

**STOLEN GOLD** • Airi Yoshioka (vn) • ALBANY TROY 1305 (62:28)

**LEÓN** *Albanico* **TANAKA** *Wave Mechanics II* **PARANOSIC** *Al Airi Lepo Sviri*  
**RUBIN** *Stolen Gold* **DUSMAN** *magnificat 3: lament* **SHIELDS** *Kyrielle*  
**SHACK** *Pulse*

There are a number of unifying factors in the present violin recital. Each of the works is by a contemporary woman composer, each is for violin and electro-acoustic media, and each is a world premiere recording. Five of the works were commissioned by the violinist and one as an arrangement of an existing work.

*Albanico* by Cuban-American composer Tania León launches the CD in stellar fashion. León's music, of which I've heard a fair amount by now, is invariably compelling, and this work is no exception. She knows the violin intimately, and uses every violinistic trick in the book. These are drawn upon not for cheap showmanship, but for the purpose of presenting the instrument's many capabilities for producing sound and interesting aural effects. As in her other music, there are a lot of jumping lines, which often find momentary repose on a sustained high note. The title refers to a handheld Chinese or Spanish fan, and the piece was conceived as a "bouncing scherzo of images."

The work is scored for violin with interactive computer. I won't pretend to know all the intricacies involved here, but the technique often produces another violin sound to accompany the soloist. At other times there are drum-like effects to undergird a particular phrase, and at still others, purely electronic sounds. León's intermixture of tonal and atonal licks is also typical of her style, a technique that she uses most fluidly. Nothing ever sounds forced or out of place. This is a truly wonderful work, requiring the utmost dexterity of the performer, and violinist Airi Yoshioka brings it off in amazing fashion. I was left breathless at its conclusion—but that's true of each of the works on this compelling disc.

Karen Tanaka is a versatile composer and pianist, born in Tokyo, and currently living and teaching in Los Angeles at the California Institute of the Arts. Originally, Tanaka had written a work, *Wave Mechanics*, for an ensemble of 20 performers. In her original conception of the piece, the first violin had a particularly important part, which the composer has extended in this work, involving just a single violin with electronics. Tanaka, like León, pushes the instrument and its performer to the limit, but utilizes more purely electronic sounds in contrast to León's electro-acoustic environment. Tanaka also tends to eschew the usual tonal production of the instrument in favor of extended techniques of violin playing. Yoshioka is required to produce growls, sounds of swarming insects, a lot of very fast tremolo, and what have you during the course of this work. The title comes from physics, in which the term *waves* is used as an analogy in describing the mathematical relations employed, and the wave is to be imagined in a hyperspace of many dimensions. Yes, the concepts are complicated, and so is the music, but the musical rewards are nonetheless rich.

*Al Airi Lepo Sviri* for violin and tape is by Milica Paranosic, and is another work in which the soloist seems to be playing two or three parts at once. Lines constantly overlap each other, and below them a voice-like chant, derived from electronic manipulations of the composer's own voice, is heard. The composer states that the majority of the work was created in a setting almost completely free of technology, but

doesn't explain how. The title is Serbian for "Airi plays so beautifully." Airi doesn't believe the title: she *does* play so beautifully, both here, in this very modally-conceived work, and in the other pieces on the disc.

Anna Rubin's *Stolen Gold*, which lends its name as the title of the album, is conceived for violin and fixed media, albeit arranged from an earlier version in which the violin part was taken by a baroque oboe. The electronics utilize three classes of sounds—glissandi varying in character from subtle to long and sweeping, clouds of pointillistic sounds, and drones. In this work, the violin is a more distinct entity from the electronics than it is in any of the three preceding works. The result is almost a concerto for violin and synthesized sounds, although the electronics sometimes takes prominence over the solo instrument. The musical language is atonal, and draws upon a variety of invented modes. The title is drawn from, among other things, the aural sheen produced by the high sounds of both violin and electronics.

*magnificat 3: lament* by Linda Dusman is also scored for violin and mixed media. The effect of the work is similar to that produced by the Rubin work, but the intent behind it is quite different. Having been commissioned to write a work by Yoshioka, she began thinking about her approach to it around the time of the beginning of the Iraq war, and also at the time that the 17-year cicadas were beginning to emerge (their emergence shows up in the electronics several times). She realized part way into the piece that it was a lament when her eight-year-old son came in screaming from a nightmare, thinking that the Iraqi war had come to the US. At that point Dusman's work became a lament for all children who are victims of violence. The violin part is suitably mournful in keeping with the work's subject matter.

The *Kyrielle* by Alice Shields begins the most traditionally of any of the works on the CD. From its very tonal opening, the piece goes its own way, incorporating a number of disparate elements. *Kyrielle* is a feminized version of *Kyrie eleison*, "Lord have mercy," and the composer states that it can be viewed as reference to "all compassionate female spirits." The solo part draws upon various Gregorian and other chants, placed in the range of the violin, which spins out shaped melismas. The cicadas from the previous work show up in this one, too, and the intent of the piece seems designed to induce some kind of spirituality, doubtless aided by the occasional organ sounds. It's a most effective work on simply musical terms.

Becca Shack's *Pulse* for electric violin and tape closes the recital. A soaring line in the violin rises above an incessant rhythm in the electronically-modified Zarb, a Persian hand-drum. Other electronic sounds are derived from analog keyboards and the voice of the composer. The listener in this work is aurally transported to the Middle East, and the change of venue provides a nice contrast.

The music on this CD represents some of the most innovative writing for violin that I've heard in a long time. Every piece is a strong one, and there is a lot of variety among the various works. The violin playing of Airi Yoshioka must be heard to be believed. Her tone is gorgeous, her intonation impeccable, and her virtuosity, in both standard and extended violin techniques, proclaims her to be a most worthy successor of Paul Zukofsky. *Fanfare* readers who might be scared off by electronic music in general might give this disc a listen. I believe that it may well win some converts to the medium. My highest recommendation attends this all-around stellar production, but I only wish

that I could get Albany to leave a little more space between the selections on its CDs. Three seconds isn't enough—six would be far better. **David DeBoor Canfield**