

ELEGANT FEROCITY: THE MUSIC OF LOIS V VIERK

The majestic beauty and savage turbulence that one often beholds while witnessing an awesome act of nature is also evident in Lois V Vierk's vigorous and delicate music. In her meticulously wrought works, she enfoldes the rapture of opulent expression in the elegance of formal rigor, a combination that derives much of its power and grace from a sensitive integration of Western experimental practices with the traditional classical music of Japan. "I've always felt equally drawn to the West and to the East," Vierk explains, "in terms of my analytical training in Western music and the musical principles I learned during twelve years of actively studying and performing *gagaku*, ancient Japanese court music."¹ Because both musical cultures occupy such prominent places in Vierk's musical imagination, she recognized important points of intersection, including structural clarity and timbral sensuousness—musical elements that she had inherited from the previous generation of composers. In the 1960s and 1970s, minimalists who had worked with sustained sounds and gradual processes introduced a new sense of musical time that persuaded listeners to attend to subtle qualities of timbre, and Vierk regarded this perceptual shift as an expressive point of departure for her own work.

Part of Vierk's ability to capture and transform the powerful elegance of *gagaku* comes from her capacity to retain the deep impact of her initial exposure to the music. Raised in the Midwest, she had consumed the music of J. S. Bach, found great pleasure in playing Beethoven's piano sonatas, and attended Valparaiso University, a Lutheran school in Indiana with a program that specialized in church music. Although responsive to the rich musical tradition of her own culture, Vierk realized that she was being exposed to a limited range of musical styles—a realization, she explains, that "propelled me on an odyssey that has affected the rest of my life."² That odyssey began in 1971, when she transferred as an undergraduate student to UCLA, which boasted a vibrant ethnomusicology department. The program featured celebrated musicians from around the world who directed ensembles in which students could gain first-hand experience with music of non-Western cultures.

Vierk explored several musical traditions during her studies at UCLA, but she was especially struck by the majestic power of *gagaku*, the imperial court music of Japan. "The sound was massive," she recalls. "It cleared out all the thoughts from my head and just made me listen."³ Vierk was transfixed by the combination of power and elegance of the stately music: "This gorgeous combination of huge, massive, loud sound, and the very graceful shapes of the slides and the melodies . . . just got me."⁴ Vierk was captivated by the rich sounds of the double reeds, flutes, and percussion, which were sometimes set in homogeneous units, highlighting subtle differences in timbre, articulation, and dynamics. She was especially taken by the canonic imitation among like instruments—passages in free rhythm that often accompanied the entrance or exit of dancers—and the complexity of the melodic lines with their preponderance of sliding

¹ Ann McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 152.

² *Ibid.*

³ Lois V Vierk, "Studying *Gagaku*," in *Arcana: Musicians on Music*, ed. John Zorn (New York: Granary Books, 2000), 307.

⁴ Frank J. Oteri, "Lois V Vierk: Slideways," *NewMusicBox*, website of the American Music Center, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/lois-v-vierk-slideways> (January 1, 2008; accessed December 9, 2014).

tones struck her as profoundly beautiful. The carefully measured formal design of the compositions, most of which progress from a slow and calm introduction to more robust and animated sections, exerted a visceral impact on Vierk as well. She enthusiastically undertook a disciplined study of the *ryuteki* flute with Suenobu Togi, a master from the Imperial Household who directed the *gagaku* ensemble at UCLA, and she continued to play in the ensemble for over a decade, several years beyond her graduation.

After completing her B.A. degree in piano and ethnomusicology in 1974, Vierk worked as a piano accompanist for the Los Angeles Ballet and continued playing in Togi's ensemble, but she soon began to develop an interest in composition. Her piano teacher at UCLA, Aube Tzerko, recommended that she contact Leonard Stein, the former pupil and assistant of Arnold Schoenberg. A major figure in the new music scene in Los Angeles, Stein served on the faculty at the California Institute of the Arts, but he first encouraged Vierk to learn the fundamentals of composition with one of his former students, Dean Drummond, who had recently assumed custody of the Harry Partch legacy. After studying with Drummond for a year, Vierk began working privately with Stein, who assigned Vierk to analyze serial music by such European modernists as Schoenberg, Berg, Webern, Berio, Stockhausen, and Xenakis. Through Stein, Vierk became immersed in the exhilarating new music community, which sparked both her imagination and her enthusiasm. She regularly attended the Monday Evening Concerts, the premiere contemporary music series in Los Angeles that Stein helped produce, and she was also invited to informal gatherings at Stein's home, where many acclaimed musicians would come to play for just a few guests. "The whole experience working with Leonard was enormously exciting for me as a young composer," Vierk recalls. "I had had no idea this world even existed. I loved it totally and wanted to write."⁵

