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Jean-Guihen Queyras

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Notable Women

New

Auerbach Trio for violin, cello and piano. **Garrop** Seven for piano trio. **Higdon** Piano Trio. **Schwendinger** C'è la Luna Questa Sera?. **Thomas Moon Jig**. **Tower** Trio Cavany.

Lincoln Trio (Desirée Ruhstrat, violin; David Cunliffe, cello; Marta Aznavoorian, piano).

Cedille CDR90000 126 (full price, 1 hour 7 minutes).

Website www.cedillerecords.org  Producer/

Engineer Judith Sherman. Engineer Bill Maylone.

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a perhaps uneasy individuality. Like Auerbach, Garrop uses extended playing techniques to produce haunting sounds. This is not novelty for its own sake, however. Garrop's work, in seven (!) contrasting yet interlinked sections, is admittedly unusual. Still, its disparate parts add up to an effective and, ultimately, disarmingly affecting whole. It was composed in memory of her father.

The heart of this CD, in more ways than one, is Jennifer Higdon's Piano Trio. Higdon (b.1962) won the Pulitzer Prize in 2010 for

Born in 1938, Joan Tower is this group's doyenne. 'Cavany' sounds exotic but it is simply an allusion to California, Virginia and New York, the three states hosting the music festivals for which this trio was commissioned. One of Tower's most frequently recorded works is *Petroushkates*, an homage to Stravinsky (and to the beauty of figure skating). It is still surprising, though, to hear a suggestion of the enraged Petrushka late in *Trio Cavany*. A single 19-minute span, *Trio Cavany* also suggests Stravinsky in its timbral transparency, and in the paradoxical heat generated by the rubbing together of its icy materials. It's rewarding for the attentive listener.

The Lincoln Trio, formed in 2003, has a broad repertoire but a discography focused on contemporary music. Its three members have thriving solo careers and bring that same individuality to their work together. This is assertive, imaginative playing, with no technical limitations and no imbalance. They expertly communicate the variety of styles and affects presented on this disc. The booklet notes are terrific and Cedille's engineering is perfection itself. 'Notable Women' is a notable success.

Raymond S. Tuttle



Lincoln Trio

Cedille

As its title suggests, this is a collection of works for piano trio by American women. One wonders if this kind of 'ghetto' programming does any good. (Recall the controversy that resulted a decade or so ago when several labels released 'gay' classical compilations.) On the other hand, who would criticize a collection of music by French composers from the 1800s, or by composers who owned cats?

Lera Auerbach (born in 1973) is a pianist-composer who defected from Russia in 1991. Shortly thereafter, she began the Trio presented here but did not complete it until 1996. According to her website, her work is 'characterized by its stylistic freedom and juxtaposition of tonal and atonal musical language'. Indeed, the work begins in an almost neo-classical vein (with a Russian accent), but *sul ponticello* strings soon suggest Schnittke, and his influence is strong. Auerbach, though, is more concise, and this brief trio (11'35" here) is praiseworthy for its emotional directness and economy of means.

Cedille has devoted several discs, wholly or in part, to Stacy Garrop (b.1969). Her decidedly un-derivative *Seven* was inspired by an Anne Sexton poem ('I died seven times/in seven ways ...') and also by 'Seven of Nine' from *Star Trek Voyager*. *Seven*, then, is about crossing over from life into death, and also from a collective 'Borgian' consciousness into

her Violin Concerto, recorded by Hilary Hahn on DG (reviewed in February 2011). Her Trio, dedicated to fellow composer Joan Tower, is in two movements. In them, Higdon explores interrelationships between music and colour. 'Pale Yellow' is gorgeously melodic. I probably would have called it 'Bright Blue', but reactions to colour can be just as subjective as reactions to music! Nevertheless, few will resist this music's serene but not entirely virginal lyricism. Higdon and I are more in agreement over 'Fiery Red'. This is a diabolical and very exciting work-out for all three musicians. Higdon wisely introduces contrast but intensity never flags. This Piano Trio is a 'don't miss'.

The next two works are fairly short. *C'è la Luna Questa Sera?* ('Is There a Moon Tonight?') was 'inspired by the moonlight reflected on the surface of Lake Como'. Don't expect Beethoven's 'Moonlight' Sonata, however. The mood is passionate and the surface highly changeable. This work by Laura Elise Schwendinger (b.1962) demands more effort from the listener, but the composer's willingness to communicate is clear. The same is true of *Moon Jig* by Augusta Read Thomas (b.1964). It requires some imagination to hear the jig elements in this work, and also its purported jazziness. Brusque and lurching, it is unlike the composer's numerous and idiomatic vocal works.