

moments with a more forceful sound production in the lower registers, delivering an emotional range that is less present in *flock foam fume*.

This is an exciting debut from an extremely imaginative performer. Despite my misgivings about the medium appropriateness for Bauckholt's and Barrett's pieces, they are delivered sensitively and creatively, with a masterful finish provided by producer Vegard Landaas and technician Thomas Wolden. It's easy to see why this album has received the accolades that it has, and I hope it will be the first of many from Hellqvist.

Leah Broad

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Kathryn Williams, *Coming up for Air*. Huddersfield Contemporary Records, HCR22CD.

Kathryn Williams, as she demonstrates in the ongoing *Coming up for Air* project, is an ingeniously inventive musician as well as being an expert flute player particularly in contemporary music using extended techniques. She has, for example, played the two Ferneyhough solo war-horses *Cassandra's Dream Song* and *Unity Capsule*, the latter something of an inspiration for this project and making a brief appearance here with the final half minute of the piece. The Ferneyhough is track 38 on this album of 40 works each lasting half a minute to a minute or so and all requiring the player to perform the material in one breath, which includes the in-breath as well as exhaling. The composers have responded to the challenge in different ways where exhaling can be traditional flute playing or using different techniques including air alone, key clicks, singing and speaking or some combination of these. Material performed on the in-breath is important because, as Williams points out, it can be half the piece when you only have one breath. Sounds on inhalation can be a powerful musical technique to exploit: one just needs to think back to Vinko Globokar's extraordinary solo works for trombone and bass clarinet (without a mouthpiece) from the early 1970s, especially when played by the composer himself. There is a reason why the pieces devised/constructed/composed for this project are constrained by 'one breath'. In an interview for this journal (Profile, *TEMPO* 73/288 (2019), pp. 109–11) Williams talks about the terrible calamity that befell her: a severe sinus condition together with asthma led to a serious illness

relieved by an operation in 2016 after which, she says, a period of

recovery and ... reflection ... led me to create this project, to enable me to explore the role of my body in relation to performance. [The project] initially began as a response to respiratory conditions I faced ... Managing these ... forced me to develop radical and unconventional means of playing. Economising on my air supply ... became an obsession (p. 110).

Williams initially invited composer friends to address the 'one breath' idea, then, with an open call for pieces (see her website kathryngwilliams.com), the *Coming up for Air* project now has more than a hundred works and presumably continues to grow.

The casual, interested listener, perhaps a flautist drawn by a 'recital disc' of 39 brand new pieces (plus Ferneyhough, however brief), may well be nonplussed, even mystified by what they hear. Tim Rutherford-Johnson usefully, briefly, describes in the liner notes some of the unusual things going on here. The track listing tells us, for example, that Annie Hui-Hsin Hsieh's *PIXERCISE 1* is for piccolo and sit-ups: we hear one held pitch that has slight regular bumps in it presumably on each 'crunch'. Andy Ingamells *Aquafifer* is listed as for fife and a bowl of water – I can't hear any gurgling (which you can definitely hear in Lauren Marshall's *SUCK/BLOW* for head joint and a bowl of water), but then perhaps the Clanger-esque glissandi are produced by water in the instrument. What we are not told is that the booklet cover photo of Williams playing underwater is in fact a performance of *Aquafifer* in a swimming pool. I'll come back to how I know this in a moment.

Many of the pieces use entirely air sounds, together with key clicks and embouchure/tongue pops, a kind of slap-tongue, as you might expect in response to this particular brief. Nina Whiteman's *Thread*, one of the longer pieces at 1'23", does this very well rhythmically; a piece by one of the better-known composers, Chaya Czernowin's *breathing etude 1* is strangely bland and sonically uninteresting. Some pieces are purely spoken text, as in Matthew Welton's *Poem in a single breath* or, as in Lavender Rodriguez's *I didn't say that he did*, have an energetic repeated pattern on flute with the text, here the title itself, fragmented within it before the entire sentence is spoken, literally out of breath, at the end. Some of the pieces are more traditionally 'flutey': repeated patterns until the breath runs out or, more successfully, pieces like Angela Slater's *A Moments Breath*, which starts rather beautifully with an extended colour

