

JOHANNA BEYER (1888–1944)

STICKY MELODIES

ASTRA CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY, JOHN MCCAUGHEY, MUSICAL DIRECTOR
80678-2 [2CDs]

Disc 1: TT: 49:23

Suite for Clarinet I (1932) 11:35

1. I. Presto 3:05

2. II. Largo 4:16

3. III. Moderato 1:09

4. IV. Rallentando 2:54

Daniel Goode, clarinet

String Quartet No. 1 (1933–34) 19:22

5. I. Allegro 2:01

6. II. Lento 11:51

7. III. Moderato 3:24

8. IV. Presto 1:54

Miwako Abe, violin 1; Aaron Barnden, violin 2; Erkki Veltheim, viola; Rosanne Hunt, cello

Three Songs for Soprano and Clarinet (1934)

9. *Total Eclipse* 4:27

10. *To Be* 1:00

11. *Universal—Local* 2:11

Merlyn Quaife, soprano; Craig Hill, clarinet

12. *Bees* (date unknown) :54

Peter Dumsday, piano

13. *The Federal Music Project* (1936) 5:14

The Astra Choir, John McCaughey, conductor

14. Movement for Two Pianos (1936) 4:00

Peter Dumsday, piano 1; Kim Bastin, piano 2

DISC 2: TT: 46:20

Suite for Clarinet Ib (1932) 9:21

1. I. Giocososo 1:05
 2. II. Lamentation 3:48
 3. III. Contrast (Sonnet form) 2:02
 4. IV. Accelerando 2:14
- Craig Hill, clarinet

String Quartet No. 2 (1936) 9:15

5. I. Allegretto 1:59
 6. II. Largo 3:58
 7. III. Moderato 2:13
 8. IV. Allegro quasi Presto :54
- Miwako Abe, violin 1; Aaron Barnden, violin 2; Erkki Veltheim, viola; Rosanne Hunt, cello

9. *Ballad of the Star-Eater* (1934) 7:26

Merlyn Quaiife, soprano; Craig Hill, clarinet

10. Movement for Double Bass and Piano (1936) 4:01

Nicholas Synot, double bass; Kim Bastin, piano

Three Pieces for Choir (1937)

11. *The Main Deep* 2:28

The Astra Choir, John McCaughey, conductor

12. *The Composers' Forum Laboratory* 1:54

The Astra Choir with Kim Bastin, piano; John McCaughey, conductor

13. *The People, Yes!* 4:09

The Astra Choir, John McCaughey, conductor

Sonatina in C (1943) 7:05

14. I. Allegro brioso 1:48

15. II. Scherzo 1:03

16. III. Andante 1:52

17. IV. Sciolto 2:17

Peter Dumsday, piano

“...sticky melodies...”

The Choral and Chamber Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer

by Larry Polansky

With this double-CD set much of Johanna Magdalena Beyer’s music can be heard for the first time. Remarkably, all of this music was written between 1930 and 1943 by an important immigrant American artist whose works, until recently, have been little known, rarely heard, and not well understood.

Beyer was part of the New York City modernist group of composers that included Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford Seeger, Charles Seeger, Carl Ruggles, and others. But only within the last few years has her music begun to be discussed alongside the music of these other composers. During her lifetime she heard only a few of her pieces (which number over forty). Of those works that did receive performances, it seems likely that most were performed a small number of times. After her death in 1944 from ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), her manuscripts languished in the archives of the American Music Center and the New York Public Library for four decades before a number of composers and performers (including Charles Amirkhanian, John Kennedy, and myself) began to bring them to the attention of the contemporary music scene by publishing, performing, and writing about them.

For various reasons, this large body of historically important modernist work from the 1930s has been almost completely overlooked. Perhaps not so parenthetically, it also happens to have been written by a woman, and one who seemed to have little skill in promoting her own work. Regardless, this music needs no added “hook” to interest us: It is richly scored, unusual in its voice and its craft, and forward-looking. I continue to discover new beauty in this music even after twenty years of involvement with it. Beyer is part of the history of twentieth-century American experimental music, and deserves to be received as such. The nature of her role is, perhaps, yet to be fully understood: Our knowledge of her work is still sketchy at best. We owe a debt of gratitude to John McCaughey and the Astra Chamber Music Society for undertaking this fascinating project with such a deep sense of commitment, love for the work, and extraordinary skill. Sixty-four years after her death, we can finally hear a great deal of her work for the first time in these excellent recordings.

Johanna Magdalena Beyer (1888–1944) was born in 1888 in Leipzig, Germany.¹ After receiving, as far as we know, a conventional music education in Germany, she traveled to the United States more than once before settling in New York City in 1924.² Not much is yet known about her early life in Germany nor her first years in New York City. She might have come to the U.S. to stay with relatives, or perhaps because of an interest in the emergent contemporary music scene. She attended Mannes College and in the late 1920s met Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, Charles Seeger, Dane Rudhyar, and others. According to her CV she studied composition with some of these composers, at least informally. Much of her biographical data is still unclear, and difficult to substantiate. The strongest evidence for her work with the Seegers is her music itself, which, from 1930–1937 is among the best realizations of the Seegers’ compositional ideas of *dissonant counterpoint*. Beyer’s piano piece *Dissonant Counterpoint* (193?) may be the only work that refers to the technique in its title.³ In addition, some of Beyer’s work (most notably the *String Quartet No. 2*, included on this CD) is inextricably connected, in style and inspiration, to that of Ruth Crawford Seeger’s.

Although this CD focuses on the chamber and choral music, Beyer was one of the first composers to write for percussion ensemble. Her work in this medium is unique. Generally free of bombast, it is characterized by a sense of humor, use of subtle sounds, gentle timbres, and an “emphasis on process over more purely rhythmic exploration” [Kennedy and Polansky, p. 726]. She wrote six pieces for percussion ensemble, one each in 1933 (*Percussion Suite*) and 1935 (*IV*), and four more in 1939. With the exception of the first, about which not much is known, these pieces probably emanate from the percussion music class taught by Cowell at the New School for Social Research in 1935, a class that influenced John Cage, Lou Harrison, Ray Green, William Russell, and others. Cage and Harrison took one of her pieces on their famous West Coast tour during the late 1930s and early 1940s—probably the *Three Movements for Percussion* (whose third movement, “Endless” is dedicated to the young Cage). *IV*, for twelve unspecified percussion instruments, was the only piece published in her lifetime (by Cowell’s *New Music Editions*), and perhaps for that reason alone has probably been performed more

¹ Much of the information (used without specific citation) on Beyer in these notes is taken from Kennedy and Polansky, “Total Eclipse. . .” What appears to be a copy of her birth records (not certificate) was located by the German musicologist Cordula Jaspar, and can be found at http://eamusic.dartmouth.edu/~larry/misc_writings/talks/beyer.index.html. Other scholars, such as Dorothea Gail (personal communication), have confirmed the birthdate, and even suggested a street address (Moschelesstraße 6) and that her father was a “Schuhmachermeister” (master shoemaker). Beyer’s death certificate, located by John Kennedy, can also be found on the above website.