In the fall of 1976, at Stein's encouragement, Vierk enrolled in the graduate program at the California Institute of the Arts, where she studied composition with Mel Powell and Morton Subotnick. "All during my composing career, various words of Mel would ring inside my head as I was writing," Vierk relates. "Concepts like 'multiplicity' of sounds, 'clarity' of intent, for example, informed all of my writing."⁶ The innovative curriculum at CalArts—which emphasized experimentation, collaboration, and world music—was well suited to Vierk's interests, and provided her with an eager band of talented performers dedicated to new music. She also greatly benefited from the residencies of numerous guest composers, including John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Pauline Oliveros, each of whom reinforced her enchantment with the physicality of sound and fortified her personal artistic vision.

After earning the M.F.A. in composition from CalArts in 1978, Vierk remained active in the contemporary music community in Los Angeles and continued to perform as a member of Togi's *gagaku* ensemble at UCLA. Working as Assistant Music Director at the KPFK radio studio, she hosted a weekly show of world music, as well as the monthly "World Series," which presented non-Western ensembles to a live and broadcast audience.⁷ She also co-founded the Independent Composers Association, a collective of young composers who sponsored new music productions throughout the region. In 1980, Vierk attended the New Music America festival in Minneapolis, which featured recent works by Alvin Lucier and Phill Niblock, composers whose drone music

⁵ Lois V Vierk, email correspondence with the author, March 10, 2015.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

made a lasting impression on her. “The concentration on sheer sensuous beauty of sound in the ‘long-tone’ works of minimalist composers in the ’70s and ’80s,” Vierk remarks, “especially the work of Phill Niblock, has always been arresting for me.”⁸ After the festival, she accompanied Togi’s *gagaku* ensemble to Japan, where she met Sukeyasu Shiba, the principal *ryuteki* player of the emperor’s Imperial Court Orchestra. Subsequently, Togi made arrangements for Vierk to study with Shiba for two years in Tokyo. After she returned from Japan in 1984, Vierk moved to New York, where she participated in the vibrant new music scene downtown, and by the end of the decade her creative voice emerged as one of the most unique among the generation of “postminimalist” composers.

Since *gagaku* so thoroughly inhabited Vierk’s sound world, it is reasonable that certain aspects of the Japanese genre can be heard in her music. One pervasive feature of her work, for example, is the glissando, the sliding effect that seamlessly carries a sound from one pitch level to another within a continuous frequency spectrum. Unlike the conventional uses of *portamento* as an occasional expressive device in Western classical music, the glissando is much more prominent in *gagaku*, where it is not merely ornamental, but an integral part of the melodic profile. “It isn’t a decoration,” Vierk says about her own use of the glissando. “There’s always a musical phrase that’s going from one point to the other point, and the glissando gets you there. . . . It just sounds so beautiful to me, to have that glissando happening and also to have it make sense musically.”⁹ She also extends the idea of traversing the sonic continuum to other musical parameters: “To me glissando includes all kinds of continuous smoothly changing sound, be it of pitch, timbre, intensity, or volume.”¹⁰

Another aspect of *gagaku* that is reflected in Vierk’s music is her proclivity for writing for multiples of the same instrument. “I think that this multiples idea first came to me from certain pieces in the *gagaku* repertoire,” Vierk explains, “where three bamboo *ryuteki* flutes or *hichiriki* double reeds play canons in free rhythm. The transparency of timbre allows small nuances of dynamics, articulations, pitch slides, etc. to be clearly heard. . . . The sound to me is at once complex because of all its many parts, but also clear and direct, because of the transparent timbre.”¹¹ Writing for an ensemble of like instruments produces what Vierk calls a “wall of sound,”¹² which can be heard in a series of pieces she composed in the 1980s, including *Go Guitars* (1981) for five guitars, *Manhattan Cascade* (1985) for four accordions, *Simoom* (1986) for eight cellos, and *Cirrus* (1987) for six trumpets. Although Vierk had begun writing more frequently for heterogeneous ensembles by the 1990s (none of the works on this recording, for example, feature ensembles of multiples), she assimilated the sensitivity for timbral subtlety that she had cultivated in her music for multiples.

