

prophecy or to drown.’ Water rejuvenates and is deadly – the latter achieved in this music through a kind of labyrinthine repetition. At length, the piano striates time evenly and persistently to mark the conclusion, and to return us out of this beautiful world.

*pegaeae*, for string trio, begins with a section more silence than sound. Stepping melodic statements alternate with lengthy gaps of silence, evoking the springs for which they are named. The source is unknown, the water magically appearing, dribbling or tumbling from the side of a hill, vanishing just as quickly. The silence between melodic dribbles is, however, artificial, and one can hear the fades to infinity as they were drawn into the DAW. Some are really quite aggressive in their shaping. It is a shame that this obvious technical error was made with this recording. Happily, the discourse modulates slightly to a lush netting of slow glissandi to which the previous dribbles have become ornamentation. Once this texture is established, the second half is more of the same. Yet, for that, it is the case that this is some of the most exquisite music I have heard for some time. I struggle to pinpoint how exactly.

*limnades*, for piano, cello and vibraphone, involves some of the most extraordinary orchestration for a trio I know. It begins with a totemic gesture: C# to a repeated G, ripples on a silent surface. This music is very concerned with its materials, almost didactic. It quietly repeats pitches at different tempi, frequently in unison, sometimes two, and rarely three different pitches. Lithe gestures try to break out of the rippling repeated pitches, to no avail. These textures are spread equally across the three instruments with such grace that one hardly notices the virtuosity. The simplicity of the brilliantly handled materials makes me wonder if Iddon is trying to make this piece work, to make the work push out of itself. But like a lake, it is bounded. Eventually it gives in to the simplest, almost indulgent idea of steady pulses at 55 bpm of the same pitch in various octaves, including a beautifully and luxuriously captured piano in its lower register and concludes shortly thereafter.

*potameides*, for piano, violin, viola, cello, bass clarinet, flute and percussion, consists of diaphanous rapidly flowing lines with dripping repeated pitches. Though this has the largest ensemble of the album, it doesn’t sound at all larger for it – in fact, compared to its slower predecessor, it sounds smaller. The music flows, simply flows and one patiently waits for an event. In the context of the album, it feels to me like a

pure progression of time. I can’t help but wonder how it would read as an isolated piece of concert music. Gradually the roaming lines decrease in their density ever so slightly, and one notices the melodically sculpted nature of the repeating pitches. An ascending semitone is a palpable shift in the grounding of the local moment.

*eleionomae*, for piano, violin, cello, bass clarinet and flute, concludes the album in a totally different world. The contrast reveals the consistency of the preceding music. It was written with the intent that the performers’ eyes would be closed during performance. While all the pieces float in a temporal limbo, this one does so with different materials, which are, to my ears, more conventionally associated with a generic kind of new music. Sounds are much less pitchy, and in the context of the album, unfortunately, it registers only as a loss. The fascinatingly iridescent interface between pitch and noise which is so emblematic of the previous pieces is simply gone. The sounds here are much less lively, more stagnant, swamp-like, even.

The musicians of Apartment House have built an impressive catalogue for *Another Timbre* performing subtly beautiful works, often with unique approaches to aleatoric composition. Their work is defined by a supremely sensitive musicality and compassion that this repertoire requires. The recordings on this album, particularly the first three tracks, are a tremendous achievement.

Alex Huddleston

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Tim Parkinson, *Piano Trio 2020*. Plus Minus. Bandcamp.

It is not commonplace for a composer to successfully manage putting together two full-fledged albums in a year in the mysterious stewing-in-its-own-juice world of new music, where monetary and production resources aren’t abundant while demand for exceptionally good stuff is high. But in the case of Tim Parkinson, 2022 was certainly a fruitful year. After his music had been released on the UK-based label *Another Timbre* in July, packing a mixture of chamber works written in the last 20 years, eager listeners were able to further satisfy their appetite for Parkinson’s tunes when his newest album *Piano Trio 2020* was released at the end of November 2022. The titles of his pieces are often straightforward and Feldman-esque; they do not beat around the bush and communicate

just enough to understand the instrumentation and when it was written. And so, as the name suggests, *Piano Trio 2020* offers a delightful exploration of the composer's more recent chamber endeavours by Plus Minus Ensemble, which consists of Mira Benjamin on violin, Alice Purton on cello and Mark Knoop on piano.