² This and other information in these notes comes from Amy Beal’s unpublished extended biographical essay. Beal’s essay, as well as my own writing in these notes, makes use of the recently made public letters of Beyer to Henry Cowell (mainly written late in Beyer’s life). Beal’s manuscript also includes new biographical research, clarifying many previously unknown and important facts about Beyer’s life.

³ The pianist Sarah Cahill, who has played an important role in recent Beyer scholarship and performance, recorded *Dissonant Counterpoint*, and another of the three major piano pieces, *Gebrauchs-Musik*.

than any of her other works. Due in large part to Essential Music's revival of her music in the late 1980s, Beyer's percussion music was the first of her works to receive delayed attention, and continues to be performed. To the best of my knowledge, other than Essential Music's recording of *IV*, the complete percussion music has not yet been recorded commercially.

Her works for large orchestra, and to a lesser extent for concert band, are somewhat enigmatic. Much of it is in a simpler, more consonant, and rhythmically straightforward style. Again, it seems that *none* of it has been recorded, and *almost* none of it has been performed.⁴ These pieces include: seven works for orchestra (all written between 1937–1941); two works for the Grainger band (*Elation* and *Reverence*, both from 1938, which she heard that same year in a reading session by Grainger's ensemble); and the mysteriously named *Cyrnab* (1937) for chamber orchestra, written during the period when Cowell was in prison (1936–40). The title seems to point to one of the most important aspects of Beyer's life: her close relationship, and seemingly unrequited love affair with Henry Cowell.⁵

HENRYCOWELL JOHANNABEYER

Beyer's music before 1930 is completely unknown to us, at least at present. She seems to have done her most productive, interesting, complex, and experimental work from 1930–1936. Around 1936–7, her work, with a few exceptions, begins to change, becoming less adventurous. This is especially evident, I believe, in the orchestral works and the later string quartets, as well as in some of the piano music from the 1940s (one of these works, the very tonal but surprisingly intricate and moving *Sonatina in C*, ends this recording). The final eight years of Beyer's life were as difficult as a composer's life could be. During Cowell's prison years she dedicated herself to sending out his works, helping him with his correspondence and legal matters, and even trying (unsuccessfully) to arrange for the publication of his book *The Nature of Melody*. When Cowell was released, their relationship worsened quickly and dramatically, to her great regret. Beyer's letters to Cowell in this last period chronicle her despair: at her poverty, her failing health (the progression of ALS debilitated her in the last few years of her life), her “grueling work schedule,” [Beal] her lack of contact with other composers, her lack of recognition (performance, publication) and her deteriorating relationship with Cowell.⁶

⁴ There are two performances I am aware of from this corpus. The first is a performance of *Fragment for Chamber Orchestra* in Köln, Germany, in the mid-1990s on a concert of Beyer's music. The second was a performance of two different versions of *March* (for fourteen instruments), at California Institute of the Arts, 2004, conducted by David Rosenboom (the two different “editions” were made by David Mahler and James Tenney).

⁵ The genesis of this title mystified me for some time. I am indebted to John Kennedy for deciphering it.

⁶ See Beal for a detailed description of this period in Beyer's life.

But these letters also describe a woman who had not given up, really, on anything. For every paragraph describing her tragic physical condition, there is another expressing her joy in music, in teaching piano to children, or in some friendship or experience. Each plea to Cowell to help her music is accompanied by a proclamation of his own importance as a composer. She never gave up, although she had every reason to. She continued writing music until very near her death (which makes the *Sonatina* of 1943 an especially poignant way to conclude this recording).

“May the future be kind to all composers.”

Much of the recent interest in Beyer’s music can be traced to the pioneering work of Charles Amirkhanian, who first noticed the manuscripts in the 1960s in the archive of the American Music Center in New York City. He was particularly interested in the percussion music, and also in a short fragment (incidental music) from a never-completed opera (*Status Quo*⁸) called *Music of the Spheres*, which suggests the use of electric instruments. Amirkhanian encouraged the Electric Weasel Ensemble (a group of Bay Area live electronic musicians that included Don Buchla, Allen Strange, Brenda Hutchinson, Steve Ruppenthal, David Morese, and for the recording, Amirkhanian on triangle) to realize and record the *Music of the Spheres* on analog synthesizers. For many years this lovely recording uniquely represented Beyer to the world. Ironically, but understandably, Beyer began to be known as an “early electronic music composer” and as one of the “first women electronic music composers.” It is unclear what she meant by her marginal indication of “electric,” but there is no evidence, aside from her association with Cowell (who worked with Theremin on a number of electronic music projects), that she had any experience or contact with electronic instruments. A much clearer picture of the scope of her compositions and the fabric of her musical ideas has emerged from subsequent work on the scores.

In the notes that follow, I have tried to credit, when possible, people who have contributed significantly to this recent performance tradition of her music. Essential Music (directed by John Kennedy and Charles Wood), the DownTown Ensemble (co-directed by Daniel Goode), the pianist Sarah Cahill, and the Astra Chamber Music Society (directed by John McCaughey) have been among the most important musicians in premiering this music. These performers and scholars deserve our gratitude for giving this music its long overdue voice. Beyer, quiet for so long, had a great deal of “faith!” not only in her own musical ideas, but in the humanity and the world. An indefatigable optimist, even in the worst of times, she would certainly be gladdened by this new attention. But perhaps she would not be surprised that her “sticky melodies” have finally stuck.⁹

⁷ Letter from Beyer to Henry Cowell, March 22, 1941.

⁸ It is unclear what became of this work. In a letter to Percy Grainger in 1938, Beyer says: “I have finished my *Status Quo*, a pageant to music [. . .], but I have only finished a short-hand score. The real copying work has to start in now.” That same year, Beyer applied for a Guggenheim Foundation grant to complete the piece, but was rejected [Beal].

⁹ Undated letter from Beyer to Harrison Kerr: “I am living a fast life here, I tell you, working like hell; the music for my *Status Quo* comes out well, I am almost crazy from all the melodies

Notes on the Pieces

Some hallmarks of Beyer's musical style are: sonic and formal transparency; use of dissonant counterpoint; rhythmic independence and complexity (heterophony); a quirky sense of humor; an interest in glissandi and clusters; and an attraction to direct, austere orchestrations and ensembles. Most of these ideas frequent the works on this CD.

Suite for Clarinet I and Suite for Clarinet Ib (1932)

Since there are currently no manuscript examples of Beyer's work before around 1930, it is impossible to speculate about what her earlier work, prior to meeting the Seegers and Cowell, might have been like. These two clarinet suites are perhaps Beyer's earliest extant works, and strongly show the influence of Charles and Ruth Crawford Seeger in the exploration of dissonant counterpoint. Beyer's use of "phrase structure" notation suggested by Seeger in the *Treatise . . .*, with different numbers of measures per line, is especially interesting in the fourth movements. Each of the four-movement suites use palindromic forms and employ what Boland refers to as "chromatic completion."¹⁰

The first suite is performed here by New York City composer and clarinetist Daniel Goode, the only non-Astra-ite on this CD (he recorded the piece independently of the Astra project, in the United States). Goode has performed this piece for several years as part of his "Interesting Melodies" project. The second suite is performed by Craig Hill, who first played it stunningly in Astra's 1996 landmark, two-night concert of Beyer's work in Melbourne, Australia.¹¹ The juxtaposition of the different styles—Goode is an important American experimental composer; Hill is a virtuoso, primarily German-trained clarinetist — is a metaphor for Beyer's own life and influences.

