Improbable Encounters: Works by Joseph Klein (b.1962)

Disc 1: CD [73:17]
Nine character studies after Elias Canetti (1997-):

1) *Der Ohrenzeuge* for bass flute [4:53] • 2) *Die Sternklare* for percussion [5:50]

3) *Der Leidverweser* for contrabassoon [5:04] • 4) *Der Wasserhehler* for ocarina [4:17]

5) *Die Tischtuchtolle* for violin [5:22] • 6) *Die Silbenreine* for glass harmonica [5:31]

7) *Der Schönheitsmolch* for bass saxophone [5:04] • 8) *Der Hinterbringer* for piccolo [5:23]

9) *Der Demutsahne* for guitar [4:54]

10) *Prime Set* (1985), for solo percussion [3:36]

11) *Monogram* (for Nicolás, in memoriam) (2004), for solo piano [1:10]

12-14) *Pathways: Interior Shadows* (1995), for soprano saxophone and chamber orchestra [21:50]

Disc 2: DVD [62:02]

1) *Goblin Market* (1993), for trombonist, prepared piano, and intermedia [22:14]

2) *IcarUS aT thE caBARet VoLtairE: parT I (tHe RENdeZVOus)* (1985), for two guitarists [8:58]

3) *Three Poems from Felt* (after Alice Fulton) (2006) — poetry with computer music [8:57]

4) *Cornell Set* (2011) — poetry with computer music [9:36]

5) *Leviathan* (after W.S. Merwin) (1998), for male voice, bass trombone, and intermedia [12:17]

Performances by Helen Bledsoe • Christopher Deane • James Rodgers • Felix Olschofka
Thomas Bloch • Andreas van Zoelen • Elizabeth McNutt • Joseph Mirandilla • Bruce Hamilton
Joseph Klein • Eric Nestler • Nova Ensemble • William Bootz • Douglas Reed
Matthew Elgart • Peter Yates • Wes Moore • Jeremiah Stones

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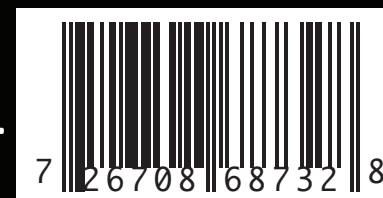
Improbable Encounters: Works by Joseph Klein (b. 1962)

Disc 1: CD [73:14]

Nine character studies after Elias Canetti (1997-):
  1) *Der Ohrenzeuge* **(The Earwitness) (2001) [4:53]; Helen Bledsoe, bass flute**
  2) *Die Sternklare* **(The Starry Woman) (2006) [5:50]; Christopher Deane, percussion**
  3) *Der Leidverweser* **(The Woe-administrator) (1998) [5:04]; James Rogers, contrabassoon**
  4) *Der Wasserhehler* **(The Water-harborer) (2000) [4:17]; Helen Bledsoe, ocarina**
  5) *Die Tischtuchtolle* **(The Tablecloth Lunatic) (1997) [5:22]; Felix Olschofka, violin**
  6) *Die Silbenreine* **(The Syllable-pure Woman) (2000) [5:31]; Thomas Bloch, glass harmonica**
  7) *Der Schönheitsmolch* **(The Beauty-newt) (2008) [5:04]; Andreas van Zoelen, bass saxophone**
  8) *Der Hinterbringer* **(The Tattletale) (2013) [5:23]; Elizabeth McNutt, piccolo**
  9) *Der Demutsahne* **(The Humility-forbear) (2008) [4:54]; Joseph Mirandilla, guitar**

10) *Prime Set* **(1985) [3:36]; Bruce Hamilton, percussion**

11) *Monogram* **(for Nicolás, in memoriam) (2004) [1:10]; Joseph Klein, piano**

Pathways: Interior Shadows **(1995), for soprano saxophone and chamber orchestra [21:50]**
  12) I. Dissolution [6:13]
      a. mercurial tides
      b. lattice
  13) II. Elusion [5:25]
      a. paroxysm & obsession
      b. epicedium (a loss unknown)
  14) III. Conflux [10:07]
      a. spiral jetty
      b. rencontre
      c. tin maelstrom

    Eric Nestler, soprano saxophone
    Nova Ensemble; Joseph Klein, conductor

Disc 2: DVD [62:02]