A third characteristic of Vierk’s music that is somewhat related to *gagaku* concerns what she calls “exponential structure,” an organizational principle that produces a precisely measured acceleration over the course of a work. “All sensory phenomena in the body are measured in exponential terms, not in linear terms,” Vierk explains. “A sound that subjectively sounds ‘twice as loud’ as another does not have twice the amount of energy. A light that looks ‘twice as bright’

⁸ Lois V Vierk, unpublished “Artist Statement.”

⁹ Oteri, “Slideways.”

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings*, 153.

¹² Oteri, “Slideways.”

as another doesn't have twice the amount of energy. The same applies to touch stimulation and perception of pain. . . . The relationship between perceived and actual amounts of stimuli is an exponential relationship, not a simple arithmetic one," she continues. "So I wondered, what would happen if I applied this idea to time, to rates of development and rates of change in a composition?"¹³ In the 1980s she began to construct forms in which the rate of change of several musical parameters (such as harmony, rhythm, texture, etc.) were determined by exponential factors. "The sections of this piece would always be getting shorter and shorter, and the pitch centers would be changing faster and faster," she explains. "I don't mean tempo here, but since more and more information and more and more energy are being added to the sounds, the musical material is moving past you in time quicker and quicker."¹⁴

These three elements—glissando as a formal function, extreme sensitivity to timbre relationships, and exponential structure—are evident in the works on this recording, but the composer's primary intention has always been the clear, direct, physical presence of sound as a mode of expression. "In my own music," she insists, "pure sensuous beauty is often a starting point. I work with emotional expressiveness and with many kinds of sound relationships as well, to build form and structure."¹⁵ Also, although Vierk's music is not overtly programmatic, she often draws formal and poetic inspiration from dualistic images of the natural world, including the astronomical phenomenon of an eclipsing binary star, the border of a forest at elevation, and the mysterious power of the sea below its calm surface.

The title of *To Stare Astonished at the Sea* (1994) was drawn from William Butler Yeats, whose love poem "Her Triumph" closes with the lines "And now we stare astonished at the sea/And a miraculous strange bird shrieks at us." Vierk interprets Yeats's phrase as a declaration that "the energy of life itself is untamed and often wilder and more beautiful than what shows on the surface," a sentiment that reflects the alternately peaceful and turbulent nature of her music. "When it is calm the ocean is gentle and inviting," Vierk observes. "It can be mysteriously majestic or humbly powerful. Sometimes it thrashes about frighteningly."¹⁶ Literally coaxing the fierce beauty from the "inner life" of the piano, Vierk adopts Henry Cowell's innovative practice of directly strumming and plucking the strings on the inside of the instrument. The piece is set in three sections: it begins by issuing primordial pulses that sound the "mysterious" depths of the low register, then moves through the middle register with sweeping glissandos and plucked pentatonic melodies, until the piece evaporates with ethereal wisps in the upper register.

Demon Star (1996) was inspired by an eclipsing binary star called Algol (literally "demon head"), which is part of the constellation Perseus. For generations, the vacillating brightness of Algol confounded observers until it was recognized to be two orbiting stars of different luminosity. Intrigued by the image of such revolving perspectives, Vierk composed a work for cello and marimba in which the contrasting instruments alternately emerge into the foreground and recede into the background, sometimes "eclipsing" the other, other times blending together to give the illusion of a single timbre. The score calls for extreme sensitivity of the performers, who are required to execute fine distinctions of articulation, dynamics, and decay: "In places I've asked the two players to make the cello sound more like a marimba and the marimba more like a

¹³ McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings*, 156–57.

¹⁴ Oteri, "Slideways."

¹⁵ Lois V Vierk, unpublished "Artist Statement."