Self-released albums sometimes produce less of an impact, but let this expectation not fool you: the composer's willingness to share the music as soon as possible and not have to deal with the unnecessary bureaucracies of record labels definitely deserves an hour of your life. *Piano Trio 2020*, being the namesake to the album, is the sole 52-minute-long piece on this recording. It is scored for violin, cello and piano and, by a curious stretch of the composer's imagination, it consists of 25 short kaleidoscopic movements, the longest of which clocks in at exactly four minutes. Working in what could be best described, for a lack of a better term, as a post-tonal idiom, Parkinson manages to conjure up diverse and vivid musical imagery. Some of the movements are melancholic, even solemn; others are upbeat and loud. While there is no apparent lynchpin linking the pieces together, and while the movements are different in their character, as a whole they still manage to maintain a uniform identity and a sense of coherence. A fascinating quirk, accentuating this coherent yet diverse maelstrom of musical ideas, is the titles of the movements. The composer resorts to all kinds of semantic tricks: classic Italian designators, such as 'Molto espressivo ma non troppo' and 'Allegro vivace e con brio'; whimsically absurd titles, such as 'Slowly carefully testing a list of 100 notes' and 'Zombie Paradise'; and plain signifiers, such as 'Rich' and 'Staggering'. They are there to perplex you and, by doing so, win your interest.

In an unexpected turn of events, while listening to the album, I found myself witnessing a fascinating and honest dialogue with the musical tradition and pondering whether this had been a conscious intention on the composer's side. The music achieves great success in bringing freshness to the melodies, harmonies and rhythms, which are not particularly uncommon; it is on the constant brink of reinventing itself. There were bits of Bach, Stravinsky and of course Parkinson himself: tunes resembling old Baroque dances alongside more maverick and adventurous bits, such as the deliciously parallel 'Digital', which made me think of the overabundance of digital information in our lives.

It also reminded me of Valentin Silvestrov's concept of 'meta-music', which draws heavily

on musical tradition while simultaneously transcending it. One might hear similar reverberations from *Piano Trio 2020*, where the fleeting material not only sparks interest in what is coming next, but also simply feels appealing without being pretentious about its creative genesis. The deliberate strategy of intertwining a number of seemingly disparate brisker elements into one larger composition allows the album to showcase Parkinson's multifaceted writing in a number of musical contexts, while never losing its essence. This release is superb and has given me sheer joy, which I will definitely revisit in the warmer coming months.

Marat Ingeldeev

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Martin Smolka, *Moon on the Sea – Sea in the Moon*. Press, Aleph Guitar Quartet. Kairos, 0022007KAI.

Martin Smolka is a Czech composer born in 1957. The album, *Moon on the Sea – Sea in the Moon*, released by the Austrian label Kairos, brings together a series of works for guitar quartet written between 1998 and 2020. Two of the four compositions of the collection are mixed pieces for guitar quartet and soprano, with poems from Bashō and Li Po. The album brings together performers of high calibre, such as the Aleph Guitar Quartet, a leading guitar quartet from Germany founded in 1994 and focusing on contemporary music, with whom Smolka has collaborated throughout the years. The other performer on the album is soprano Daisy Press, a versatile singer from the US whose performance practice expands beyond contemporary music to include pop and circus performance. This is the first collaborative project between Smolka and Press, and to my ears it's a very successful one!

The album's compositions present a clearly defined soundworld of the guitar quartet as a musical formation. The performers' execution brings about the timbrally rich sound intended by the composer, while the recording mix captures the richness of the sound, taking strongly into consideration the spatial placement of the musicians, an element that will be creatively treated in some of the pieces. The album presents a cohesive collection of pieces: most pieces are short in duration with a focused treatment of simple yet concise musical ideas.

Smolka's writing is transparent, direct and not developmental in nature. The first composition on the album, *Bashō*, for soprano and guitar