trill on one note spilling over into a Debussy-esque flourish, finishing with tremolos. Debussy also appears in Mark Dyer's *Momento for Kathryn* where the opening mixes Williams herself talking on tape, with some sound effects, about the breathing issues, before moving to her playing 'live' the opening solo of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, in a kind of whistletone *sotto voce*. Patrick Ellis's *Breath, Patterns, Bends* repeats and embellishes quick tonal patterns to a crescendo climax. Amber Priestley elongates *It involves beautiful tightropes of logic on which one has to walk* with 'field recordings' – it is an engaging collage-like piece though it is difficult to discern the one-breath-ness aspect of this in the playing. But this is where I come back to the cover photo.

A 'set' of 23 pieces, 16 of which are on this album, carefully arranged and played almost without a break, can be seen in a video of a live performance from London's Café Oto recorded in December 2018 (the video is available on the website kathryngwilliams.com). Suddenly it all seems to make so much more sense. They become pieces of music and 'performances' rather than quirky, sometimes a little dry, extended technique mini-*études* for solo flute. We see a film of the swimming pool version of *Aquafifer*; Priestley's *It involves beautiful tightropes of logic on which one has to walk* is, in fact, a long strip of musical notation (I think) along which the player progresses. Watching Williams play the piccolo whilst doing her 'crunches' for real is pretty funny. The *l'après-midi* solo is played away from the instrument gradually moving nearer to the mouth-piece. Charlotte Marlow and Chrissie Pinney's *Breathless* is an arresting black and white close-up film of just mouth and flute embouchure, which puts this reviewer in mind of Samuel Beckett's play *Not I*. There are other excellent things on the video including a four-part extended version of Larry Goves' *Air Pressure*, again as a film with four multi-tracked flutes in four frames. But what is particularly revealing about the video performance is that almost all of these pieces raises a laugh from the audience. Some pieces are plainly meant to be amusing, some, though, are curious and mysterious, some have unsettling content – the odd embarrassed laugh here perhaps as the brevity means the listener is often left hanging, questioning. But the audience response is also due to the playing – the evident enjoyment, energy and theatricality of Williams' performances. *Coming up for Air* is a fascinating and rewarding project: obviously for Williams herself, with her own body and the physicality

of playing being so much a part of what this is all about, for the composers doing what they often like doing, i.e. responding to a constrained brief, but also for the rest of us as it grows and flourishes. Yes, they are short pieces, but when grouped in performance they become movements in some kind of larger episodic 'suite' or narrative or drama. Now with so many pieces to choose from this must be a rich resource for creating many different kinds of programmes. The album works fine as a document, but to really understand what this is about, and for the full effect, you need to see Kathryn Williams do it live.

Roger Heaton

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Eliane Radigue: *Occam Ocean 2*. Onceim Orchestra, Frédéric Blondy. Shiin, SHIINEER2.

Since she made the transition, almost 20 years ago, from working exclusively in the fixed media domain Eliane Radigue's music for solo instruments has become somewhat familiar and has been the subject of articles both in previous issues of TEMPO and in this issue. In collaboration with instrumentalists such as clarinettist Carol Robinson, violist Julia Eckhardt and harpist Rhodri Davies, her *Occam* series has grown gradually into a repertoire that constitutes at least as powerful and individual an aesthetic as her synthesizer-based music of the last three decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, nothing quite prepares the listener for the expansion of her consistent yet endlessly evolving musical thinking to embrace the 31-piece orchestra of *Occam Ocean 2*. Not that it's a typical orchestra by any means – it consists of five clarinets, six saxophones and no other woodwinds; trumpet, euphonium, trombone and tuba; accordion, three guitars and three percussionists; and a string section consisting of a single violin, two each of violas and cellos, and three double basses. Among the players in the Onceim ensemble are several well-known improvising performer-composers such as Charlotte Hug, Bertrand Denzler and Robin Hayward (the latter a frequent collaborator with Radigue in recent years).

The composer refers to this 52-minute work as a solo for the conductor Frédéric Blondy, 'as if he were a soloist', and elsewhere in the informative notes (consisting mostly of insightful impressions by a number of the participants) Blondy explains that he's principally concerned with overall timing, which can vary quite widely from one