1) *Goblin Market* (1993), for trombonist, prepared piano, and intermedia [22:14]
    I. come buy, come buy
    II. open heart/absent dream (theme & variations 1-5)
          Theme - Variation 1 (dormant) - Variation 2 (pastoral)
          Variation 3 (melancholy) - Variation 4 (empty) - Variation 5 (urgent)
    III. Laura dwindling (passacaglia)
    IV. resistance (improvisation)
    V. bitterness without a name (epilogue: variations 6-12)
          Variation 6 (delirious) - Variation 7 (passionate) - Variation 8 (anxious)
          Variation 9 (fervid) - Variation 10 (resolute)
          Variation 11 (susurrant) - Variation 12: coda (reflective)
      William Bootz, alto & tenor trombones, prepared euphonium
      Douglas Reed, prepared piano

2) *IcarUS aT thE caBARet VoLtairE: parT I (tHe RENdeZVOus)* (1985), for two guitarists [8:58]
      Matthew Elgart & Peter Yates, guitars

3) *Three Poems from Felt* (after Alice Fulton) (2006) — poetry with computer music [8:57]
          I. Prequel — II. By Her Own Hand — III. Call the Mainland
      Alice Fulton, recitation

4) *Cornell Set* (2011) — poetry with computer music [9:36]
          I. Gorge Dweller: Evensong I (Tacey M. Atsitty)
       II. Elegy for a Car (Clayton Pityk) — III. What is Broken (Benjamin Garcia)
       IV. In Mid-Autumn: Shanxi Province 2007 (Elizabeth Lindsey Rogers)

5) *Leviathan* (after W.S. Merwin) (1998), for male voice, bass trombone, and intermedia [12:17]
      Wes Moore, voice; Jeremiah Stones, bass trombone

NOTE: The versions of *Three Poems from Felt*, *Cornell Set*, and *Leviathan* included on this recording have been modified for DVD presentation, and differ somewhat from the original performance versions. These three works should be played on a home theater system with 5.1 surround sound; a test track is included on the DVD in order to balance speakers for the optimum listening experience.

If anything may be considered a unifying "theme" for this collection of works, composed over a period of nearly 30 years and representing a varied cross-section of the composer's output during that period, it is perhaps encapsulated in the title of this album: a menagerie of idiosyncratic personalities; a clandestine meeting with a figure from Greek mythology in a Dadaist café; a confrontation between Pre-Raphaelite women and goblins within a completely incongruous musical context; the intersection of words, music, and mathematical processes; and on a larger scale, disparate works composed decades apart, are here brought together in a single collection of "Improbable Encounters."

The first works on this album are from a series of short pieces for various solo instruments based upon characters described in *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere* (Earwitness: Fifty Characters), a collection of surreal character studies written in 1974 by the Bulgarian-born British-Austrian novelist Elias Canetti (1905-1994). For the past seventeen years, these ironic paradigms of human behavior have suggested to me a variety of instrumental reinterpretations; to date, thirteen studies have been completed, composed for contrabass (1997), violin (1997), contrabassoon (1998), ocarina (2000), glass harmonica (2000), bass flute (2001), alto saxophone (2004), trumpet (2006), percussion (2006), guitar (2008), bass saxophone (2008), piccolo (2013), and organ (2013). The following excerpts provide a sense of Canetti's colorful descriptions of the characters included on this disc:

Der Ohrenzeuge (The Earwitness) "comes, halts, huddles unnoticed in a corner, peers into a book or display, hears whatever is to be heard, and moves away untouched and absent."

Die Sternklare (The Starry Woman) "shuns the crude light of the sun. [She] sighs in relief when the sun is gone and she wishes it would never come again... Her skin is as pure as the light of the sun. But she does not realize this in herself. Her only mirror is the illuminated night, and this mirror consists of so many dots that it has no unity."

Der Leidverweser (The Woe-administrator) "has lost all he had six times. He has known poverty and hunger; and since he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he has had to make do with iron. He has always worked his way up with iron energy. No sooner did he reach the top than he lost everything again."

Der Wasserhehler (The Water-harborer) "lives in fear that he is bound to die of thirst and so he collects water... He goes to his neighbor and asks for some water... [and] thereby spares his own faucet, which shares his sensitivity and closes before it is too late."

