

recordings

Musical Arguments to Tussle With

by B.L.C. ©2004

Irwin BAZELON: *Junctures*; *Sunday Silence*; *Spirits of the Night*; *Concatenations*. Nancy Allen Lundy, soprano; Scott Dunn, piano; James Burnham, viola; Harold Farberman/ Gianmaria Griglio/Orch of Sofia; Frank Epstein/Percussion Quintet (w/ viola). Albany/TROY 602. TT=57:23.

In a memorial concert we covered back in 1995 (see TMC, v3#4, pg. 4) at New York's Weill Recital Hall, we heard four chamber works by this composer which we suggested displayed "an overwhelming need to be uncompromising at all costs," and that together with his "flashes of beauty" betrayed a man with "a tough exterior and an inner sensitivity." This new posthumous CD does not change that view at all. On it, a pair of orchestral works, another for solo piano and a fourth for the unusual ensemble of solo viola with percussion quartet, all convince that Irwin Bazon did not stand on ceremony and that this personality also stamps his writing, which we became familiar with in his book, *Knowing the Score*.

That book, relating to a subject he knew well—the plight of the composer for film—impresses the reader with his knowledge of and personal involvement with that music. Bazon wrote many scores for film, but his concert music allowed him to express his inner self much more freely, perhaps. Take the musical opus mentioned above, *Concatenations*, which word my *Oxford American* defines as sequence(s) or combinations. Fortunately, I also own a Webster's *New Collegiate*, which provides a second definition: the uniting of a chain of events into a single meaning. The availability of more than one lexicographic source is common among crossword constructors and, to this constructor and critic, it fuels my continued distrust of the Oxford. For I believe that 'Bud' Bazon had the second definition in mind. His music is in no way la-di-da, but firmly argumentative, as is his writing. To

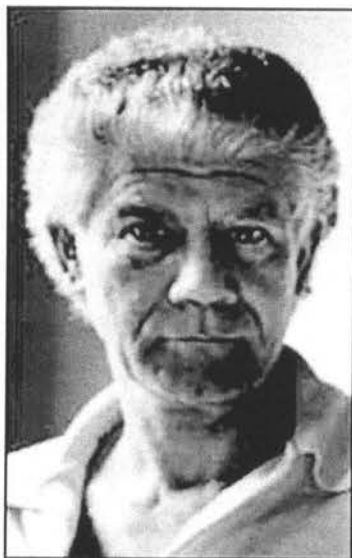
this critic, it appears that his design reflects his own outlook. The percussive passages appear to be reporting the uncontrollable happenings in the world around us vis-à-vis the lyrical viola trying to make some sense of it all. Maybe one can appreciate this notion in a purely abstract sort of way, but we challenge anybody to listen further to his comments and Bazon's music, and disagree.

Now the two orchestral works may be different in structure, but there are distinct elements in both that are tied to the composer's style. *Junctures* is just that—a piece about events coming together and then pulling apart (composer's description). The main segments are driven by shifting meter and contrasting dynamics. The soprano's contemplative melody at the very end has an effect similar to that of the viola in *Concatenations*. The difference is the soprano gets the last word, but she projects an acceptance of the world still as a place of peace and order.

The earlier composed *Spirits* hints at the composer's rebellious younger attitude. Written in 1976, the music is tough and rocky like a ride in a Humvee. Putting it and *Junctures* together in one package would seem to indicate that Bazon was fully accepting the spirit of the times as serious and even dangerous.

Sunday Silence for solo piano is the latest work on the disc, having been written in 1989 and premiered by Alan Mandel in 1990. The title is the name of the 1989 Kentucky Derby winner (the composer was a big racing fan) but to the uninitiated may carry no such sonic suggestion. The work is made up of strong chords separated by contrasting colors and tempi which accelerate as the piece progresses. At the end the pianist plunks notes on the soundboard and, perhaps, this is his idea of a whinny, as opposed to, say, Leroy Anderson's outright brazen imitation on the trumpet. Well, even the most disciplined of artists may be allowed to produce a nice postcard on occasion, and why should Bud Bazon be any exception.

Well, we feel there are signs in his later



Irwin Bazon

work that he was mellowing and that he was finding elements of beauty in unlikely places. Not surprising, as composers do have a tendency to look back and recall pleasant or thrilling things in their lives, whether it be their first horse race, that first encounter with the woman in their life, a great sermon at church or a grand holiday parade. Bud Bazon was not a simple man, but surely certain traits stand out and, at the risk of repetition, we will paint him as a composer with a hard core expression of beliefs.

What He Brings to the Table

by Dr. Helmut Christoforus Calabrese ©2004

Music for Voices: Allen Brings. Allen Brings: 5 choral works and 2 piano/vocal works. CAPSTONE CPS-8731

This recording features various ensembles, orchestras, and the soprano Mara Bonde accompanied by the composer himself on the piano.

The CD is a very good anthology of the vocal compositions of Allen Brings. The *Three Holy Sonnets* (1988) for chorus and orchestra, *The Lament of Rachel* (1997) for chamber choir & piano, four-hands, and *Three Holy Sonnets and From Psalterium Davidicum* (1994) for chorus & orchestra all manifest a polyphonic texture for the voices and the instruments. These compositions are dramatic in their use of dynamics, contrasting textures, and dissonant harmonic language.

The other recordings, *A Herrick Suite* (1977) for chorus & piano, *Three Songs of Blake & Donne* for soprano & piano, and *Mountain Song* (1992) for soprano & piano contain beautiful melodies that fit the content of the words most eloquently. These works manifest a more consonant harmonic language. The piano accompaniments are rich in counterpoint and create a thematic unity through variation.

The quality and the performance of the recording are excellent!

The Firm and the Ephemeral: New Music From Mexico

by John de Clef Piñeiro ©2004

"Agua y Piedra—(Water and Stone: Recent Music from Mexico)": Lilia Vázquez Kuntze: *Estudio #1* (2001) • Georgina Derbez Roque: *Cuatro Piezas en Seis Sonidos* (1993) • Ramón Montes de Oca Téllez: *Dos Estampas* (1993) • Horacio Uribe Duarte: *Preludio y Toccata* (2001) • Federico Ibarra Groth: *Sonata No. 3 "Madre Juana"* (1988) • Marcela Rodríguez: *Como El Agua en el Agua* (1985) • Arturo Márquez: *Días de Mar y Río* (1997). Ana Cervantes, piano. PRODISC SDL00147 (72:46)

In this collection of solo piano works by seven present-day Mexican composers, new music champion Ana Cervantes presents us