

In 1936, flutist Georges Barrère (1876–1944) performed *Density 21.5*, a work for solo flute that he commissioned from Edgard Varèse (1883–1965) to celebrate his new flute made of platinum. The iconic work tested new boundaries of musical language and extremes of register, producing a novel sonic palette for the new materiality of Barrère's instrument.

Befitting the adventurous ingenuity surrounding the creation of *Density 21.5*, Claire Chase's visionary *Density 2036* project was started in 2013, and by the centennial of Varèse's piece, she will have commissioned a vast new repertoire featuring the flute. The works on this album were created for the 2016 part iv of *Density 2036*. Together, they reimagine every facet of the creative process: composer and performer become collaborators both on- and off-stage; new instruments are developed and the capacities of old ones reimaged; and the boundless brilliance of Chase's dazzling playing on the full fleet of flutes—from the piccolo to her platinum C-flute to her beloved contrabass, nicknamed Bertha—pushes music to new sonic limits.

Richard Beaudoin's *Another Woman of Another Kind* for flute and eight voices takes its inspiration from Claire Chase's Meyer Sound Lab recording of Varèse's *Density 21.5*. Beaudoin measures events in Chase's recording down to the millisecond, including intakes of breath, percussive impressions of her fingers on the keys, and the musical notes themselves. Along with unpublished texts by Paul Griffiths, the temporal unfolding of the "microtiming" serves as the springboard to explore seven stories or movements that transform age-old synergies between words and music. The first two stories are semantic and musical awakenings, ranging from inchoate rhythmized, unpitched whispers to moments of speech to melodic song to the recitation of Griffiths' full text. Paradoxes in text/music relations abound. Story 4, entitled "Words" is more about locution and sheer lyricism than semantics and Story 6, "A Piece of Music" is brimming with the potential for word-painting, yet, resisting the temptation, the narrator leaves sounds of such words as bells, kettledrums, trumpets, and monstrous organ to the imagination. The text of Story 5, "Numbers," is mathematical equations. If numbers suggest precision, the voices and flute are most independent in this movement, coming together at the end, as if playing out an algebraic equation where the answer is reached by two separate means.

Vijay Iyer's *Five Empty Chambers* for tape also takes pre-recorded sounds by Chase as its source. Scored for 5 flutes—contrabass, alto, C-flute, piccolo, and ocarina, all played by Chase—she improvised fragments of non-pitched sounds, from which Iyer weaved a lush electronic fabric of dancing rhythms and effects. The distinctive character of each instrument shines through the rich epi- sonic tapestry. In so doing, he reframes the role of composer, performer, and engineer.

The works by Suzanne Farrin and Pauchi Sasaki explore the invention of new technologies. Farrin harnesses the potential of a new headjoint for the flute, where the mouthpiece slides, providing glissandi like its distant cousin, the trombone. It simulates the ondes Martenot, which accompanies the flute in *The Stimulus of Loss*. An instrument patented the same year as the theremin in 1928, it too produces wavering sound and slides between and around the pitches of the Western 12-note system. The title comes

from a line in one of Emily Dickinson's (1830–1886) countless letters to her sister-in-law Susan (1830–1913): "The stimulus of Loss makes most Possession mean." Farrin's music—exquisitely beautiful and mournful—captures Dickinson's laconic, eroticized death-driven aesthetic. Farrin's music abounds in delicate, ornate, subtle gestures; the antiphony between the flute and ondes Martenot evokes calls into the void. The occasional unisons raise the possibility of convergence, only to separate—creating a profound translation of Dickinson's expressions of abject loneliness into musical poetry.

Both Sasaki and Chase wear their newly invented technologies in *Gama XV: Piece for Two Speaker Dresses*. Enveloped in a plethora of small speakers designed in the form of dresses and engineered by Sasaki, the performers' terpsichorean gestures are amplified through the speakers. Gama is a multi-series project, inspired by images of wind, ocean, and river currents. This fifteenth iteration focuses on air, starting with Sasaki vocalizing and Chase blowing into a tube attached to an artificial lung. Transitioning seamlessly from modern technology to the traditional technology of musical instruments, *Gama XV* ends with a poignant duo between flute and violin.

The 'Bertha' in the title of Tyshawyn Sorey's *Bertha's Lair* is the nickname that Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) gave to Chase's contrabass flute, an instrument that is especially suited to long, quiet, mysterious, gentle whistling sounds. Sorey does not oblige, demanding instead a raucous play. The duo starts energetically, as if in medias res, with a busy animated display on the C-flute before transitioning to Bertha. The segue into Bertha's appearance with clanging keys and pointillistic whistling breaths is magical. The most striking thaumaturgy comes when Chase and Sorey match each other's sound: the flute becomes percussion and Sorey's characteristic fleeting touches of cymbals and light grazes across a drum mimic the airier percussive play of the flute.

—SUZANNAH CLARK