

flavored licks,” boogie-woogie, and an homage to troubadours. These widely disparate ideas are fitted together through a series of transitions – some peaceful, some agitated – with numerous non-sequiturs. And, although the siren is never completely silenced, Freund’s musical mindscape is an utter delight!

Reginald Bain’s *Not Speaking*, written for saxophonists Fancher and Engebretson (who are married), enters the realm where communication is understood between selves and surroundings. Subtle messages emanating from the sweeping vibraphonic environment and the subsequent responses from the saxophones seem to imply much in the way of self-similarity. There are times when the saxophone timbres join together with the pulsating metalophone, making it difficult to distinguish one from the other – a sonic reflection. Nowhere is this more apparent than when alternate fingerings are employed to impressive imitative effect. In some places, I wished for the wind tones to fill the inner spaces at even softer dynamic levels, in order to highlight further the subtlety and nuance that characterize this refreshing and magical dialogue.

As the order of the selections themselves follows a certain arc, it is quite natural that Engebretson’s *An Arc of Solitude* rounds out the program. Here, the inherent flexibility of the saxophone, well-understood by Engebretson, and indeed, Stusek and Fancher themselves is utilized to wondrous effect. The bent timbres, buzzing multiphonics, and wide range of pitch, articulation and dynamics paint a brief but intensely graphic tone-picture of a “period of seeming confinement in a small, white room, illuminated by a sickly yellow-green light.” In spite of the somewhat forlorn description, this work is actually a prime example of thoughtful and adept saxophonic explorations perfectly suited for today’s performers and listeners.

*Louder than Words* is an eloquently delivered musical statement. Much attention is given to the scope and proportion of the selections, as well as to technical and interpretational considerations. Far from being a mere “catalogue recording” of works for two saxophones, this is a well-devised and largely thematic approach to the presentation of numerous contemporary compositions, all worthy of further investigation – in the living room and practice room alike.

Debra Richtmeyer and James Romain, producers. *In Friendship*. 2008, Centaur Records, Inc. CRC 2916. James Romain, saxophone; Kevin Class, piano. Reviewed by Steve Stusek.

James Romain is Associate Professor of saxophone and Jazz Studies at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Kevin Class is Director of Collaborative Piano at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. *In Friendship* is Romain’s first solo classical CD release.

One of the things I love about Ryo Noda’s *Mai* is that while pitches, tempos, and rhythms are specifically notated (more so than in many of his other works) performances of *Mai* are invariably very personal. It’s a work that allows one to explore emotion. Modern, yet accessible. Despite being performed often, there are very few

recordings of Mai, making this one most welcome. Romain's performance here is wonderfully "static." Even in the faster middle section, one has the feeling of floating, and throughout, an almost disturbing lack of direction that creates an enormous amount of tension. We're not going anywhere, we just "are." The glissandos are especially effective, gentle yet powerful. Romain's choice of accidental carry-over is sure to provoke discussion, if not out and out controversy in saxophone circles! This recording is a "must-listen."

Alfred Desenclos' *Prelude, Cadence et Finale* is surely a favorite of saxophonists (and one of our most recorded works) making it a familiar, if dangerous, selection. Romain's performance is up to the challenge. His tone is beautiful throughout, and most enjoyable in the singing sections of the *Finale*, where many lesser saxophonists let the tone spread. The *Cadence* is especially noteworthy – it is precise, yet musical, virtuosic, but not virtuosic for the sake of virtuosity. I predict it will become a model for many young saxophonists

Another work to often suffer virtuosic abuse is Paul Bonneau's *Caprice en Forme de Valse*. In Romain's hands, the *Caprice* is light and dancing, with delightful changes of character and even small touches of humor that would make Bonneau smile. There are few recordings that bring out the "tune" of this work, but Romain distills it.

Robert Muczynski's *Sonata, Op. 29* is odd man out in this recording as the only piece by an American composer. While not the strongest of Muczynski's works, it nevertheless has earned its place in the canon. Romain makes easy work of the first movement's altissimo passages and emphasizes the movement's Gershwin-esque quality. He carries this spirit through the second part with an exuberant jazz-style articulation that propels us through the short, exciting movement. Romain's handling of the final six-eight section is virtuosic. I wish I could tongue that quickly!

The heart of this CD is the title track, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *In Freundschaft*. It's the longest work on the recording, the only one played on soprano, and arguably the most difficult. Romain gives a strong performance. One consideration is how to handle the theatrical nature of the work, which is lost in a recording. It can also be difficult to present the work's spatial quality. Romain has done a fine job of distinguishing the work's "layers" through exaggerating the use of left, center, and right channels, making this aspect of the piece, if anything, more effective than might be possible in a live performance. Another striking quality of Romain's performance are the short trills towards the end of the work. In Romain's hands they become cries, pent up with emotion. Romain's control of the altissimo range is likewise stunning. If there is one small qualification in this whole review it is that Romain's circular breathing is not yet perfected. It is very good, to be sure, but there is still the hint of connection between fingers and breathing.

The final work is one of my favorite compositions, Edison Denisov's *Sonate*. Composed in 1970 and arguably ushering the saxophone into the *avant-garde*, it is still one of the most fascinating, unusual, and exciting works for saxophone, mixing twelve tone writing, numerology, rhythmic canons, contemporary techniques, and jazz. In short, a good blow. Romain makes it all sound easy (and it probably was for

him). The third movement in particular is ferocious, and one will almost believe there is a jazz trio playing rather than a duo.

*In Friendship* is a terrifically played collection of some of the saxophone's most important compositions and a must-have for classical saxophonists.