

Points of Departure. Nicholas Papador, percussion. Toronto: Centrediscs CMCCD 20715, 2015. 1 compact disc (55:35). Contents: *A Very Welcome* / Nicholas Papador (5:08) – *Les petites reprises* / Isabelle Panneton (4:55) – *Ariane endormie* / Nicolas Gilbert (8:49) – *Points d’émergence* / François Rosé (15:37) – *Invisible Cities* / Linda Catlin Smith (10:04) – *Night Chill* / Christien Ledroit (11:01).

Percussionist Nicholas Papador enjoys a diversified career. He has performed extensively as a soloist and chamber musician throughout Canada to great praise. Papador also maintains a successful career as an educator at the University of Windsor, where he has served as a faculty member since 2005. Yet Papador wears a third hat—that of an accomplished composer; his works thus far are entirely for percussion.

Points of Departure is a new Canadian Music Centre Centrediscs release on which Papador performs percussion works by six Canadian composers (one by Papador himself). There is an intriguing order to the six compositions, one that engenders an arch design to the overall recording with respect to the instrumentation. For instance, the first two are scored for solo marimba; the third is for solo vibraphone; the fourth is scored for a small group of three metal, three wood, and three drum instruments (all played by one performer); the fifth and sixth works are for solo vibraphone and marimba, respectively.

The disc begins with Papador’s 2008 *A Very Welcome*. In his program notes, Papador indicates that the solo marimba piece was written for his wife Johanna to celebrate the birth of their son. In essence, the ternary-designed work is an etude for the instrument featuring arpeggios and extended intervals for each hand. The ebullient mood of the piece no doubt reflects the circumstances behind the composition’s origin.

The next work is Isabelle Panneton’s solo marimba *Les petites reprises* from 1992. In this ternary-designed composition, the outer portions feature a spirited series of rapid passages, trills, and tremolo harmonies; the interval of a third is a prominent harmonic element. The contrasting middle section contains slow, chorale-like textures. Panneton notes that the title is a simple reference to the abridged reprise of the opening material.

Scored for solo vibraphone, Nicolas Gilbert’s 2005 *Ariane endormie* is a beautiful, contemplative work. The arch design of the piece can be attributed to the program underlying the piece. Gilbert suggests that the calm opening represents Ariadne’s slumber; the restless middle portion of the composition identifies her agitated sleep, which returns to the quiet repose that ends the work.

François Rose’s *Point d’émergence* dates from 2000; at fifteen minutes in duration, it is the longest work and the title track of the album. As his program notes elucidate, the piece is organized into a type of continuous variation design. For instance, the opening three-minute section contains seven phrases. In the first phrase, there is an interactive dialogue of a primary motive among the three instrumental



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families; each of the six subsequent phrases contains further development of this imitative texture; however, each phrase becomes incrementally shorter, generating a sense of acceleration to the overall section. Succeeding sections essentially modify this design, where each section explores both contrapuntal and rhythmic variations on this primary motive.

Invisible Cities is a 1982 solo vibraphone work by Linda Catlin Smith. She writes that the inspiration for this work is drawn from Italo Calvino's novel of the same name. Specifically, just as Calvino portrays a different city in each chapter, yet each is fundamentally always a description of Venice, each section of Smith's work is a variation of a series of harmonic gestures, where rising three- and four-note chords in which minor second/major seventh and perfect fourth/fifth intervals feature prominently throughout. The slow tempo of the work combined with extensive use of the instrument's sustain pedal engenders a meditative, luminous quality to the composition.

The final work on the recording is Christien Ledroit's 2004 *Night Chill* for marimba and electronics. Although not a programmatic work per se, Ledroit writes that "the title refers to the general feeling of the piece and the senses that surrounded me during its composition—the rustling of leaves, bare trees and cool nights." The piece is a type of rondo design: the refrains are toccata-styled virtuosic passages cast within a strict meter (11/16); by contrast, the episodes are quite free, contemplative improvisatory exchanges between the marimba and electronic sounds (some of which are computer generated, while others are taped sounds of the marimba). The introduction begins with slow, interactive material for the marimba; there is a child-like naivety to the music. As the piece unfolds, the refrain becomes more exuberant and the episodes more complex in their instrument/electronic dialogue, culminating in the violent torrent of activity that ends the composition.

These six divergent works demand a consummate musician to negotiate their broad range of technical challenges. They also contain a wealth of pitch and harmonic relationships that the performer must convey in a meaningful and engaging manner. Simply put, Papador's performances are spectacular. Not only does he handle complex rhythms with aplomb, his flawless musicianship also summons for the listener a broad range of emotions—from extensive energy to profound subtlety. With each listening, I became ever more engrossed in these fascinating and intricate compositions.

Full marks go to recording engineer Douglas Romanow and the sound mastering by Graemme Brown for their work in generating the excellent sound and balance throughout the disc. The liner notes are serviceable, and appear to have been procured from the composers' web sites or the CMC library. In sum, this is an exceptional release of contemporary percussion works by one of Canada's vital performers. May there be many more!

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