

first two albums should enjoy this latest offering.

—Jeff W. Johnson

### The John Psathas Percussion Project Vol. 1

John Psathas, Composer; Omar Carmentates, Arranger

Navona Records



This collection of John Psathas compositions is a multi-year project to adapt many of his compositions for other instruments for percussion. The project was funded by a Furman University Faculty research grant, and other growth grants. The scores are published by Prometheus Editions. There are 14 selections featured. “Corybas” is the opening selection, an 11-minute rhythmic work utilizing harmonic and rhythmic patterns with a Middle Eastern influence. The mixture of the vibraphone, marimba, and drum patterns are outstanding. This is followed by three works originally for piano quintet. There is an interesting blend of rapid motives and long sounds on the vibes, gongs, and bowed sounds. The next set of pieces is titled “Drum Dances,” and the playing is creative in style and color. Other works vary in tempo, mood, and style, but one title that should be mentioned is “Ed Dorado.” The title perfectly describes the style, the harmonic content, and the mood of this work. The performance of solos, unison motives, and counterpoint between the marimba, vibes, and drums is exciting and creative.

This recording is first rate, and the members of the group—Justin Alexander, Brian Baldauff, Omar Carmentates, Tommy Dobbs, Emma Gierszal, Justin Lamb, Melinda Loece, Brian Nozny, Ryan Paatterson, and Lis Rivera—deserve credit for their contributions to this project.

—George Frock

### The Landscape Scrolls

Peter Garland

Starkland

Music often aids in centering oneself. This can be associated with performance, and also with listening. This high-quality recording boasts exceptional performance and sound quality, and it provides the listener with just over 50 minutes of

Zen-like beauty, basked in an onslaught of divine overtones. Commissioned by, and dedicated to, percussionist John Lane, “The Landscape Scrolls” are based on the 24-hour day cycle.

The work consists of five movements: Mid-Day, Sunset, After Dark, Late, and Early Morning. Each movement is dedicated to specific instrumentation: Chinese drums, rice bowls, triangles, glockenspiel, and chimes. Each section is a musical depiction of the composer’s view of the day cycle, and I feel that he was extremely successful in translating his perceptions to music.

John Lane’s performance is masterful; while the music is not “virtuosic,” it is very difficult to communicate effectively. There are so many tangible aspects that the composer tries to depict: mountain ranges, frog ponds, fireflies, stars, and fog are just a few. Lane does a wonderful job with sound production, is a patient performer, and exhibits great skill and nuance.

While I understand that this may not make it onto your jogging playlist, it definitely has a place within the libraries of percussionists and enthusiasts, alike. This allows you to take a step back and appreciate an atmospheric, aural experience.

—T. Adam Blackstock

### Phonix Marimba Orchestra II

Shiniti Uéno and Phonix Réflexion

ALM Records

The overarching purpose of *Phonix Marimba Orchestra II* appears to be an exploration of percussion ensemble music demonstrating varying degrees of Japanese influence, with some connections clear and near to the source, and others a bit more tenuous. If listeners are expecting an hour of heady works like “Michi” and “Prism Rhapsody” however, they will be in for a surprise at the occasional humor and wistfulness of an album that plays more like a variety show than a uniform statement.

A few of the pieces, such as Nathan Daughtrey’s “Firefly” and Makiko Kinoshita’s “The Book of Sand,” will find an immediate audience in North America with their active and accessible material. I found the decision to feature “Firefly” as the recording’s opening track a bit puzzling, and I would have rather heard it later in the album following “The Book of Sand” or one of the other examples of purely Japanese music. When placed in the context of a CD otherwise entirely devoted to Japanese compositions or arrangements performed by a Japanese ensemble, I got the vague sense that there was something disingenuous, almost touristy, about setting the tone of the album with “Firefly” (originally commissioned by the Texas Christian University Percussion Orchestra). The performance itself is very good, and the piece (one of Daughtrey’s stronger

works) is ostensibly based on various Japanese myths, folk songs, and melodic modes, so I suppose there’s a reasonable argument to be made despite my curmudgeonly stance.