The two clarinet suites are closely related musically, and the manuscript sources suggest that they were written together. Quite difficult to play, they are perhaps some of the clearest explorations of the dissonant counterpoint idea—as much so as any piece by Ruth Crawford Seeger or Carl Ruggles. Although they bear a superficial resemblance to works like Ruth Crawford Seeger's *Diaphonic Suites*, *Piano Study in Mixed Accents*, or even the fourth movement of her *String Quartet*, Beyer's dissonant counterpoint pieces (most of her work until about 1936) have their own style—abstract, yet redolent of a sophisticated melodist's instinct. Rigorously composed, they are gems of what might be called the 1930s New York City dissonant counterpoint "school."

swirling around in my head, sticky ones too, people will be surprised what I can do." This letter was written sometime between 1936–40, from an address on Long Island.

¹⁰ See Boland for more analysis of these suites, the *Movement for Two Pianos*, *String Quartet No. 2*, and other works.

¹¹ The program for those concerts is at Polansky, website (see note 1).

The fourth movements of these suites are especially intriguing and historically important. They are among the earliest and most salient examples of what Cowell calls, in *New Musical Resources*, “tempo melody” [Cowell, pp. 98-108]. Beyer’s notation of this technique, however, comes directly from Seeger’s *Treatise . . .* [“Melodic Order Number 2,” (Seeger, p. 179)] Both movements are composed entirely of running eighth notes without rests. At the beginning of each phrase (and actual system line) in the score, Beyer specifies “m = m” (“measure = measure”), indicating that the tempo of the next measure is equal to the number of beats in the previous. In other words, if there are two eighths in the last measure of one line, and three in the first measure of the next, the tempo becomes 3:2 faster than the previous tempo.

The fourth movement of the second suite is an accelerando using this technique, starting at *eighth note* = 56, and gradually accelerating to *eighth note* = 957 (!). The first suite moves in the opposite direction (creating a tempo arch form for the two pieces together), beginning at *eighth note* = 132 and slowing drastically towards the end. Both of these movements, if the modulations are followed exactly, end in extreme, not quite practical, tempi. The ideal tempi for the eighth note on each line (system) of the score, rounded to integer values, for the two fourth movements, are:

Line	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>Suite I</i> ratio	1:1	2:3	2:5	5:2	4:3	2:3	2:3	4:2	2:5	2:3	2:3	2:3
<i>Suite I</i> tempo	132	88	35	88	117	78	52	104	42	28	19	12
<i>Suite Ib</i> ratio	1:1	3:2	3:2	2:6	3:2	3:2	3:2	4:2	3:4	4:2	3:2	4:2
<i>Suite Ib</i> tempo	56	84	126	42	63	95	142	284	213	425	638	1276

The ultimate tempi are not likely to be realized precisely in performance—one eighth note every five seconds for the first suite, and a tempo of 957 for the eighth in the second (nearly impossible even *without* the final three-octave leap). Beyer was not interested, I think, in this kind of mathematical precision, nor in a conceptual statement regarding extreme tempi. The notation, which stresses relative, not absolute tempi, allows the performers to make slight adjustments along the way.

If Beyer intended these two movements to be what Cowell called “tempo melodies,” they may be among the first (and finest) examples. Cowell suggests that tempi can be composed using a simple analogy to, or perhaps mapping of pitch: using simple integer ratios. Assuming an arbitrary starting pitch of C, the tempi of the fourth movement of the second suite can be seen as a melody (C-G-D-G-D-A-E-E-B-B-F#-F#, ignoring octaves, for the sake of simplicity), which travels from the root (1/1) to the tritone (729/32, or, octave simplified, 729/512) in a slightly meandering Pythagorean path (tempo ratios are absolute, taken to the starting tempo):

Line	Tempo Scalar	Tempo Ratio	“Note Name”
<i>1</i>	1/1	--	C
<i>2</i>	3/2	3/2	G
<i>3</i>	3/2	9/4	D
<i>4</i>	1/3	3/4	G
<i>5</i>	3/2	9/8	D
<i>6</i>	3/2	27/16	A
<i>7</i>	3/2	81/32	E
<i>8</i>	2/1	81/16	E
<i>9</i>	3/4	243/64	B
<i>10</i>	2/1	243/32	B
<i>11</i>	3/2	729/64	F#
<i>12</i>	2/1	729/32	F#

These two (paired) movements are a concise, early example of the ideas of “tempo modulation” that later fascinated composers such as Conlon Nancarrow, Ben Johnston, and Elliott Carter (who first used his technique of “metric modulation” in 1949). They seem to be two of the earliest pieces that explicitly used the idea of “modulation” between integer-related tempi as a formal, organizational technique.¹²

Three Songs for Soprano and Clarinet (1934)

Probably first performed in 1936 by the great clarinetist Rosario Mazzeo, these three lovely and difficult pieces are based on Beyer’s own extraordinary texts. Like much of the rest of Beyer’s extant poetry, their voice is metaphysically naturalistic, in a strangely delicate translational polyglot (“emaciated sunbeams die below swaying grass, / leaving the planet colorless, / Faint. . .”; “Effort, research, action / Thought bearing power, strength / And courage abundant / To wrestle from the elements / The secret kept.”). Ever hopeful, and always explicitly “universal—local,” Beyer seems to wrestle with her titular polarities, whether she is “to be” or is to be in “total eclipse.” Yet the music in these pieces is resolute, decisive. The clarinet writing is confident and fluid, and the (once again, dissonant) counterpoint between the singer and clarinetist is meticulously crafted. The first song, “Total Eclipse,” begins with clarinet long notes in the lowest register of the instrument, and the vocal part (intentionally or not) quotes Ives’s song “Majority” in its opening words. This song is stately, serene, and declamatory both in its metric feel and clear song form. “To Be” is Beyer in her “sunbeams,” “sparkling rays,” and “raindrops” persona, musically manifested both in the dance-like 6/8 song meter (very definite in the voice) and in the rapid, rhythmically complex counterpoint of the clarinet. She seems to be exploring the idea of embedding different meters in the rapid clarinet runs, by using as many different tuplet values as possible. “Universal—Local,” is, for lack of a better word (or perhaps for lack of a more imaginative liner-note author), transcendent. The tempo is slow, the clarinet is written entirely in the (high) clarino register, and the vocal part is primarily composed of half-steps (some separated by octaves). It is also an interesting example of her use of a

¹² The notes on these two movements are the result of my collaboration with Marguerite Boland, and also indebted to Daniel Goode’s early analyses of the first suite.

central idea of dissonant counterpoint: Wait as long as possible before repeating a note. The first such repeat occurs in measure 14 (when a G natural is reintroduced), and the chromatic completion (that is, the twelfth pitch class, in this case C natural) doesn't appear until a few measures from the end (of the vocal part). The ending, five measures of a gradual decrescendo over two extreme high notes in the clarinet, is as spine-tingling as it is restrained.