¹⁶ Lois V Vierk, unpublished "Program Notes."

cello,” Vierk explains, “no easy task!”¹⁷ The majority of the piece is comprised of double stops in the cello and double mallets on the marimba, many of which are open intervals that produce the “wall of sound” that characterizes much of her previous work for ensembles of multiples. The animated propulsion of a steady pulse is often articulated throughout the work with repeated pitches and measured tremolos that are passed between the two instruments. Like the slight and radical shifts in illumination that radiate from a binary star, the musical materials undergo constant variation, but there is a clear structural progression from an aggressive and energetic section to freely measured lyrical content, which is different than several of her works that unfold in the opposite direction.

Vierk offers an especially evocative image to describe *Timberline* (1991): “On a map it is just a boundary, but in person a timberline is an experience of time and light unfolding. The dark closeness of the forest gives way gradually to spaciousness. Light shimmers in. Blue sky and hints of the grandeur ahead draw you up the mountain. You cross the timberline not in an instant, but through a short span when time is replaced by exhilaration.”¹⁸ Cast in two continuous sections, *Timberline* begins with sustained notes and slow glissandos in the winds and strings in the middle register. Gradually, the instruments engage in canonic imitation, resembling the unmeasured introduction of traditional *gagaku*. The heterogeneous ensemble permits Vierk to concoct rich timbral combinations that materialize independently and dissolve into one another. The formal development of *Timberline* is governed by the composer’s principle of “exponential structure,” where the note values and phrases become progressively shorter, the dynamics increase, the registers expand, and the texture grows more dense. The structural acceleration is punctuated by increased rhythmic activity in the piano and percussion, yielding a jubilant climax that encompasses the full range of the ensemble.

In 1998, Vierk was struck with a debilitating autoimmune disorder that often restricts her ability to compose, but the condition provided perspective on her life and art: “It was terrible on many fronts when I first got sick,” Vierk recalls. “I just [didn’t] have it in me to finish pieces. I think being out of the scene for so long makes you realize what really is important and what’s not. The scene is not important.”¹⁹ She would begin many pieces, but she found it impossible to sustain the physical energy necessary to complete a work. Before she was properly diagnosed, she had several sketches in various stages when the appalling tragedy of September 11, 2001 took place. “My family and I had watched horrid events of that day ‘live’ out our apartment window, as thousands of people were murdered before our eyes when the World Trade Center was shot down,” Vierk relates. “It is an image I will never ever forget of smoke and dust drenching lower Manhattan in a horrible white cloud of debris that used to be a building vibrant with the energy of many living, breathing people.”²⁰ After spending several weeks “in a kind of daze,” she discarded her earlier sketches and composed a simple melody that became the basis of *Words Fail Me* (2005), an expression of the devastation of the community and, perhaps, her personal affliction.

Written for cello and piano, *Words Fail Me* consists of two contrasting movements that reflect Vierk’s ongoing fascination with dualities. The melancholy first movement features the halting

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Oteri, “Slideways.”

²⁰ Lois V Vierk, unpublished “Program Notes.”

lyricism of the cello melody, replete with heart-wrenching glissandos, which is accompanied by short ascending *furries* in the piano. Initially devoid of a perceivable pulse or meter, the instruments seem rhythmically isolated from each other until the latter half of the movement, when the cello melody is conjoined with the steady chordal accompaniment of the piano. The driving energy of the second movement is launched by a motoric rhythm in fifths and octaves in the low register, which is slightly reminiscent of Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. A series of modulations send the music into different harmonic regions and higher registers as the movement builds in thunderous intensity, with the increasingly dense texture giving the impression of a larger ensemble. The unmistakable sense of defiant struggle and achievement offers a triumphant counterpart to the somber spirit of the first movement. "This piece is meant as a tribute to the victims and to all the people of greater New York City," Vierk explains, "as well as to all people anywhere who survive tragedy and disaster and go on with life with great resolve."²¹

Vierk's artistic resolve has always privileged the integrity of physical sound, the idea that any sound carries the potential for profound expression. "To me it just rings true," she states. "It's real. It's life. It's earthy."²² Visceral impact remains at the core of Vierk's work—indeed, her attraction to *gagaku*, which first propelled her on a lifelong odyssey, preceded her earliest ambitions to compose. Distinct from many American and European modernists whose experimental curiosity led them to explore the music of non-Western cultures, Vierk made her artistic approach from the opposite direction: she began her arduous study of composition after she had already engaged *gagaku*, lending her a unique perspective that continues to enrich her musical imagination. "Gagaku will be a lifelong journey for me," Vierk indicates. "The intangibles that first pulled me in—the power, the timeless beauty, the elegance—are still there. A lifelong reward."²³

—Eric Smigel

Eric Smigel is Associate Professor of Music and coordinator of the musicology program at San Diego State University.

