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WARSHAW: *Sirens; Responses;*
Camille's Dance

Carolina Eyck, theremin; Boston Modern
Orchestra Project/ Gil Rose

BMOP 1104 [SACD] 51 minutes

I first heard Dalit Hadass Warshaw's (b 1974) theremin concerto *Sirens* (2017) 6 years ago at a BMOP concert. I left disappointed, having been unable to hear the theremin from where I had been sitting—a testament to the subtlety and delicacy of the instrument and to the importance of acoustics and sound engineering to the presentation of a work. I'm delighted to report no such problem here—I can hear the theremin perfectly; better yet, it is an excellent work.

Warshaw writes with a somewhat dissonant, Bergian expressionism and lush, autumnal color—all quite haunting, but easy to follow. The soft, fluid timbre of the theremin fits comfortably in this orchestral sound, sometimes blending and sometimes rising above it. She is herself a thereminist and studied with the first virtuoso of the instrument, Clara Rockmore, so the highly melodic and chromatic solo writing is more assured, informed, and virtuosic than any theremin concerto I've heard (of the few that exist). The theremin is a fickle beast that requires absolute concentration and precise control, so such writing is a testament to her deep familiarity with the instrument and its capabilities, as well as to soloist Carolina Eyck's considerable skill as the world's leading thereminist.

Warshaw's program brings out different facets of the theremin's siren-like sound (hence the title), covering mythical sirens, alarms, and Clara Rockmore itself. I found the program too expository—I ended up ignoring it and admiring the haunting, subtle, and thoroughly well-crafted music on its own merits. This is easily among the best major works written for the theremin.

I hear similar qualities in *Responses* (2016), a set of orchestral reactions to particular Brahms intermezzos. They are far afield from Brahms, but listening closely I can hear small motives, rhythmic patterns, or harmonic intervals that she has taken from those pieces. They are clever homages that stand just as well on their own.

Camille's Dance (2000) is altogether different. It is much more volatile, violent, and dreary, depicting the sculptress Camille Claudel's strikingly vivid art and her descent into madness—emphasis on the latter. It has some thrilling and downright morose orchestral writing, though it feels rather one-note, given the subject.

Fantastic performances from BMOP and especially Carolina Eyck. You owe it to hear this concerto and learn just what the theremin can do in the right hands. Ample liner notes and great sound.

FARO