Bees

The date of *Bees* is unknown. It is part of a large collection of pedagogical pieces called *Piano-Book* (*Bees* is marked #21, and in one manuscript, "busy are the bees" is written at the top of the page). However another manuscript for *Bees* also exists independently, perhaps suggesting that Beyer considered it a piece in its own right. The *Piano-Book* version also includes some wonderful onomatopoeic lyrics ("I might dance and sway, try to fly like you, busy bees. sr—, br—, sr—") . Whether primarily intended as a pedagogical exercise for her students or not, this is one of my favorite Beyer pieces (and not coincidentally, the one I chose to edit to initiate the Frog Peak/Johanna Beyer project). Lively and chromatically inventive (most of it consists of chromatic scales alternated with dissonant tremolos), it is a (Bartókian) microcosm of her style, humor, art, and, I would suppose, her personality.

The Federal Music Project (1936)

While all of the works on this CD are first recordings, this may also be a first performance. It combines Beyer's frequent apiarian metaphors ("I know of an active beehive, it buzzes and bubbles all day") with her exuberant, ecstatic, almost mystical optimism. It is a shame that this remarkable piece has remained silent for so long. The lyrics are reminiscent of (though predate) another important (and deeply moving) Beyer work, *Have Faith!* (1937) for flute and soprano.¹³ These two works, like the *Three Songs for Soprano and Clarinet*, exemplify the tension in Beyer's musical personality between unbounded hope and dark feelings of isolation. As in her other texts, the English sounds a little off-kilter ("Glad people will breathe in music / the babies with their milk / and soon we will have creators / of enduring music and skill," "Unavoidably what may happen / is surely a wonderful thing"). Dedicated to Ashley Pettis, an important figure in the New York music scene in the 1930s through his work with the Federal Music Project and the Composers-Forum Laboratory, *The Federal Music Project*, like the related *The Composers' Forum Laboratory*, may have been a submission to a call for works by this organization. It is an unusual work in several ways. The manuscript is not entirely clear as to the text setting. It is in five verses, in antiphonal form (basses against the other voices), and is centered around the insistent canonic declamation "I know" (always a major second). Like *Composers' Forum* . . . it is curiously, delightfully self-referential: a piece of music about making music.

¹³ Astra has also performed this work several times (Mardi McCullea, flute; Merlyn Quaiife, soprano) which exists in three versions. A recording by flutist Margaret Lancaster with soprano Beth Griffith is forthcoming on New World.

Movement for Two Pianos (1936)

Dedicated to Henry Cowell, this major work makes use of a number of pianistic devices associated with him, such as clusters, glissandi, and low register timbres. [Boland] points out the cumulation-reduction process in this work: “a simple four-bar melody, marked *cresc. poco a poco*, is repeated in a succession of increasingly dramatic variations, culminating in dense tone-cluster harmonization. In the final section, just as in *Music of the Spheres*, the process is reversed, starting with cluster harmonization and paring the melody back to single notes, while also slowing the tempo and reducing dynamics.” Boland also points out an irony of this work, that music so strong, even fierce and aggressive, could be written by someone described by many people as “being extremely quiet, almost painfully shy” [Kennedy and Polansky]. *Movement . . .* was performed on the Composers’ Forum Laboratory Concert of Beyer’s music in 1936.

String Quartet No. 1 (1933–4) and String Quartet No. 2 (1936)

Beyer wrote five string quartets, the first two before 1936, the last may be from 1943. The first two, recorded on this CD, seem to be the more important of the set, and have been performed by both Astra and Essential Music. The other three remain, I believe, unperformed.

The two quartets are similar in their extensive use of glissandi and of clustered, dissonant chords. Each is in four movements, the first quartet is *attacca* throughout (with an “aesthetic pause” before the fourth movement). Each has a *fast/slow/moderate/very fast* movement structure. Like the Clarinet Suites, they form an elegant matched pair.

The first quartet begins with an energetic, highly contrapuntal (more accurately, heterophonic), dissonant Allegro. Furious rhythmic passages are interwoven with swells in other instruments, creating a rich and intricate texture that is unlike anything else I know of in Beyer’s music. Rhythmically, the ideas are drawn primarily from dissonant counterpoint (recalling to some extent, Crawford Seeger’s *Diaphonic Suites*). Beyer avoids simultaneous attacks when possible, and makes formal use of *gruppetti* (sometimes, as in the remarkable passage at measure 36, creating tempo modulations via irregular beat divisions).

The second movement, Lento, is equally heterophonic, but consists of a kind of recombinant texture glissandi, single melodic lines, and held notes. Always changing, shifting, and undulating until it finally resolves in its final measures, it is a beautiful, intimate work. The third movement, Moderato, recalls the famous fourth movement of Crawford Seeger’s *String Quartet*, in its opening antiphonal measures (without the palindromic “cumulation/reduction” technique [Boland] of the latter piece). The cello part plays a strangely awkward duple pulse, and the inner voices comment on the first violin’s complex melody with their own rapid, chromatic, interlinear passagework.

The fourth movement is nothing short of astonishing. In its minimalist use of material, and focus on timbre and gesture, it might have been written fifty years later (listen for the second violin repeating a high E-flat half-note pulse for one hundred and twenty-nine measures). It is a unified, fantastic sound world, almost completely composed of glissandi, crescendi/decrescendi clusters, and a few somewhat surprising “melodies” near the end. Its closest aesthetic relative may be another Beyer piece, *The Federal Music Project*.

The second quartet is the evolutionary companion of the first, and shares several formal ideas. It is just as startling, variegated, and visionary. This quartet is, however, less abstract, texturally simpler, and more eccentric. Two of the four movements (with the same tempo architecture as No. 1) are united by the cello part, which quotes Papageno’s first aria from Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* (“Ein Mädchen oder Weibchen . . .”). The first movement begins in a kind of chorale, albeit an atonal one, and ends comically (pizzicato upper strings over the cello tune). In between, it develops into a little canonic fantasy, with the cello part gradually morphing away from the tune in odd ways, while the other parts echo the cello’s rhythm, contour, and at times its harmonic implications. A complex, funny, unexpected movement, it is like the first movement of No. 1 in its heterophonic character. But the implications of the Mozart quote, far simpler rhythms, and much thinner texture clearly distinguish this quartet from its predecessor.