On form and growth

Lois Vierk's pieces speak simply at first: "Here I am." Their first moments tell you all you need to know about what will happen. This is generally true of honest people, and Lois is one of the most honest composers and people I've ever known.

They begin like the beginning of a friendship. And like life or a love affair they grow (in Lois's term) exponentially, obeying the law of logarithmic perception—we generally perceive in ratios, not as additions and subtractions. Lois is disciplined in this practice, and its mechanisms—temporal and polyphonic density (her music is always polyphonically, never heterophonically complex—the whole never cedes control to the parts).

The unsolvable problem of exponential growth is that things get way too large way too quickly. Lois solves the problem: when a thing grows *almost* too far, it becomes something new, like ideas, which ends in transformation, or morphogenesis, to radically new ones. In Lois's music

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Oteri, "Slideways."

²³ Lois V Vierk, "Studying *Gagaku*," 310.

morphogenesis is the rule and the engine—new ideas start when previous ones have run their course. They demand new beginnings and identities. The new idea knows all that the old idea knew, but it also knows how to begin afresh.

Lois's pieces often end quietly, with what might be called codas. I've known Lois for many years, as a friend and fellow composer, and as an advocate and frequent performer of her music. Sometimes I think of these endings as a gift to the performers, a reward for the tremendous sustenance of attention and precision required by her music.

But there are no gifts in her music: the "coda" is the perfectly timed final morphogenesis. Her *real* musical gifts are honesty, clarity of music vision, and fanatical dedication to getting things right. She revises her pieces at an alarming (and for performers, maddening) rate. Her music is as merciless as it is rewarding.

Many years ago, I had a wonderful student whose pieces oscillated between two extremes: forward-looking experimentalism and deep formal and harmonic conservatism. The latter, it seemed to me, were written out of a reticence to let her conventional music training "go to waste." I invited Lois to meet with her. Lois silently sifted through the large stack of the student's scores, separating them into two piles. When she finished she pointed to the first pile, the more conservative pieces, and said: "Take these pieces, throw them out." She pointed to the other stack and said "Do this".

As much as any composer I've ever known, Lois understands when new is required and why. For her, growth is form and form is growth, and I think she's right.

—Larry Polansky

Larry Polansky is a composer, theorist, teacher, writer, performer, programmer, editor and publisher.

Lois V Vierk (b. 1951) studied composition with Mel Powell, Leonard Stein, and Morton Subotnick and received an MFA degree from California Institute of the Arts. For ten years she studied *gagaku* (Japanese Court Music) with Mr. Suenobu Togi in Los Angeles, and for two years she studied in Tokyo with Mr. Sukeyasu Shiba, the lead *ryuteki* flutist of the emperor's Gagaku Orchestra. Ms. Vierk has spent most of her career in New York City. Her music has achieved an impressive international reputation and has been presented in Composer Portrait concerts at German Radio Cologne and by other German and Swiss ensembles. Major commissioned works include *Silversword* for the Lincoln Center Festival, where it was performed by the Reigakusha Ensemble of Tokyo, and *River Beneath the River*, commissioned by the Barbican Center, London, for the Kronos Quartet, which has performed it many times.

Among the many performers and presenters who have commissioned Vierk are pianists Ursula Oppens, Frederic Rzewski, Aki Takahashi, and Margaret Leng Tan; accordionist Guy Klucevsek; Ensemble Modern, the Kitchen, the Paul Dresher Ensemble, the Bang on a Can Festival, L'Art Pour L'Art, and Music from Japan. Co-creations with tap-dance choreographer Anita Feldman have been commissioned by the American Dance Festival, the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, Meet the Composer and others. Filmmaker Holly Fisher has spotlighted Vierk's music in the feature-length film *Everywhere at Once* and other films. Her music has been performed at major venues worldwide, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Barbican Centre, Darmstadt, the Huddersfield Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Festival, Edmonton New Music Festival, Suntory Festival (Tokyo), Adelaide Festival (Australia).

