

modern versions of the old baroque fantasies, with licks seemingly improvised (but they're not) with alternately dreamy bel canto sections juxtaposed with etude-technical almost David Del Tredici length codas: pages of quasi-ostinati cut by clouds of atmospheric sound-dust.

**Tod Machover: Bounce and Chansons d'Amour** [Bridge 9040] Robert Shannon, keyboards.

*Bounce* (1992) for Disklavier, Electronic Keyboard and Hypersinstrument Electronics has scintillating high bell licks. (Shannon has the chops.)

*Chansons d'amour* (1982) for piano: at 45 minutes it's got the big chords, extreme mood swings (which seem like an extended meditation on Berio's *Piano Sequenza*), and variations on a "spectral chord" not unlike the opening tune-up of a Charlemagne Palestine concert.

(By the way, a must hear from Mr. Palestine is **From Etudes to Cataclysms** [Sub Rosa SR272] recorded in the Church of S. Apollinare, Italy – unbelievable acoustics, superb playing. There's also **Charlemagne at Sonabend** [c@s 2001] with the most resonant Bösendorfer ever recorded.)



**Tod Machover: ...but not simpler...**

[Bridge 9346]

*Sparkler* (2007) sparkles. There's a wealth of color-drenched details: virtuosic wind passages juxtaposed with high string sonorities and untuned metallic percussion – and that's just in the opening of this twelve minute gesture-packed piece. Written for large orchestra, with a large percussion battery and three keyboard synthesizers, I'm hearing Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* woven throughout, with hints of Boulez, Debussy and Adès. Yet Machover's orchestration is unmistakably his own.

What follows is a short *Interlude "After Bach"* (2006; rev. 2011) which weaves functional harmonies within a dirty-triadic web. Then follows three short *Hyper-Dim-Sums* (2004) and another *Interlude* (2011) – all warmly played, with dead-accurate intonation and careful bowing, by the IO String Quartet.

...but not simpler (2005) is a stringent 15 minute work for string quartet. It stylistically veers toward the Peter Maxwell Davies *Naxos Quartets*. But Machover's writing is more gesturally nuanced and harmonically colorful (out of Carter's *Harmony Book*) than the grey-streaked Davies.

*Jeux Deux* (2005), for hyperpiano and orchestra, is 17 minutes of virtuosity which ends in a fun Shostakovich-inspired romp. The CD title, of course, refers to Einstein's famous quote, "Make things as simple as possible but not simpler," which Machover, I think, has achieved. Sure, Machover is "wired" but, ultimately, who cares? Do we listen to the *Ring* because of the Wagner Tubas or *Aida* because of the famous Triumphal Scene trumpets? Mozart introduces a clarinet. Fine, but it doesn't "make" the piece.

No, it's not the technology which impresses. What impresses are those non-glamorous, essential and not easily acquired skills which are rarely discussed in *The New York Times* but which Mr. Machover possesses in abundance: skills such as the ability to create resonant sonorities; a seasoned sense of the the long line and the long form; a knowing use of economy of means; and a firm grip on Fux counterpoint.

**Graham Gordon Ramsay: The Sacred Voice**

[Albany: Troy 1304]

Mr. Ramsay takes considerable care to shape subtle vocal lines. The a cappella *Ave Maria* (2007), is a gem of functional harmony. The SATB *Missa Sancti Stephani* (2007) and *Obedience* (2007) (soprano, bass, organ) are more traditionally complex. *If You Love Me* has the technical sophistication of a Gibbons madrigal. Heinrich Christenson conducts.



**Robert Moran: Trinity Requiem** [innova 244]

*Trinity Requiem* (2011) was written for the Youth Chorus at Trinity Choir (Robert Ridgell, conductor) for the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Pachelbel's canon, Parsifal's chimes dodge in and out of Moran's signature static harmonies. Voices float;

celli, harp, organ gestures hint like Cy Twombly graffiti. To write such sophisticated simplicity one needs the skill of a contemporary Virgil Thomson (likewise *Nocturne in White* for harps and voices). Rounding out the CD is a short *Requiem for a Requiem* by environmental sound artist Philip Blackburn: a witty precis of the Moran tracks.

**Patricia Morehead: Good News Falls Gently** [NV5854]

Even after repeated listenings I cannot differentiate Ms. Morehead from the thousand others writing in the same acceptably serviceable style. The piano writing seems mildly reminiscent of Stefan Wolpe (minus the indomitable muscularity) and the chamber music mildly reminiscent of Wuorinen (minus the overarching sense of form, attention to detail and dry wit). The recording itself is fair: the pianos are out of tune, the soprano is unflatteringly miked and the audible page turns should have been edited out.

**Tania Leon: In Motion** [Albany: Troy1284]

Tania Leon, whose politically correct multiculturalism makes her unavoidable on the lecture/committee circuit, writes good dance music. In *Haiku* (1973), for narrator and mixed ensemble, choreography is translated into emphatic percussive gestures that fit Dance Theatre of Harlem's Balanchine-inspired vision of itself hand to glove. *Inura* (2009), has voices (caribbean by way of Broadway), smooth strings and a never-ending beat approaching the complexity of the old American Dance Machine conga section. (Disclosure: I played for both ADM and DTH in my dance class days.)

**Barabara White: I Can Now See the Moon**

[Albany: Troy1303]

The American Academy of Arts and Letters calls her music "provocative even when it speaks in undertones, creating a personal space that is as unique as it is inviting." Really? I've listened and listened but I can find nothing that differentiates her personal space from the personal space of about a thousand other composers. (I'm willing to concede that my own personal space may be less than unique.) The work is surely provocative, but only of student concerts in overheated music schools.

**Paul Chihara: Love Music** [Albany: Troy 1290]

Relentlessly congenial McMusic – the first moments are delicious, the rest...I can't remember.

**Flickers of Mime/Death of Memes  
Alexander Berne & The Abandoned  
Orchestra** [innova 804]

Here's a request: when composing please vary the ostinato. Do not ever think that simply