

Dreamtiger: East-West Encounters

Colin McPHEE Balinese Ceremonial Music [10:23]; **Douglas YOUNG** Trajet/Inter/Lignes [13:49]; **Olivier MESSIAEN** Canteyodjaya [13:31]; **George CRUMB** Vox Balaenae [19:27]; **Toshiru MAYAZUMI** Extract from Bunraku [4:50]

Dreamtiger (Kathryn Lukas, flute/Rohan de Saram, cello/Douglas Young, piano and percussion/Peter Hill, piano)

rec. October 4th and 11th 1981, Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester.

CAMEO CLASSICS CC9018CD [62:00]

Dreamtiger was a British contemporary music ensemble with a roster of international world class players. The group's leader, composer Douglas Young, and his illustrious colleagues were active from 1974 to 1984 but unfortunately little of their work has been captured for posterity. Their LP from 1982, *East-West Encounters*, is a superb reminder of the group's 1980 U.K. tour repertoire. I'm delighted that Cameo Classics has restored the recording back into the catalogue.

Colin McPhee's beautiful *Balinese Ceremonial Music* is an arrangement for two pianos transcribed from gamelan music. McPhee visited Bali on a number of occasions between 1932 and 1938 and he built up a detailed knowledge of Balinese music. *Balinese Ceremonial Music* is the direct result of his knowledge and love of gamelan. The first section of this three movement piece was recorded by the composer and Benjamin Britten in 1941. Young and Hill perform the complete work here with authority.

Douglas Young's *Trajet/Inter/Lignes* for solo flute and small percussion was premiered in 1981 by flutist Kathryn Lukas. It really is a showcase for the virtuosity of Ms Lukas. The work itself is relatively thorny and maybe over long at almost 14 minutes but there are some fascinating colours to be heard across the instrument's full range. The eastern influence is obvious with the timbre being breathy and oriental in nature. The sounds of the breathing and the clicking of the keys are cleverly incorporated into the music itself. Interjections by the percussion mirror the effects used regularly in the Far East and also serve to underline and emphasise certain sections of the music. Flautists will love this piece. Others should also be readily drawn into its atmosphere.

Peter Hill made a highly regarded recording of Messiaen's piano music for Unicorn in 1986. The pianist's credentials as a Messiaen expert are obvious in this earlier 1982 recording of *Cantéyodjayâ*. The piece was written in 1949 and, like many of his works, utilises Hindu rhythms. Lovers of Messiaen shouldn't hesitate in hearing this. By way of a digression I also see that Peter Hill's recording of Havergal Brian's piano music has just been released by Cameo. That is another fine example of his art.

We then come to the real gem of the collection. What a superb piece *Vox Balaenae* is. George Crumb's evocation of whale songs is stunning. Written in 1971 and inspired by the singing of the humpback whale this piece really does sing with its memorable, haunting melody given to the cello. The work also draws its inspiration from the flute music of the Andes and Indian sitar music. Crumb weaves these elements together in a quite magical way to produce a melodically appealing work with many theatrical and eerie moments along the way.

The final work, *Bunraku*, did not appear on the original LP. I assume that it was from the same recording session. It is a short piece based on the sound world of the Japanese shamisen - a 3 stringed instrument - and is written for solo cello. It uses pizzicato effects extensively and the recitativo section imitates the human voice. This is an interesting end to the CD and is played, as is everything else on the disc, most expertly.

This CD is proof that contemporary music can be uplifting, inspiring, tuneful and memorable. Performances are of the highest quality and the sound is detailed and full toned with a tremendous impact. It's certainly one of the best things to have come out of Cameo and one of the best contemporary music recitals that I've come across in a long time. The vinyl transfer is courtesy of Klassic Haus in the USA and the end result is a pleasure to listen to. This is a disc oozing class.

John Whitmore

A great collection from Dreamtiger