Matthew Gold is a percussionist in the Talea Ensemble, where he also serves as director of operations, and a member of the Talujon percussion group. As a soloist and chamber musician he appears frequently on festivals and programs across the U.S. and internationally, presenting concert programs, master classes, and lectures. Mr. Gold is an instructor of percussion at Williams College where he directs the Williams Percussion Ensemble, the I/O New Music Ensemble, and the annual I/O Festival of New Music. He serves on the artistic staff of the Wellesley Composers Conference and the Institute and Festival for Contemporary Performance at Mannes College. Mr. Gold performs regularly with the Mark Morris Dance Group and has been a member of the resident ensemble at the Walden School's Young Musicians Program.

Pianist **Margaret Kampmeier** enjoys a varied career as soloist, collaborative artist and educator. A founding member of the Naumburg Award-winning New Millennium Ensemble, Ms. Kampmeier performs regularly with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. She has appeared with the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic Ensembles, Metropolitan Opera Chamber Ensemble and the Kronos Quartet. A dedicated educator, Ms. Kampmeier teaches piano at Princeton University and is Chair and Artistic Director of the Contemporary Performance Program at the Manhattan School of Music. She attended the Eastman School of Music and SUNY Stony Brook, and is most grateful to her mentors, Barry Snyder, Gilbert Kalish, Julius Levine and Jan DeGaetani. Ms. Kampmeier is an avid reader, and enjoys traveling and spending time with her family. A native of Rochester, NY, Ms. Kampmeier currently resides in New York City.

Cellist **Theodore Mook** is a versatile performer, comfortable in avant-garde, classical, historical, and commercial styles. He has been an active proponent of new music since 1980. After almost thirty years in New York City, he now makes his home in rural Rhode Island, and serves on the faculties of the University of Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Philharmonic Music School. Mr. Mook has performed at the Library of Congress, the American Academy in Rome, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, with appearances at festivals around the world. His extensive discography spans more than 100 works from the classical, avant-garde, popular, Broadway and hip-hop styles. Mr. Mook is an enthusiastic performer on period instruments as well, and performed as a continuo cellist with New York's Musica Sacra, Sacred Music in a Sacred Space, The Fairfield Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Lukes, Long Island Early Music, and for many years with the legendary Blanche Moyse at the Marlboro Festival.

Relâche is a new-music ensemble that for over thirty years has maintained an international reputation as a leader in commissioning and performing the innovative music of our time. Relâche has a unique sound—flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, viola, piano, bass and percussion, and performs works that are neither classical nor popular, but somewhere in between—a melding of Western classical traditions with jazz, rock, electronica, world music, and more. Among the oldest continuously operating, non-profit organizations and chamber ensembles dedicated to contemporary music in the United States, Relâche has consistently offered world-class performances and presentations of music by leading American and international composers and artists. To date, Relâche has performed more than 600 concerts in the Greater Philadelphia area, around the country and the globe, including residency, festival, and touring appearances in South America, Japan, and Eastern and Western Europe. The Ensemble boasts a touring-ready

repertoire of more than 50 pieces and a repertory library of over 400 works. Relâche has released seven CDs to date.

English hornist and oboist **Lloyd Shorter** (conductor on this disc), is presently Co-Artistic Director of Relâche. He has curated and produced countless Relâche productions, residencies, recordings, and special projects including commissioning new music for silent films. He was previously the oboe faculty and new-music faculty at the University of Delaware and served on the national performing arts committee of Internet2. He produced interviews using Internet2 as a vehicle for bringing artists “virtually” in the classroom. They included Philip Glass, Merce Cunningham, Meredith Monk and Rinde Eckert. In 2014–15 he is curating and performing in Relâche events at the Barnes Foundation, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Penn Museum as well as a residence at Dickinson College.

Zürich-based pianist **Claudia Rüegg** studied with Hadassa Schwimmer, Werner Bärtschi and Erna Ronca, and received a Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy as well as a Master of Arts in Music Performance. She teaches music at the University of Teacher Education Thurgau (PHTG) and works as a pianist. Ms. Rüegg is a soloist and chamber musician and regularly performs in concerts across Europe and North America. Her broad repertoire emphasizes 20th-century music (Cage, Feldman, Wolff, Stockhausen, Donatoni, Scelsi, Schönberg, Webern, Kurtag, Holliger, among many others). She has worked with such composers as Ernst Thoma, Lois V Vierk, Alfred Zimmerlin, Annette Schmucki, Christoph Gallio, Ulrich Gasser, Hans Koch and others. She has performed at major contemporary music venues worldwide and many of her concerts have been broadcast by Swiss Radio DRS 2 and Deutschlandfunk.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Go Guitars. Seth Josel, electric guitar. OO Discs 36.

