with David Burge and Gui Mombaerts. He is the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (1978-79), an award from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (1978), grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Foundation; Prix du Francis Salabert (1976), Gold Medal from the Concorso Internazionale du Music e Danza G.B. Viotti, and the Koussevitzky Prize at Tanglewood (1972). His music is published by Theodore Presser (Elkan Vogel), and Editions Salabert. Curtis-Smith has received commissions from the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Louis Falco Dance Company; Boston Musica Viva, Igor Kipnis, David Burge, William Albright, and others. In 1976-77, he was visiting lecturer in composition at the University of Michigan and is currently an associate professor at Western Michigan University.

He writes:

“In *Unisonics*, I have attempted to merge the sounds of the two instruments as one, largely through the use of unisons or the heterophonic ornamentation of a single melodic line. The concept of ‘unison’ in this work refers to more than the duplication of pitch; through the use of extended techniques for both instruments, the attack and timbral characteristics of the two instruments are brought closer together. Except for the fourth movement, the piano is limited throughout to the tessitura of the saxophone.

“The piece is in five movements, the first and last of which are in the form of a prelude and postlude based on similar material. (The postlude is essentially a slow transformation of the more brilliant prelude.) The second movement introduces multiphonics in the saxophone (twenty different ones are used during the course of the piece), and cyclical breathing. The bowing of the piano strings, using specially designed bows, is used in this movement as well as in the fourth movement. Since 1972, when I first originated the technique of bowing the piano strings, I have used this method of sound production in a variety of pieces, including *Five Sonorous Inventions* (CRI 346) and *Rhapsodies* (CRI 345).

“The third movement is heterophonically the most complex of the five, with the two instruments beginning in unison, and gradually diverging as the movement progresses.

“The fourth movement features some extreme *aléssimo* writing for the saxophone (a total of five different octaves of B-flat are notated), as well as various multiphonics, counterbalanced by more extensive bowing of the piano strings. This time, however, the bowing involves only the strings in the lowest octave, the resulting high pitches being partials, sometimes as high as the 64th.

“None of the piano sounds are electronically manipulated or amplified in any way. *Unisonics* was written for Trent Kynaston.

“*Music for Handbells* was written in 1976-77 for a three-octave (37 pitches) set of handbells. Each of the ten handbell players is responsible for either three or four bells.

“I have departed from traditional handbell notation (which resembles piano music) and have written the ten parts on as many staves, thus achieving a greater accuracy of notation, especially in terms of the duration or damping of each bell.

“Each of the ten parts is assigned one or two dyads, which, are, of course, combined with other dyads. These dyads are constructed around the pitch center C, with G (sometimes G major) a strong supporting sonority. The separate dyads are thought of as progressing independently with occasional collisions in musical space to form what are sometimes very consonant vertical entities. (C major, E flat major, etc.)

“Since handbells produce tones of such extraordinary—duration, every pitch can be thought of as forming and maintaining a separate level throughout the piece. Melodies then become an intricate series of staggered repeated notes, sometimes widely spaced, but nonetheless ultimately simply repeated notes, which by their immediate juxtaposition in musical space happen to form melodies, lines, and harmonies. Thus, the opening of the piece, the germ of this concept, is quite simply, three levels of repeated notes. After that, the complexity of the repetitions increases rapidly.

“The piece is traditionally notated in terms of pitch and duration, with nothing left to chance, with the exception of three rather short sections: the opening passage, the static C-major-ish section about halfway through, and the loudest passage near the end where the bells enter in stretto one by one.”

The performers on this recording are Cary Belcher, Barbara Brenner, Steven Hesia, Larry Hutchinson, Connie Klausmeier, Jeff Powell, Mickey Shroeder, Betsy Start, Rick Uren and Patricia Wichman.

Gerard Schwarz began trumpet studies with William Vacchiano and composition with Paul Creston, and is a graduate of The Juilliard School. He has had an extensive career as an orchestral musician and soloist, as a recitalist and as a conductor, and has made over fifteen solo recordings for Columbia, Vox, Nonesuch, and Desto Records. Schwarz has been a devoted performer and conductor of twentieth-century music and has also been active in the field of computer music, working with Max Matthews at Bell Laboratories.

Trent Kynaston is professor of music at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo where he teaches saxophone and music theory. As an artist in both classical and jazz traditions, he has performed in concert and recital throughout the United States. He was one of four saxophonists selected to represent the U.S. in 1970 at the 2nd World Saxophone Congress, and was again honored when invited to give a lecture-recital in 1976 at the 5th World Saxophone Congress (for which *Unisonics* was written) in London, England.

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Produced by Carter Harman

Recorded by David Hancock, New York, May 1978

Unisonics: Recorded by Trent Kynaston, Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1978

Music for Handbells:: recorded same, 1978

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(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)