

GRAMOPHONE

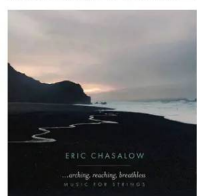
ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Chasalow

'... arching, reaching, breathless'

Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock^a. Piano Trio No 3, 'Rock Hill Variations'^b. The Snow Man^a. String Quartet No 2^c. String Sextet^d. To the Edge and Back^e. The Wings that Bear the Night Away^f
^aJulia Glenn, ^bMari Kimura, ^cClara Lyon ^{vn} ^dSam Kelder ^{va} ^{bd}Hannah Collins ^{vc} ^aDavid Russell ^{vc} ^{sng} ^{bc}Steven Beck ^{pf} ^{cc}Lydian String Quartet
New Focus (FCR468 • 70')



Guggenheim fellow and Irving G Fine Professor at Brandeis, Eric Chasalow has

built a distinguished career at the intersection of instruments and electronics. Yet he has an addiction to sound that goes well beyond the academy, and this survey of his string music makes a compelling case for a composer equally assured in both idioms.

The Wings that Bear the Night Away, violinist Mari Kimura's account of the Icarus myth with fixed media, is intricate and fascinating, with the vertiginous exhilaration of a Beethoven scherzo transmogrified to the leading edge of the 21st century. It must be fun to read the score. Chasalow's Third Piano Trio, *Rock Hill Variations*, dedicated to Copland's memory, carries a Coplandesque integrity and delight in simple materials. Beck, Lyon and Collins dispatch the darting dialogue and mournful lyric episodes with relish. David Russell's two Wallace Stevens settings are the album's most intimate moments. Both *The Snow Man* – Stevens's meditation on winter's annihilating clarity – and *Disillusionment of Ten O'Clock*, with its haunted houses and sleepwalking nightgowns, are half sung, half spoken, anxious and spectral.

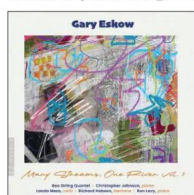
The Second Quartet is a perpetual delight – definitively written for four different personalities, its metaclassicism triggering oblique memories of the great quartet repertoire before spinning off into fresh invention. The Sextet is a study in intricate structures; halfway through the second movement comes a striking image

of parallel lines slowly diverging, a strong pulse keeping everything industriously on course. *To the Edge and Back* closes with a delirious violin riff – Julia Glenn in electrifying form – making a piece no performer or listener will forget.

Laurence Vittes

Eskow

'Many Streams, One River, Vol 1'
Dispatch from the Killing Floor^a.
The Gallery Wall^b. Lillet Aperitif^c.
Microscope^d. Remo's Revenge^e.
Two Blues and a Berceuse^b. Undertow^f
^aLiliane Montevecchi ^{chanteuse} ^aRichard Hobson
^{bar} ^dLes Scott ^{af} ^dElizabeth Kieronski ^{ob} ^dJohn Campo ^{bcl} ^fLászló Mező ^{vc} ^{bf}Christopher Johnson,
^aRon Levy ^{pf} ^eBeo Quartet
Navona (NV6785 ➔ • 70')



Gary Eskow (b1951) was a new name when I chanced upon this album released by

Navona late last year. Many composers combine their activities with other careers (not always within music), whether academic, performing or writing; Eskow does some writing on music but first and foremost describes himself as 'a fan', and there is something of an engaging sense of discovery in all the works collected here, several (but not all – dates for most are not provided) of recent provenance.

A fine example of that – and, to my ears, the finest music featured – is the string quartet *Remo's Revenge* (2013 or thereabouts). This work came about after Eskow had sought out and talked music with the excellent American composer Fred Lerdahl – 'one of America's great secret treasures' in Jed Distler's opinion (I do not disagree) – whose music Bridge Records has championed frequently (2/12, 11/17, 6/24). Eskow was fired by that conversation to compose this quartet though it quickly, and compellingly, moves off in its own direction and is splendidly performed by the Beo Quartet. (The title is unexplained; if it relates to the film *Remo Williams* it is not obvious.) The aphoristic piano suite

The Gallery Wall (c2018) is a set of brief reflections on music, delicately played by Christopher Johnson, by other composers Eskow has studied.

Johnson is the accompanist to László Mező in the cello-and-piano suite *Undertow*, which also starts with a (slightly ponderous) tribute piece, to the jazz pianist Bill Evans. The suite takes off, however, in the second movement, 'Steps of the Alhambra', a reimagining of Tárrega's *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*. Bach and Eric Clapton hover behind the remaining two movements.

The song-set *Dispatch from the Killing Floor* (2000-01) is the gravest item featured, arising from a composition exercise set by Richard Danielpour, in which – as in the wind trio *Microscope* (1995) – one senses Eskow still feeling his way. Neither piece quite catches the assurance of the cabaret song 'Lillet Aperitif', composed for the late Liliane Montevecchi (1932-2018), or the piano set (Christopher Johnson again) *Two Blues and a Berceuse*. All in all, this is an entertaining portrait album of a little-known composer who knows what he is doing. I look forward to Vol 2.