Der Ohrenzeuge

Der Wasserhehler

Die Sternklare

Die Tischtuchtolle (The Tablecloth Lunatic) "is dazzling white and breathes in linen. Her fingers are strict, her eyes angular." However, when she happens upon a spot in the linens she obsessively inspects, "she turns dangerous, like a poisonous snake. Now she opens her mouth and shows dreadful fangs. Now she hisses before striking, the tiny spot takes its life into its hands."

Die Silbenreine (The Syllable-pure Woman) "speaks so unshakably correct that others listen to her with open mouths. Perhaps they hope to swallow the words themselves and keep them for the right moment. Absurd thought! Words do not fit into every mouth, they bounce back from some like marbles."

Die Silbenreine

Der Schönheitsmolch (The Beauty-newt) "is keen on all the beautiful things that have existed, do exist, or will exist in the world, and he finds them in palaces, museums, temples, churches, and caves…. it would be ungentlemanly to describe his repulsive looks. Let it be said that he never had a nose. His pop eyes, his jughandle ears, his goiter, his black, rotten teeth, the pestilential stench he exudes from his mouth, his sometimes squeaky, sometimes croaking voice, his doughy hands… he never holds them out to anyone and unerringly finds his place in front of all beauties."

Der Schönheitsmolch

Der Hinterbringer (The Tattletale) "won't keep anything to himself if it could hurt someone's feelings. He hurries and gets a steal on other tattletales…. [he] will overlook no insult uttered in anger, and he makes sure that it teaches the insultee."

Der Demutsahne (The Humility-forbear) "twists from one submission to another…. He knows that a person who is eager to die will practice submission early on, and the trick is to live in the teeth of this insight… [He] practices bearing up under his hardship…. [and] does it so well that he is sometimes pricked by malice; then he succeeds in intercepting a hardship before it properly arrives."

Prime Set is a 12-voice canon for solo percussionist, based on a sequence of prime numbers, and is typical of several pure process-oriented works I have composed over the years. The canon subject consists of a series of twelve timbres, each successive voice "transposed" by means of a "timbral matrix." The percussion battery, played with four different mallets, is divided into three groups of four instruments each: skin (tambourine, tom-tom, two bongos), wood (wood block, temple block, castañets, pod rattle), and metal (sleighbells, cowbell, brake drum, gong). *Prime Set* is dedicated to percussionist David Yoken, who premiered the work on 22 October 1985 at the University of California, San Diego.

Der Hinterbringer

Monogram (for Nicolás, in memoriam) was composed in September 2004 as part of the project "Bells for Nicolás," a collaborative work to honor the life of Nicolás Alejandro Useche-Gonzales, a University of North Texas composition student who was killed in a tragic automobile accident in August of 2004. The pitch material is based entirely on the letters in the dedicatee's name, hence the work's title. "Bells for Nicolás" was first presented on a memorial concert at the University of North Texas on 9 October 2004.

Pathways is a series of works featuring a variety of solo instruments with a single, fixed orchestral accompaniment. Versions for trombone (*Opposing Forces*), percussion (*Revolution*), and soprano saxophone (*Interior Shadows*) have been completed, exploring the distinct relationship between each soloist and the ensemble. The conceptual metaphor for *Pathways* is that of a traveler: though a single road may be taken by different individuals, the various experiences and responses to a particular environment may vary substantially with each. Here, the orchestra serves as a monolithic sonic landscape through which the various soloists traverse. Structural models used in *Pathways* are inspired by natural phenomena, manifested in mathematical sequences, fractals, and chaotic/entropic processes.