The second movement is inspired by the third movement of the Crawford Seeger quartet, and is sonically reminiscent of the fourth movement of Beyer’s first quartet. A series of held chords with asynchronous crescendi/decrescendi and simple repeated descending lines, it is an elegant study in timbre and dissonance. Gentler, lighter, and far shorter than its (Seeger) inspiration, it is, in my opinion, one of the loveliest three minutes of string quartet orchestration ever composed. In this piece we can clearly hear Beyer’s instinct for the simplest sound and the clearest form, and her gift for avoiding the unnecessary. It’s possible that the little “explosion” in the middle of this movement (in the first violin) is a formal quote of the Seeger piece.

The third movement is a study in the unusual superposition of different meters. The top two parts are notated in 3/8, the bottom two in 2/4. The eighth-note durations are the same, so that the measures don’t match up.¹⁴ The cello part maintains a steady pizzicato pulse (mostly an ostinato of minor ninths), while the other parts elaborate the rhythmic superposition. The piece gradually, however, becomes a kind of miniature viola concerto. After establishing a plaintive triplet figure, the viola melody begins to “reduce,” in what Boland refers to as “cumulation-reduction,” until just a lonely, low open C remains. The piece ends as plainly as it begins, on a held tritone in the two violins (E/A flat) over the C/C# ostinato in the cello.

¹⁴ Interestingly, this is not the convention regarding the notation of simultaneous different meters. Modern usage, often attributed to Mahler, and evidenced by standard, commercial music notation software, seems to be, for example, that 2/4 over 3/4 means “3 in the time of 2.”

The fourth movement is another glissando study, with the Mozart quote again in the cello. Strikingly beautiful, and only one minute long, this movement recalls the final movement of the first quartet. The first violin plays mostly half-step and whole-step double stops, with transitional glissandi. The second violin is an ostinato, sliding between B (natural) and F on each downbeat (against the Mozart melody in F major). The viola part also glissandos to each downbeat, but begins around middle C and, over the course of the work, widens to two octaves, before ending on its low open C (as part of a final chord spelled F-C-F-B). Halfway through the piece, Beyer employs a simple “metric modulation” on the Mozart melody. Retaining the 3/8 meter in the cello, the melody suddenly shifts, via re-notation, to two-thirds time, while the other parts stay in (albeit barely felt) triple meter. This movement seems to be a musical self-portrait of the composer herself, combining many of her musical influences, affection for simplicity, and playfulness.

Together these two quartets are an important, and up until now, missing part of twentieth-century string quartet literature. The Astra quartet is led by first violinist Miwako Abe, who has been a passionate advocate and performer of the music of Beyer and the young Crawford Seeger. After a revelatory first hearing of the second quartet played some eleven years ago by a group of Astra performers in Melbourne, it a great joy to finally have these two quartets available on CD.¹⁵

Ballad of the Star-Eater (1934)

The text for this “fourth” song for clarinet and soprano (written in the same year as the three others) is by the poet and author Bonaro Wilkinson Overstreet, who often worked in collaboration with her husband Harry A. Overstreet, both of whom were Beyer’s friends. It is likely that this work was performed during Beyer’s lifetime, perhaps by Mazzeo [Kennedy and Polansky, pp. 738–9]. It is distinct, as a piece, from the *Three Songs . . .*, since it does not use a Beyer text, and it is longer than the three of them combined. In some ways *Star-Eater* is uncharacteristic of Beyer—I know of no other long, narrative work by her.

The opening clarinet passage is a very clear example of dissonant counterpoint ideas of chromatic completion or accumulation. The opening figure G-C#-D-Eb first adds an F# (in quintuplet rhythm), then G# (septuplet), then A, E, and F (triplets), and finally B before the voice enters. The soprano part, in the first few measures, echoes (more or less) this chromatic build up. Oddly, the final note of the twelve chromatic pitches, B flat, does not appear until forty-nine measures into the piece.

¹⁵ The original performance was by Briar Goessi, Deborah Goodall, Isabel Morse, and Jenny Stokes, who deserve credit for helping to bring these pieces to life. Miwako Abe, besides recording the Beyer *Suite for Violin and Piano* and assisting with the performance edition of that piece, has been instrumental in premiering, performing, and editing a number of previously unknown violin pieces by Ruth Crawford Seeger, as well as championing the work of other American and Australian composers.

Movement for Double Bass and Piano (1936)

The genesis of this short but intense work is curious. We know very little about it—why was it written, and for whom? Regardless, it is a tightly constructed, highly dissonant, and well-orchestrated work for the instrument—idiomatic and interesting. Melodically, the piece deals with the evolving transformation of the opening motive, a descending minor third, D to B, which also ends the work. Much of the piano part, clearly accompanimental, is written in clustered seconds in the right hand over octaves in the left. The work seems to climax in a bass “cadenza” a little more than halfway through the piece. This solo begins quite softly in the high register, and has a quasi-Baroque structure of dynamic levels, all in the space of about thirty measures. To the best of my knowledge, *Movement . . .* was never performed during Beyer’s lifetime, and was premiered by bassist Robert Black, at Roulette, New York City, in 1994. Black has pointed out that it is an unusual work for its time, simply by virtue of its orchestration.

Three Pieces for Choir (1937)

These three choral works were premiered (as far as I know) by Astra in 1996. With this CD, four out of five of the known choral works are now available (the fourth, *The Robin in the Rain*, is in a different musical style). *The Main Deep* is on a text by James Stephens (1882–1950), an Irish poet and writer who was a friend of James Joyce. Once again, it is unclear what the connection between Beyer and the poet was, even whether they knew each other. However, it is clear why Beyer was attracted to this poem (“The long rolling / Steady pouring. . .”, “Green placid / Slow-sliding. . .”). The score is marked “to the choral contest committee, Federal Music Project . . .” and carries the performance instruction: “All intervals should be reached by sliding, as subtle as possible.” It is *pianissimo* throughout, and most of the four-part vertical sonorities are composed of paired (major or minor) seconds. Beyer takes one small liberty with the text, adding a final triple *piano* “hush” to the poem at the end.

The Composers' Forum Laboratory is a joyful, almost ecstatic work about being a composer ("If you are a composer, and don't know what to do . . ."). The text, by Beyer, is a detailed description of what happens at the eponymous locale. *Composers' Forum . . .* is another extremely imitative work, similar in some ways to the first movement of *String Quartet No. 2*. It is written with great inventiveness, musicality, and affection for the voices. I especially love the relentless bass part, which occasionally, unexpectedly, breaks out of its grumpy single notes into exuberant tritones. This piece is written in 5/8, and the D-minor piano ostinato plays with a kind of simple but beautiful "phase" idea (the F in the right hand which begins each measure).

The People, Yes! is based on a Carl Sandburg poem, a choice probably influenced by Ruth Crawford Seeger's association with that American poet (Beyer, in fact, translated Crawford Seeger's setting of *Prayers of Steel* into German). Once again, Beyer works with interleaved seconds (which, in this piece, are often heard, as in the opening D-G-C-F chord, as "stacked fifths"). In the first half of the work, Beyer harmonically shifts this chord, slightly altering it with each entrance (for example D-G-C#-F, at measure 5; C-F-B-E at measure 15, and so on), while keeping the order of entry (SATB) the same. The second half of the work changes character, following the poem. Sandburg's "Ai! Ai!" is "spoken, yet within pitch," and becomes a kind of pointillist interruption to the lyrical, imitative treatment of "Yet, the sleepers toss in sleep."