Guy Rickards

G Gordon

Debussy Première Rhapsodie (arr G Gordon)^a

G Gordon Creavit Deus hominem^b. Fumée

(after Hahn)^a. Gotham News^c

^bJosé Luis García Vegara ^{ob} ^aHorácio Ferreira ^{cl}

^bFrankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra /

Duncan Ward; ^aHong Kong Sinfonietta /

Christoph Poppen; ^cRadom Chamber Orchestra /

Szymon Morus

Neuma (NEUMA260 • 52')



Geoffrey Gordon's triptych of orchestral works – each sparked by a visual image –

makes for a fascinatingly cohesive release. These are, to borrow a useful frame, atmospheric film scores to movies that never happened. That they work so compellingly as pure concert music is a measure of Gordon's imagination.



Jonathan Nemtanu and Clio Theodoridis present 'Nostos', a programme exploring the theme of homecoming

The album opens with *Gotham News*, Gordon's response to Willem de Kooning's 1955 canvas. 'If it could talk, the work would yell', a critic wrote of the painting – and one could easily say the same of Gordon's score. The Radom Chamber Orchestra attack its controlled chaos with conviction, the last three minutes constituting a coda that brilliantly brings the disparate parts together, ending with a few growls and a grunt.

Gordon's arrangement of Debussy's *Première Rhapsodie* and the title concerto *Fumée* were conceived as a pair – premiered together on September 14, 2023, by the Swedish Chamber Orchestra in Örebro, Debussy first, *Fumée* to follow. Gordon actually found his way in not through Debussy but through Reynaldo Hahn's ravishing 1896 chanson, its text – 'Companion of the ether, indolent smoke, I resemble you somewhat' – providing both musical material and spiritual compass. Clarinettist Horácio Ferreira is at home with the largeness and fineness of spirit both works demand, and the Debussy arrangement shares the same moments of pure beauty, the same transcendence.

Creavit Deus hominem is effectively an oboe concerto, its four movements tracing a trajectory from intimacy to boundlessness

with José Luís García Vega as the constant human voice amid Gordon's vast orchestral forces; the composer's ability to play with layers of light and harmony, realising an organic continuity in the mass of sound, is remarkable. It ends as triumphantly as an oboe and such a conglomeration can.

The booklet's reproductions of the visual images that inspired each work are indispensable. **Laurence Vittes**

'Moving Shapes'

Crawford Seeger String Quartet (1931)

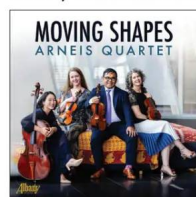
Haydn String Quartet in D, Op 71 No 2

Fanny Mendelssohn String Quartet in E flat

Ruehr String Quartet No 12, 'Moving Shapes'

Arneis Quartet

Albany (TROY2021) ➔ • 75'



This is a pearler of an album. The Arneis Quartet may not be that familiar to

collectors: their discography is modest in size, devoted to music for the most part not otherwise available, with releases on labels such as Centaur, Habitat Sounds and Navona. On the evidence of this newcomer

(and an earlier Avie issue), they are a much under-recorded ensemble.

Haydn's 55th quartet is a good example of their playing of standard repertoire not otherwise evident from their catalogue to date. This is a superbly balanced performance, the intonation flawless, the interpretation incisive, yet light in touch as well and full of joy – an absolute delight as Haydn should be. Fanny Mendelssohn's youthful Quartet (1834), written when she was just 29 years old, is again very nicely rendered; perhaps not quite a match for the Ebène Quartet's splendid account but not far short.

Ruth Crawford Seeger's solitary Quartet (1931), which opens the album, was written when she was of a similar age to Hensel (well, 30). It is rather more compact in design; four concentrated movements composed early in her most radical period. The Arneis catch its balance of expression and experiment ideally in a version fully the match of previous rivals, the Schoenberg Ensemble's being (arguably) the best of them.

The Arneis Quartet's Avie issue I mentioned above was of Elena Ruehr's Eighth Quartet, *Insect Dances* (7/22), which was written for them, as was her most recent, the five-movement Twelfth Quartet, *Moving Shapes* (2024). The four players are fully inside Ruehr's dynamic and polished writing for the medium, and their advocacy is of the kind composers can usually only dream of. Ruehr covers some rhythmically tricky ground in the opening 'Fast Fourier Transform', while the central 'Shifting Clouds and Ocean Waves' audibly puts the players through their paces. First-rate performances all round: the finest chamber album I have heard since the Sirius Quartet's 'Incantations' – and that was my recording of the year for 2025!

Guy Rickards

Crawford Seeger – selected comparison:

Schoenberg Ens

DG 449 925-2GH (12/97)

Fanny Mendelssohn – selected comparison:

Ebène Qt

Virgin 464546-2 (4/13)

'Nostos'

Ciesla *Ogres rouges* Iturralde *Suite Hellénique*

Lussier *Récit et Lied*, Op 31^o Say *Suite*, Op 55

Clio Theodoridis sax Jonathan Nemtanu pf
Leaf (LM306 • 52')



Born in Athens and based in Quebec, saxophonist Clio Theodoridis reclaims