

GRAMOPHONE

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

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The Boston Modern Orchestra Project and conductor Gil Rose showcase the works of Donald Crockett on their new disc.

Ming Dynasty novel about a monk and a monkey king's journey to seek sacred texts in India, played with consummate ease and artistry by Duke University's Ciampi Quartet, the music provides challenges for the players and delights for the listener.

The most delightful is the brass quintet *Sparkle*, written for the opening of Lenfest Hall at the Curtis Institute, its fireworks set off by a young and brilliant ad hoc ensemble. The most serious is *Zbi* for violin and piano, written as part of a counterpoint course at Duke. The most purely beautiful is *Huan*, played with exquisite grace by Coline-Marie Orliac. The most adventurous is *Urban Sketcher*, wherein a simple clarinet trio takes a surrealist walk through New York City, using electronic and acoustic sounds including a Chinese flute. Gretchen Peters's detailed booklet-notes enhance the listening experience, while the audiophile recordings reveal in every bar Chiayu's wide palette of colours. **Laurence Villetts**

Crockett

Wedge. Viola Concerto³. Blue Earth

³Kate Vincent

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose
BMOP/sound 10-42 (63) • DDD/DSD



The orchestra is a vessel for swirls of colour and animated incident in the creative

hands of Donald Crockett. The three works the Boston Modern Orchestra Project perform on this new disc show the American composer fully engaged with nature, especially as experienced in his home state of California, as well as myriad emotional states. Crockett has a knack for developing musical kernels and summoning rich contrasts of atmosphere.

The oldest piece, from 1990, is *Wedge*, which explodes with striking motivic ideas and varied textures. Crockett pays tribute to Stravinsky's Viola Concerto in what booklet annotator Christopher Hailey aptly describes as 'a fleeting allusion to the distinctive "passport chord" that opens each of Stravinsky's four movements'. But what we mostly hear in less than 10 minutes is an explosion of brilliant woven materials.

Crockett wrote his Viola Concerto (2012) for his wife, Kate Vincent, whose focus and sensitivity are stamped on every moment of this vivid four-movement work. The piece takes the soloist and orchestra through a kaleidoscopic series of encounters – at turns warm, playful, argumentative and whirlwind. It is a superb addition to the viola repertoire.

The five movements of *Blue Earth* (2002) portray aspects of nature – beauty, majesty and fury – without ever sounding like modern-day Debussy. Crockett paints his land- and seascapes with exceptional finesse and power, finding inventive ways to meld winds, brass, strings and percussion into

something of elemental eloquence. Gil Rose and the Boston ensemble raise the sonic roof when they aren't savouring the delicate pleasures in Crockett's music.

Donald Rosenberg

Fairouz

'Poems and Prayers'

Symphony No 3, 'Poems and Prayers'³. Tahrir³

³Sasha Cooke sop ³David Kravitz bar ³David Krakauer cl ³UCLA Chorale; ³UCLA University Chorus; ³UCLA Philharmonia / Neal Stulberg

Sono Luminus 10-42 (63) • DSD/DSD

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Mohammed Fairouz's Symphony No 3, 'Poems and Prayers',

intended as a musical meditation on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demonstrates the composer's ability to bring down to human scale large blocks of sound and passion, at times as vast as the great choral works of Beethoven and Verdi. Setting texts ranging from the ancient Aramaic Kaddish to modern Israeli and Arabic poetry by Mahmoud Darwish, Yehuda Amichai and Fadwa Tuqan, Fairouz creates a mostly bleak landscape in which hope is to be raised. Even the half-hour final movement, an epic, chaotic setting of Amichai's 'Memorial Day for the War Dead', is haunted by dread, so that the quiet moments are the best, most authentic