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New Percussion Literature and Recordings

Circularity

Matthew Coley

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Matthew Coley has asserted himself onto the national scene of marimbists with the release of his debut solo CD, *Circularity*. Combining a virtuosic command of the instrument with a diverse repertoire and superior production quality, this recording will be appreciated by professional musicians and casual listeners alike.

The CD opens with “Prelude #11” by Dmitri Shostakovich, a short piece noted for its clear, simple melody and counterpoint. The next four works, grouped into a set titled “Fugues,” contains works by Bach, Shostakovich, Bjorn Berkhout, and Coley. Here, Coley’s interpretation is cemented by an unwavering adherence to the fundamental ingredient in these works—their rhythmic integrity—without sacrificing the phrasing and balance essential to the livelihood of the counterpoint. This is followed by perhaps the most technically ambitious piece on the CD, Alejandro Vinao’s “Kahn Variations” and Coley’s own composition, “Circularity.” Brett William Dietz’s “Metamorphosis” features six short movements, all of which are performed with an energy and sensitivity to nuance that highlight the programmatic titles of each.

The closing piece, Marcin Blazewicz’s “Concerto Rustico for Marimba and String Orchestra,” was originally composed for the 2008 World Marimba Competition in Stuttgart, Germany. Presented in this recording with chamber orchestra (directed by Russell Vinick), the balance between soloist and ensemble is remarkable. The piece often invokes tonalities reminiscent of Bartok, as Coley uses it as a showpiece for his technical mastery and interpretive insight. Overall, I found this CD to be one of the most enjoyable marimba recordings in recent memory due to its exciting repertoire, world-class performing, and extremely high production quality.

~Jason Baker