Io. Margaret Lancaster, flute; Larry Polansky, electric guitar; Matthew Gold, percussion. New World Records 80665-2.

Manhattan Cascade. Guy Klucsevsek, accordion. New World/CRI NWCR 626.

Red Shift IV. Included on *Bang on a Can Live, Vol. 2*. New World/CRI NWCR 646.

River Beneath the River. Various artists. Tzadik 7056.

Simoom. Theodore Mook, cello. XI Records 102.

Spin 2. Claudia Rüegg and Petra Ronner, pianos. Vexer Verlag CHF 45.

Production credits:

Words Fail Me and *Demon Star*

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman

Assistant engineer: Jeanne Velonis

Edited by Jeanne Velonis and Judith Sherman

Recorded September 22 and 30, 2014 at the Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City.

Piano by Steinway & Sons (*Words Fail Me*)

To Stare Astonished at the Sea

Produced and engineered by Ernst Thoma

Recorded June 21, 2002 in Münsterlingen, Switzerland on a Steinway B piano.

Timberline

Producer: Joseph Franklin

Engineer: John Vanore

Assistant Engineer: Glenn Carty

Editor: Peter Price

Recorded direct to two-track digital in July 1992 at Acoustical Concepts in Eddystone, PA.

Recording made possible through the generosity of Thomas Buckner and funding from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music. *Timberline* was previously issued on OO Discs 17.

Digital mastering: Paul Zinman, SoundByte Productions Inc., NYC

Cover art: *Radiance Light* by Darcy A. Spitz

Design: Bob Defrin Design, Inc.

All works published by the composer. Lois V Vierk's scores are available from Frog Peak Music (www.frogpeak.org). Contact the composer at www.loisvvierk.com.

This recording was made possible by a grant from the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trust.

Special thanks to Jed Distler, Bruce Ide, Wendy Shufen Ide, Al Margolis, Phill Niblock and Experimental Intermedia, Larry Polansky, Lloyd Shorter, and Paul Tai.

FOR NEW WORLD RECORDS:

Lisa Kahlden, President; Paul M. Tai, Vice-President, Director of Artists and Repertory; Mojisola Oké, Bookkeeper; Paul Herzman, Production Associate.

ANTHOLOGY OF RECORDED MUSIC, INC., BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Herman Krawitz, Chairman; Amy Beal; Thomas Teige Carroll; Robert Clarida; Emanuel Gerard; Lisa Kahlden; Fred Lerdahl; Larry Polansky; Paul M. Tai.

Francis Goelet (1926–1998), *In Memoriam*

For a complete catalog, including liner notes, visit our Web site: www.newworldrecords.org.

New World Records, 20 Jay Street, Suite 1001, Brooklyn, NY 11201

Tel (212) 290-1680 Fax (646) 224-9638

E-mail: info@newworldrecords.org

© & © 2015 Anthology of Recorded Music, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

**NO PART OF THIS RECORDING MAY BE COPIED OR REPRODUCED
WITHOUT WRITTEN PERMISSION OF A.R.M., INC.**

LOIS VIERK (b. 1951)

WORDS FAIL ME

80766-2

1. *To Stare Astonished at the Sea* (1994) 6:37

Claudia Rüegg, piano

2. *Demon Star* (1996) 14:14

Theodore Mook, cello; Matthew Gold, marimba

3. *Timberline* (1991) 16:10

Relâche: Laurel Wyckoff, flute; Ken Ulansey, clarinet; Chuck Holdeman, bassoon; Kathleen Carroll, viola; Douglas Mapp, bass; John Dulik, piano; Helen Carnevale, percussion; Lloyd Shorter, conductor

Words Fail Me (2005) 19:34

4. I 7:19

5. II 12:15

Theodore Mook, cello; Margaret Kampmeier, piano

TT: 56:53