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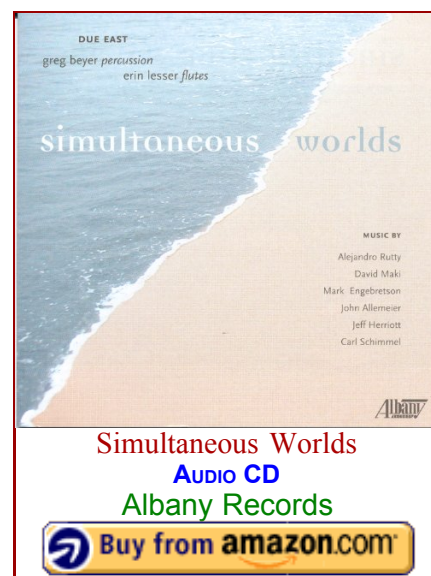
CD Review by Phillip Scott

DUE EAST: SIMULTANEOUS WORLDS • Greg Beyer (pc); Erin Lesser (flutes) • ALBANY TROY1215 (66:24)

RUTTY *Simultaneous Worlds*. **MAKI** *Ita*. **ENGBRETSON** 2 Duos. **ALLEMEIER** *Songs of Earth and Sky*. **HERRIOTT** *Dissipation of a thought*. **SCHIMMEL** *Temper Mutations*.

There is a visual element to percussion playing. John Corigliano’s recent Percussion Concerto, for instance, places different families of percussion instruments at three corners of the orchestra, requiring the soloist to move around and thereby subtly altering the sonic perspective. (As far as I know the excellent Corigliano work is unrecorded, but I would not be surprised to see it turn up on a Naxos CD some time.)

Lacking the visuals, contemporary percussion music can sometimes come across as a series of disconnected experiments in sonority. Even with the addition of flute, this collection of quite interesting new work does not escape that trap. Detailed, helpful notes by Brian Hart illustrate the singular ideas behind these pieces, but without his notes you would have no clue about why the music is as it is—beyond general descriptive terms like “mysterious” or “playful.” Every one of the composers (all born in the 1960s and 70s) meets the challenge set by these two virtuoso performers, exploring fascinating sound worlds—yet something is missing. Given that these composers are working with the most melodic of



instruments and the most rhythmic, there is little lyricism from the flute and not much rhythm from the percussion—in the sense of rhythmic propulsion that we associate with drums. Rather, the flute provides disconnected phrases and bent notes, with the percussion often reduced to exotic punctuation.

Carl Schimmel's *Temper Mutations*, in 10 short movements, is the longest work here and the most varied. From moment to moment it holds interest, but the musical imperative behind it seems weak. The pieces with the clearest formal structures work best (as usual). They are the Two Duos by Mark Engebretson, and the work that gives the disc its title, Alejandro Ruty's *Simultaneous Worlds*.

Engebretson's work falls into two neatly contrasting movements. The first, *Whac-a-Mole*, is a sprightly scherzo based on an arcade game, featuring a machine-like snare and a questing flute line that makes use of such techniques as overblowing and fluttertonguing. The quieter second movement, *Floam*, alternates lyrical episodes with quasi-Minimalist arpeggios, pitting the flute against vibraphone and marimba.

Alejandro Ruty's three-movement work also begins with flute and vibraphone, playing with the idea of melodic loops. There is a gently melancholic feel to the first movement; a slight Latin flavor to the thematic fragments is both attractive and distinctive. (The composer is Argentinean, now resident in the U.S.) The spacious and static slow movement is capped by a cute finale in Brazilian samba rhythm, featuring flute and marimba. Again I am put in mind of the Minimalists, but that may only be because Steve Reich uses the marimba frequently. In any case, here the textures are imbued with purpose and cohesion.

To sum up: Unless you are a practitioner or unabashed aficionado of these instruments, then this is strictly a CD for dipping into. One thing is unquestionable: the skill and musicality of the two performers, who go under the name Due East. Sound quality is first-rate. **Phillip Scott**

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