The third in the series, *Pathways: Interior Shadows* was composed for saxophonist Eric Nestler, who first performed the work on 31 March 1995 at the University of North Texas, with the composer conducting the Nova Ensemble. In this version of the work, the saxophone soloist acts as a commentator, mirroring and elaborating upon the material presented within the orchestra. The titles of the three primary movements are intended to reflect the various tendencies within the music: a gradual disintegration in Dissolution, a sense of absence in Elusion, and a coming together in Conflux. Dissolution is in two sections: the first, mercurial tides, is characterized by a constant ebbing and flowing in the solo saxophone part, which in turn creates ripples of increasing intensity throughout the orchestra; in lattice, the music disintegrates into isolated points, through which the saxophone weaves its restless melody. A cadenza in the saxophone leads into the second movement, Elusion, which is also in two sections: paroxysm & obsession, a sudden disruption consisting of isorhythmic patterns in brass and percussion, which influence the course of the melody in the solo saxophone; and epicedium (a loss unknown), an elegiac response to a tragic incident that occurred to a colleague during the work's composition. A second saxophone cadenza leads into the third movement, Conflux, which is in three sections: spiral jetty is named for an earth work created at the Great Salt Lake in Utah in 1970 by American artist Robert Smithson (1938-73), and long since worn away by the effects of nature; the incongruity of this temporary artificial monument elegantly thrust upon its desolate natural surroundings, the process of erosion, and the concept of "jetty" itself are all referenced in this section. In rencontre, the woodwinds and brass are in direct conflict, with the saxophone soloist acting as mediator. Another cadenza in the saxophone leads into tin maelstrom (the title borrowed from a line in John Ashbery's collection of poems *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*), in which the soloist attempts to pass unscathed through the overwhelming turbulence in the orchestra, ultimately having the final comment in the subdued coda, which seemingly leaves off where the work began.

IcarUS At thE caBARet VoLtairE: parT I (tHe RENdeZVOus) was composed in the summer of 1985 for the Los Angeles-based guitar duo of Matthew Elgart and Peter Yates. The work was premiered on 18 December 1985 by the Elgart/Yates Duo at the University of Leuven, Belgium, and has since been performed over fifty times throughout the United States and Europe. *IcarUS At thE caBARet VoLtairE* is the recipient of a 1987 ASCAP Morton Gould Award and an honorable mention in the 1988 Gaudeamus Prize Competition. Much of the work is based on a process of growth/metamorphosis/decay, though these processes are often obscured by the density of their unfolding. Texts from four different languages (German, French, Italian, and English) are arbitrarily juxtaposed, their placement derived from Morse Code and organized according to pre-compositional decisions determined by a deck of playing cards. The result is a self-reflexive caricature of the inherently theatrical nature of musical performance itself, combining exaggerated physical gestures, extended performance techniques, and absurd spoken passages.

I have been an admirer of Alice Fulton's poetry for several years now, and have used her evocative turns of phrase as titles for two of my previous works. I had wanted to compose a musical setting of her poems for quite some time, but had difficulty finding the appropriate medium, as her words seemed to resist a traditional musical setting. It finally occurred to me that I was really interested in creating an elaboration of a poetry reading—after all, poets often "perform" their own works just as musicians do, so it seemed natural to create a sonic environment around the poet's spoken words. *Three Poems from Felt* was drawn from Fulton's 2001 collection of poems, which lent themselves particularly well to such a setting. The work was first performed by the poet on 4 April 2005 at the University of North Texas.

In the spring of 2010, Alice Fulton contacted me about undertaking a commission for a similar project with four MFA poetry students in Cornell University's Creative Writing Program. The poems used in *Cornell Set* were selected for their contrasting content and style, allowing for a variety of approaches in the computer music setting. Specific references in the text provided the impetus for many of the processed sounds (e.g., cars and dogs in the Pityk poem, birds and rain in the Garcia); in some cases, the text reading itself provided the source material (this occurs to some degree in each setting, though the music in the Atsitty poem is based entirely on the author's reading of her poem). The computer music is generally cued off of the text, though the Rogers poem also includes a continuous track of gongs and ambient street sounds throughout. *Cornell Set* was first performed by poets Tacey M. Atsitty, Clayton Pityk, Benjamin Garcia, and Elizabeth Rogers on 15 April 2011 at Cornell University.

Goblin Market was composed in 1993 for trombonist William Bootz, and is based upon the poem of the same name by Pre-Raphaelite poet Christina Rossetti (1830-1894). The work itself is not intended as a programmatic representation of the poem, but is rather a structural and psychological study of the actions and characters portrayed therein; as such, the material has been reinterpreted as a parallel or alternate realization of the original, almost as a shadow or specter. The work is divided into five movements, according to the dramatic unfolding of the poem, which is further parsed into sub-sections corresponding to each paragraph of text; thus, the pacing of the musical work is based directly upon that of the poem itself. Rossetti's poem concerns two sisters, Laura and Lizzie. Each day as they stroll through the woods to the market, they hear the cries of the goblin men, enticing them to come buy their fruits (come buy, come buy). Though the girls are aware of the dangers of listening to the goblin men, Laura one day gives into the temptation. After buying their fruits with a lock of hair and a tear, Laura is treated to tastes and pleasures beyond her imagination. Eager to repeat the encounter the following day, Laura is devastated to find that now only her sister hears the cries of the goblin men (open heart/absent dream). Pining for lost pleasures, Laura begins to waste away (Laura dwindling). In an effort to save her sister, Lizzie confronts the goblin men, but stubbornly refuses to eat their fruits (resistance). Eventually the goblin men give up, leaving Lizzie in disgust (bitterness without a name). The shared experience brings the two sisters together and heals Laura of her wasting anguish.