The whirling “Prima Luce” by Yo Goto, for two marimba soloists and marimba ensemble, may be the surprise hit of the album for many percussionists, as the interplay between soloists and the ensemble is palpable and captivating even when translated via headphones or speakers (let alone onstage and in person), and could easily find its way onto American university percussion ensemble programs in the near future. However, the dramatic and imposing “Sinfonia M—Hear the voices of the Gods!” by Tokuhide Niimi struck me as both the heart of the album and also its strongest and most memorable piece. At over 17 minutes in length, and beginning with an auspicious Bach Chorale quotation, Niimi’s work is certainly a bold artistic statement and a marathon for the performers, but the ensemble presents a moving and deeply refined performance that captured my attention for its entirety.

Following the gravitas of “Sinfonia M,” the back end of the CD takes an unexpected turn into the realm of the neo-classical, with an arrangement of Russian folk songs and Keiko Abe’s own bubbly arrangement of “Scaramouche” by Darius Milhaud, before concluding with an arrangement of Yoko Sugano’s lyrical “Flowers Will Bloom,” a piece composed in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. All told, the album is something of a potpourri, alternately sincere and quirky, and shines a light on the modern romanticism coming out of Japan’s current generation of composers and arrangers. There’s certainly something for everyone on this CD, and if you’re of the curious type, I would say *Phonix Marimba Orchestra II* is worth checking out.

—Brian Graiser

### Resonance

Dave Rudolf Quintet

Self-Released

Dave Rudolph is a drummer/composer from South Florida who has clearly “been around.” His musical palette is broad, covering many styles and influences including jazz, Afro-Cuban, New Orleans second-line, and even free jazz. *Resonance* showcases both his drumming and composing in a collection of nine selections performed by a world-class contemporary jazz combo. All the tunes are Rudolf’s original compositions, and his drumming is strong, confident, musical, and inventive throughout.

The CD begins with “Atonement,” a samba that moves along at a brisk tempo. The melody is haunting, played by guitar and tenor saxophone. The rhythm section, with Rudolph at the helm, is very

tight and grooving. The style changes near the end of the head to a more sparse feel that launches the guitar solo played by LaRue Nickelson, who is maybe the strongest player in the band (and that’s saying something in this excellent group).

“Those Clumsey Words” is an Afro-Cuban 6/8 with a very compelling, smooth melody floating over the top of the cooking rhythm section. After the solos and restatement of the head, Rudolph solos over a vamp played by the guitar and bass. The drumming here is very fluid and melodic. The next tune, “Lonely Train” is a “big-3” feel that Rudolph plays with brushes during the head. Again, this features the guitar in some wonderful blues-oriented material with Rudolph changing to sticks and continuing the basic feel.

“The Vine” begins with a rubato introduction that leads the listener to think it will be a ballad. But the tune quickly moves to a fast head in a Latin style, played beautifully by tenor saxophonist Zach Bornheimer with guitarist Nickelson. The form of the tune involves some odd phrasing that really works and makes this more than just another predictable Latin tune. Rudolf’s duet with pianist Pablo Arencibia eventually morphs into a solo with the full rhythm section. “Bounce” is the only tune with a swing feel on the CD. It begins with drums, which sets up a Monk-like melody that leads to another great guitar solo by Nickelson. Rudolf finishes the number with a rousing drum solo that is straight out of the jazz tradition.

“Resonance” has a straight eighth feel and is a ballad that features singer Whitney James on a very nice wordless vocal. This leads to “Night Squirrel,” which has a New Orleans second-line feel that is a nice contrast to the other material on the CD. It’s written in a 12-bar blues form and features some nice trading of “4s” by the guitar and sax. “Whimsy” is another ballad that features the piano. After a rubato introduction, the feel settles into a jazz waltz. Rudolf’s writing here is right out of the great American songbook style. His brush work behind the bass solo is very nice as well.

The CD concludes with “Brush Strokes,” which I naturally assumed would also feature Rudolf on brushes. But the title is probably more connected to the painter’s brush, as this is actually a free jazz excursion between saxophonist and drummer. Their interaction is clever and conversational, full of many explorations of colors.

This is an excellent CD featuring great playing by a great band. Rudolf is in command throughout but gives his bandmates plenty of room to show their musical skills. While most people outside of Tampa, Florida might not know of Dave Rudolph and his music, hopefully