The four choral works on this CD form two natural pairs: those that are settings of the poems of others, those that are Beyer's own texts about musical organizations. The musical styles reflect this division: the former are abstract, impressionistic; the latter are concrete, rhythmic, declarative. Together, these four pieces are a fascinating, compositionally inventive addition to the contemporary choral literature, and deserve our serious attention.

Sonatina in C (1943)

Beyer wrote three major earlier works for solo piano (*Dissonant Counterpoint*, *Gebrauchs-Musik*, and *Clusters*), some pedagogical works (including *Bees*), and a few pieces late in her life, which are of a fundamentally different character (quite tonal). The *Sonatina* is a beautiful example of this late work. On the top of the score Beyer wrote in her very fine hand: "Greenwich Village, N.Y. June, 1943" (she died six months later). The piece is dedicated to her cherished piano student Roland Leitner, who lived on Staten Island, and was important to Beyer near the end of her life [Beal]. This may be the last work Beyer ever wrote, and it is a fitting conclusion to this recording.

The *Sonatina* is in four movements: Allegro brioso (C major); Scherzo (F major, with a “Trio” in Bb); Andante (Am, in 6/4); and “Sciolto” (A major, in 5/4). This work, contrary to my previous statements about it [Kennedy and Polansky] is far more important than I first thought. It combines a number of interesting ideas with her natural pianism (Beyer was an accomplished pianist, who, among other things, premiered Cowell’s *Rhythmicana*). All of the movements are quite short, and of markedly different character. The first two are the most harmonically conventional (neither modulates, and there are almost no accidentals at all!), but they are replete with harmonic and formal nuances, a kind of thoughtful, Beyer-esque meditation, perhaps, on her own life and musical background. The third movement, Andante, begins with a simple idea (the left hand an eighth-note off from the right hand), in a simple rhythmic motif (three quarters and a dotted-half). Beyer quickly adds a second remarkable idea—repeating right-hand chords which successively add (harmonic) dissonances. Mostly very quiet, it is a gentle dance at peace with itself. The fourth movement is a kind of rondo in quintuple meter— Beyer subdivides the score into four double-barred sections. It begins with a repeated dominant (E) figure, which immediately expands into a motif based on the major second (characteristic of Beyer). The second idea in the piece is a lovely polyrhythm—at first, four in the left hand against ten in the right (Beyer later switches to triplets). The piece alternates these ideas (and a few others), finally expanding to the high registers of the piano.

Many years ago, when cataloging it, this *Sonatina* seemed to me to be a simple work, somehow related to her degenerative physical condition. After repeated listening and score-study I have completely changed my mind. What I once saw as simplicity now seems like maturity. Listening to it now, in Peter Dumsday’s sensitive performance, it is easy to imagine Beyer, alone, impoverished, and with little to look forward to, finding great joy, satisfaction, and I hope, a sense of peace as she composed it at her piano.

Larry Polansky is a composer, performer and writer living in New Hampshire. He is on the faculty at Dartmouth College and co-directs Frog Peak Music (A Composers' Collective).

“Unavoidably what may happen
is surely a wonderful thing . . . ”
Johanna Beyer’s Musical Journeys

by John McCaughey

Johanna Beyer and her music have migrated widely across space and time to the point of this recording—the German immigrant’s American adventures in sound of the 1930s, performed 70 years later by musicians mostly in Melbourne, Australia, for New World Records in New York City.

The network of dialogues that ensues, between different places and eras, is peculiarly in harmony with the character of Beyer’s music, which revels in different dynamic levels applied to simultaneous instruments in the score, lines that are pulling apart or occupying their own eccentric space. Such “encounters at a distance” are embodied in a literal sense by the trans-Pacific dialogue that opens the two CDs—the New York and Melbourne clarinetists Daniel Goode and Craig Hill playing the two Suites for Clarinet, which the composer considered complementary enough to title No. 1a and 1b.

Our own encounter with Johanna Beyer began more than ten years ago. During a visit to Melbourne as a Fulbright Scholar in 1996, the composer and scholar Larry Polansky generously made available a range of Beyer’s manuscripts for performances in the Astra concert series in this city. Two of these works—the String Quartet No. 2 and the *Three Songs for Clarinet and Soprano*—had been recently published by Frog Peak Editions. The others—three choral pieces, Clarinet Suite No. 1b and *Have Faith!* for soprano and flute—were still in manuscript form, as found in the New York Public Library.

Two things were immediately striking about these works. They were a *discovery*, of an original musical personality, rather than a *re-discovery*, of something that had faded from a previous era. Several of the works were receiving their first known performances in our 1996 concert, including the three choral pieces and the String Quartet No. 2.

Secondly, these scores resonated with a kind of concert ideal to which our Astra programs have long aspired—choral music brought into an engagement with other musical media and forms, into a sense of “concerted” event with new and unusual materials. Johanna Beyer’s music is itself continuously “concerted,” in this original Italian sense from the Baroque—it applies generalized principles of composition that she derived from various sources to the specific theater of each ensemble grouping. The musical textures that she generates from the tussling of her voices are never repeated from one movement to another, always explorative, rarely resting back, seemingly always looking toward a performed event rather than a composed structure.

So it was that the Johanna Beyer works, performed at the Astra concert in December 1996 among other music by Johann Hermann Schein, Arnold Schoenberg, and Australian composers Carl Vine and Richard Vella, made a strong initial impact on the audience that was hearing them many years after their time of composition. The special excitement and interest raised by the String Quartet No. 2 was repeated a few weeks later, in February 1997, when it was performed a second time by a quartet from The Juilliard School during a large Cowell centennial series in New York.

And yet, this positive initial experience was based on a relatively small sample of the Beyer legacy. Our privilege of discovery continued in the broader representation of works that developed for this recording at the request of New World Records. If the earlier concert seemed to invite descriptions such as “quirky” or “eccentric” for the special qualities of the pieces heard, a richer musical personality emerges from the new environment that includes the first String Quartet, both Clarinet Suites, the *Ballad of the Star Eater*, the choral *Federal Music Project*, and works for piano and double bass.

The entry of String Quartet No. 1, in particular, adds a new perspective and scale to the whole. The second quartet, which might have seemed a small-dimensional study in influences from Ruth Crawford’s quartet combined with Beyer’s own ironic humor in the reference to Papageno’s melody, now becomes part of a grander and more original exploration of the medium—across a total of eight movements in which there is no recurrence of the same textural configuration.