In the present work, the two main characters of the poem are represented by two complementary pitch cells, one consisting of five pitch classes, the other of seven. This 5:7:12 scheme is applied throughout the poem's narrative, manifested not only in the pitch material, but in the proportional relationships between the various musical and visual elements as well. The musical-dramatic content of each section of the work is the result of a psychological extrapolation of the drama within the poem, which has then been superimposed upon or recast within more traditional formal models: for example, the theme of the second movement variations is a paraphrase of the second section of the first movement, as well as a miniature set of variations in itself; the variations of the second movement continue in the fifth movement, after being interrupted by movements III and IV; the third movement is a passacaglia based exclusively upon the seven-note pitch cell, and is thus an extension of (or obsession upon) variation 4 of the second movement. In a broad sense then, the entire work may be viewed as a set of variations on the two complementary pitch cells (thus making the second and fifth movements "variations within/upon

variations"). *Goblin Market* was supported by a Composers Special Project grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. The work was first performed by William Bootz and Douglas Reed on 22 February 1994 at the University of Evansville.

Leviathan is based upon the poem of the same name by American poet W.S. Merwin (b. 1927), from the collection titled *Green With Beasts* (1956). Merwin's poem is an evocative depiction of the mythical beast, the "curling serpent that in ocean is, Sea-fright... the shadow under the earth." The present work explores the psychological implications of the poem through a variety of musical and visual elements — including multi-channel computer music, live processing of the voice and bass trombone, video projections, and lighting. The work is presented in five episodes, throughout which the relationship between the voice and bass trombone is continually changing. The vocalist elaborates upon the salient lines of the poem, representing the conceptual and psychological aspects of leviathan, while the bass trombonist embodies the physical and mythical manifestation of the beast. The computer music consists of three musical layers: a continuously transforming sonic "seascape", suggesting the "wastes gray-green crashing" described by Merwin; the spoken voice, presenting the poem in its entirety (and including additional references to the creature from Biblical mythology drawn from Job 41, Psalms 104:26, and Isaiah 27:1 in Episode 3); and a variety of processed nautical sounds (crossed with bass trombone and voice samples), creating a sonic link between myth and reality. *Leviathan* was supported in part by a faculty research grant from the University of North Texas; computer music was realized at the UNT Center for Experimental Music & Intermedia, with the assistance of Morris Martin, Ed Baird, William Bootz, and Chris Gassler (sound source materials); Steve Willis, audio engineer. The video was created by Jon L. Henry, under the supervision of the composer. The work was first performed by Jeffrey Snider and William Bootz on 9 November 1998 at the University of North Texas Merrill Ellis Intermedia Theater.

Born in Los Angeles in 1962, Joseph Klein is a composer of solo, chamber, and large ensemble works, including instrumental, vocal, electroacoustic, and intermedia compositions. His music reflects an ongoing interest in processes drawn from such sources as fractal geometry, chaos, and systems theory, often inspired by natural phenomena. His works frequently incorporate theatrical elements, whether as a component of the various extra-musical references, or as an organic outgrowth of the musical narrative itself. Literature is another important influence on Klein's work, with recent compositions based on the writings of Franz Kafka, Elias Canetti, Alice Fulton, W.S. Merwin, Milan Kundera, and John Ashbery, among others. His music has been performed and broadcast internationally, and has been recognized by such organizations as the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Composers Forum/Jerome Foundation, the American Music Center, the Gaudeamus Foundation, and ASCAP. Klein holds degrees in composition from Indiana University, University of California, San Diego, and California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. His composition teachers have included Harvey Sollberger, Claude Baker, Robert Erickson, and Roger Reynolds. Klein is currently Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of North Texas College of Music, where he has served as Chair of Composition Studies since 1999.