The activation of each medium in which Beyer worked remains a dominant impression in this widened landscape, coupled with a talent for volatile melodic developments that cross between the heterogeneous layers while animating them individually. We might be reminded of the later American music of Beyer’s fellow German emigré Stefan Wolpe. European variation and American variety, perhaps, issuing in many forms: In the first movement of the String Quartet No. 1, a tonal-like ostinato melody F-E-F sharp-G carried through an environment of splintered versions of itself; in *The Main Deep*, the fluid syntax of James Stephens’s verbal seascape mirrored in a choral blur of cluster harmonies and sliding pitches; in the Movement for Double Bass, the separated hands of the piano setting up not just layers but evolving energies around the bass sound; in the Movement for Two Pianos, the two players not only engaged in a polyrhythmic encounter with each other but in competing rhythms and expressions between their two hands.

Preparing the way to the recording, the works on these CDs, with the exception of the first Clarinet Suite and the Sonatina, were performed at an Astra concert in Melbourne’s Gasworks Theatre in November 2007. There they were set into a context of music by Charles Seeger, Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, and the young Lou Harrison. The program was long, but the audience was held engrossed by the quality and variety of Beyer’s music.

This double-CD, then, goes the final step of placing Johanna Beyer on her own. It is hoped that the recording can be received as a kind of concert, with an intermission between the discs and a process of variation relating the two halves. The experience of its preparation points to a mind that could travel far—into new possibilities of each medium at play, but also, literally, into the future, where the music arrives still sounding fresh and original at the point of its discovery, still fully capable of stimulating the enjoyment and admiration that were apparently denied it seven decades ago.

Three Songs for Soprano and Clarinet (1934)

1. Total Eclipse

Moving of masses,
Stirred by astro-phenomena,
Directing matter,
Their slave, yet their master,
Still to be.

Effort, research, action,
Thought bearing power, strength,
And courage abundant
To wrestle from the elements
The secret kept.

The world is aghast,
Nature pales in hush
And feeble protesting
Sinks into last motions,
Activity before death.

Birds and beasts bow in fear,
Frightened leaves tremble,
Emaciated sunbeams die below swaying grass,
Leaving the planet colorless,
Faint, deathlike at rest.

Here and yonder,
Beads of light--lost,
Erring through valleys of the moon,
Still shed their love upon earth,
While shadow-beads pattern designs.

But behold the heavens,
Phenomenous climax!
Bursting the shielding surface,
The fiery glow of the corona
Circles its dance of life.

And its secrets alight,
Reaching out beyond spheres,
Expanding towards searching,
Restless thoughts of men,
Begging to be known, to be loved.

But though men try,
Time and again,
These longing elements flee back,
Hiding their shame--“misunderstood”--
Wearing mourning-veils another time untold!

—*J.M. Beyer* (August 1932)

2. *To Be*

To be a sunbeam, a sparkling ray,
To fall as raindrop, chattering gay,
To be a grain of sand, bathing in sun and wind,
Waiting for tides to come and go --
To be a tiny shoot, just from home “root,”
To leaf off from the stem that holds you firm,
To be a blossom, oh, with spellbound hue,
Forthcoming fruit promise, crystallized in dew --
To be a wandering cloud, sailing along,
To shine as star above, meet moons and suns,
To rise and fall in curves, in space and time,
Thus an enduring cycle, majestic, sublime.

—*J.M. Beyer* (December 1934)

3. *Universal--Local*

Stars, moons, suns,
Penetrating love--
Endless time, infinite space--
Forever--
Boundless beauty--

Sleepers, toiling with a minute,
with a grain of soil--
Poor, forgotten creatures, dragging on--
But void,
Where could be wings!

—*J.M. Beyer* (July 1932)

The Federal Music Project (1936)

I know of an active bee-hive,
it buzzes and bubbles all day,
is full of creative ideas,
a nucleus of a future so gay!

To it come all happy children,
and adults so young and so old
to find the key to music,
to know of the secrets untold.

It all is taught with knowledge,
with love through games and fun.
Unavoidably what may happen
is surely a wonderful thing.

Glad people will breathe in music,
the babies with their milk
and soon we will have creators
of enduring music and skill.

The Federal Music Project,
the bee-hive I'm talking about,
is a remarkable, living idea
with a future, oh, so bright!

—*J.M. Beyer*

Ballad of the Star-Eater (1934)

Hunger assailed me with sharp, cold pain.
I had searched for food, and searched in vain.
I had found no berries, no pulpy root;
and the boughs above me bore no fruit.

So I lay in the grass and gnawed a blade
and I can't be sure, perhaps I prayed.
I only know that suddenly
a splendid knowledge came to me.

Stars were twinkling overhead;
on these I knew that I might be fed.
So up I rose with quick, glad cry
and began to scale the wall of the sky.

Here was a crevice, there a cleft,
so I went climbing, right hand then left.
My breath came short, the quick air strong,
but I thought brave songs as I climbed and clung.

Below the horizon stretched and grew
'til the earth spun free in a tide of blue.
Weary and stiff but fiercely proud
I swung at last to a ledge of cloud.

Then stars were around and over me
rare, ripe nuts on a heavenly tree.
I crushed and cracked them and crunched the meat.
Oh, they were rich and spicy sweet!

I crushed and cracked them and from my hand
the shells slipped down in a meteor band.
The strength flowed through me from toe to crown,
I left my cloud perch and came on down.

I can still see the sky-dust on toe and heel
where I dug for footing; and I still can feel
the curve of clouds, where I clung to these
with gripping fingers and gripping knees.

Now I walk the earth without care,
though roots elude me and boughs are bare.
For stars still prickle my finger-tips,
and the taste of stars is warm on my lips.

I fear no hunger with sharp, cold pain;
if it dare assail me I shall climb again.

—*Bonaro Wilkinson Overstree*

Three Pieces for Choir (1937)

1. *The Main Deep*

The long-rolling,
Steady-pouring,
Deep-trenched,
Green billow.

The wide-topped,
Unbroken,
Green-glacid,
Slow-sliding.

Cold-flushing,
On-on-on,
Chill rushing,
Hush-hushing,
Hush-hushing.

—*James Stephens, A Poetry Recital (1925)*

2. The Composers' Forum Laboratory

If you are a composer,
and don't know what to do,
go to the Forum-Laboratory
they'll surely hear you.
Whether "old" or "new,"
abstract or true,
quite fancy or plain,
for orchestra or choir,
percussion or piano,
woodwinds or strings,
a Mass or a dance,
they'll give you your chance,
and furnish an audience, so big as the hall,
who comes to see, to hear, to know,
whether it is really so
that we have composers, quite a long row,
who will bear testimony of our epoch
so great, so tense,
so vast, so immense,
full of vigour and strength
fateful at glance
but of future enhanced
and response we get spontaneously
just you are being criticised on the spot
whether you like it or not,
and all is recorded,
so you better be for it,
The Composers' Forum Laboratory,

—J.M. Beyer

The greatest, active, living idea
of present and future time and space,
the noblest monument of our race.

3. *The People, Yes!*

Sleep is a suspension midway
and a conundrum of shadows
lost in meadows of the moon.
The people sleep.

Ai! ai! the people sleep.
Yet the sleepers toss in sleep
and an end comes of sleep
and the sleepers wake.
Ai! ai! the sleepers wake! . . .

—*Carl Sandburg*, from “The People Speak” (1936)

The **Astra Chamber Music Society**, Australia, was formed in 1951 in Melbourne as an orchestra of women musicians under Asta Flack, a violinist and conductor who had migrated to Australia from Lithuania. Under the directorship of George Logie-Smith (1958-77) the group was extended to a professional chamber orchestra and the Astra Choir was founded. Over two decades, innovative performances of choral-orchestral repertoire ensued, ranging from Bach and Stravinsky to new commissioned works from Australia.

Since John McCaughey succeeded as Musical Director in 1978, the Astra Choir has provided the main focus of concerts, joined by many of Australia's leading contemporary instrumental performers as guests. Each Astra concert is designed as an event that engages with new and unusual work, drawn from all musical periods. The choir becomes a basis from which a wealth of forms can be explored, spanning from medieval and Renaissance music through little-known Romantic works and Schoenberg to current developments in electronic and post-minimal music from Australia, Europe, and the United States. The art of collective voices is extended to varied combinations with instruments, electro-acoustics, text, theater, and film.

John McCaughey has been Musical Director of Melbourne's Astra Chamber Music Society since 1978. For many years he was a faculty member in the former Department of Music at La Trobe University, a significant center for contemporary composition and music technology in Australia. He has also taught at the Folkwang School in Essen, Germany, and the University of Melbourne, and currently lectures in postgraduate studies at the Victorian College of the Arts. Numerous contemporary works from Australia and other countries have been commissioned and premiered under his direction, crossing boundaries between choral performance and other genres and media. A former student of Keith Humble and Wolfgang Hufschmidt in composition and Gerd Zacher in organ, he has had his own works recorded by pianists Larry Sitsky and Michael Kieran Harvey (*Move*), and on a Cybele release of electro-acoustic music in Germany (2002).

Miwako Abe, violin, has played a long and distinguished role in Australian music, and is currently Head of Strings at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. She has performed as a soloist on five continents, including appearances with major orchestras in Australia and numerous recital tours. She was a prizewinning graduate of the Guildhall School in London, continuing at the Salzburg Mozarteum where she became an assistant of Sandor Végh. Among other contemporary performances for Astra, she premiered Lawrence Whiffin's *Concerto for Violin and Five Instruments*. Her previous CD for New World Records with pianist Michael Kieran Harvey presented American works from Beyer, Cowell, and Crawford-Seeger to Dodge and Polansky.

Aaron Barnden is a freelance violinist based in Melbourne. Previously a student at the advanced Australian National Academy of Music, he completed a Master's degree in performance at the University of Melbourne in 2001. Since then, he has performed with a number of orchestras and chamber ensembles including the Melbourne Symphony, Cologne New Philharmonic, Australian Pops Orchestra, Dead Horse Band, Silo String Quartet, and Astra. Much of his recent work has been in new music, notably through the Silo quartet, which has played and recorded numerous works by living local and international composers.

Kim Bastin was born in Melbourne and studied piano with Waldemar Seidel before leaving Australia in 1971 for an extended stay in Scandinavia. Since his return in 1987 he has been an accompanist for the Astra Chamber Music Society and has appeared in many of its concerts, often as a duo pianist with Joan Pollock. In other roles he is active as a translator, music copyist, and editor. He has edited works of Johanna Beyer, Ruth Crawford-Seeger, and Helen Gifford, and is currently editing piano and chamber works of the late Keith Humble for Astra Publications.

Peter Dumsday graduated in piano from the Hobart Conservatorium in 2006, studying with Michael Kieran Harvey. Now based in Melbourne, he has a growing role as a contemporary performer with diverse groups. He plays in the Astra Chamber Music Society's concert series, and also works closely with the composer David Chisholm. He has given several solo recitals, and in 2007 made his concerto debut, playing the Khatchaturian concerto with the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra. He is further active as a composer and as a keyboardist in the funk/fusion band King Armadillo.

Daniel Goode, composer and clarinetist, was born in New York. His solo, ensemble, and intermedia works have been performed worldwide. He is co-founder/director of the DownTown Ensemble, formed in 1983. He has been a performer and composer with Gamelan Son of Lion since 1976. In 2004 he initiated the Flexible Orchestra, a rethinking of the symphony orchestra. His innovative music for solo clarinet includes *Circular Thoughts* (Theodore Presser Co.) and *Clarinet Songs* on the XI label. His music has been performed at national and international festivals including New Music America, Bang on a Can, and Sounds Like Now. His works are available at Frog Peak Music, www.frogpeak.org.

Craig Hill, clarinet, has enjoyed an association with Astra since 1994, performing solo works by Graham Hair, Stravinsky, and Johanna Beyer, chamber works by Schumann, Schoenberg, Carter, Berg, and Crawford Seeger as well as collaborating in the premiere of several works by Lawrence Whiffin. As a performer on period clarinets he has appeared at festivals throughout Australia, the United States, and Denmark, with the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Concerto Copenhagen, and the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra. Recordings include Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the ABO under the direction of Paul Dyer (ABC Classics). Craig Hill has been a member of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra since 1992.

Rosanne Hunt studied cello in Melbourne with her mother, Marian Hunt, with Christian Wojtowicz in Hobart, Anner Bylsma in The Hague, and Irene Sharp in San Francisco. She has established herself as both a modern and baroque cellist throughout Australia, touring and recording with the contemporary Elision and Libra ensembles, the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra, and the Arcadia baroque ensemble. She also teaches cello at the University of Melbourne.

Soprano **Merlyn Quaife** is well known across the Australian musical landscape as a singer of great versatility, from chamber music to opera, from bel canto to minimalist styles, and as a champion of new music in both concert and operatic genres. She has premiered many works and roles, frequently composed specifically for her. Until 2007 she headed the voice department at the University of Melbourne, where she initiated a long-range program of composition and production of new operas. Her own previous recordings have been with ABC Classics, Naxos, Tall Poppies, and Move Records.

Nicholas Synot performs widely in Victoria as a double bassist in chamber and contemporary groups. He completed a science degree at the University of Melbourne, and pursued private studies with Steven Reeves, principal bass with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. He has worked with the Melbourne, Adelaide, and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras, and premiered several music-theater works with the Melbourne-based Chamber Made Opera. He toured Europe as principal bass of the Geminiani Chamber Orchestra.

Erkki Veltheim is a noted Australian viola player whose activities extend to roles as violinist, composer, and improviser. A member of Elision Ensemble, Australian Art Orchestra, and the country punk band Roadkill Rodeo, he has also performed with the Berlin Philharmonic, Melbourne Symphony, and Australian Chamber Orchestras, with the German contemporary groups Ensemble Modern and Ensemble Musikfabrik, and in Australia with Black Arm Band, a collective of indigenous singer-songwriters. He has collaborated with other creative performers including Brett Dean, John Rodgers, and Jon Rose, and has devised and performed mixed-media works in Australia, Finland, and Spain.

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