

in the score). The violin part has the same bars and time signatures as the piccolo but is written in proportional or spatial notation where 20 millimetres of stave equals a quaver of the piccolo's tempo (not clock time), which is mostly quaver equals metronome 26 to 34(!).

Similarly, the *Accanto* piece is written in spatial notation, which, I would argue, negates the need for rhythmic notation, as the two things do the same job. While this might please the composer's notational obsessions, for the player it is an easy get-out (used before by some of the older 'new complexity' composers) and means they simply don't have to bother working out those rhythms. The problem is that you can hear this in the performances, where what might have been jagged, unexpected placements are evened out by the player's natural 'musical' instincts based on, for example, their breathing, even heartbeat, and certainly some kind of internalised pulse against which to play the micro-'off-beats'. Johnson further confounds things by stating, 'The rhythmic language... is extremely complex and detailed, but it is treated in a flexible, almost "improvisatory" manner.' So, despite there being much to fascinate and enjoy here, my 'why?' question still stands.

Roger Heaton

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Eden Lonsdale, *Clear and Hazy Moons*. Apartment House, Rothko Collective. Another Timbre, at206.

Moons are defined by their orbit around celestial objects other than stars. In this sense, they are essentially relational, in the orbit of gravitational fields of larger spheres. However, moons are not without their own energies, causing, for example, oceanic tides on these regulating planets. Multiplied, one could imagine how several moons might come to simultaneously pull at the edges of but also contain large bodies of water as some sort of mercurial mediator. These sorts of ambiguities between transition and stasis are of apparent concern to composer and cellist Eden Lonsdale in his debut album, *Clear and Hazy Moons*, comprising four pieces for chamber ensemble, three of which are performed by Apartment House and the title track by the Rothko Collective.

The opening sound on Lonsdale's disc neatly encapsulates this metaphorical lunar liminality. A lone, heavily reverberated piano harmonic, a muted fundamental alongside a high, hazy partial: indeed, I cannot tell whether this sound is real or

synthesised. Its core conflict between haze and clarity sets the atmosphere for and is continuously alluring throughout *Oasis*. The orbiting, microtonally fluctuating B \flat harmonic partials act as reference points – guiding but hazy moons – controlling the ebbing and flowing tides of beatings conjured by the other instruments. This opening to this disc is slow-moving: at the surface level, not much *happens*. However, this apparent stasis creates an almost purpose-built crater for the considered playing of Apartment House to fill, breathing iridescence into Lonsdale's blueprint. A subtle shift of pacing occurs around 8'30", wherein the players alter their roles, and this continues for the remaining six minutes. Indeed, one of Lonsdale's achievements across this album is how different sections of the same piece are both transitioned between and subsequently speak to each other. Some sort of partial eclipse in this new-found meandering occurs from c. 12'45". Here, for about a minute and a half – and perhaps due to the fleeting quasi-major tonality – there is captivating lucidity, like the piece has arrived, before it jettisons this clarity and abruptly ends.

Billowing begins by sounding like a sort of lopsided Arvo Pärt-like hymn before introducing quickly descending lines. It then exhales as if this solemnity is collapsing in on itself. These plunging lines draw attention to themselves – distorted moons hastening their orbits – at the expense of the simple Holy Minimalist melodies. The first seven minutes present discrete episodes of approximately a minute long, each with slight variations: expulsions of unearthly energy through a lunar filter. The music withers and returns minutes later for the fifth episode: here, Lonsdale's attention to structural nuance momentarily baffles and subsequently allures me, which demonstrates the way he holds the listener's attention. From just before the seven-minute mark, the piece cowers in itself, presenting elongated wraiths of the previous material, inviting re-inspection and reinterpretation of its timbral world. The higher woodwinds that follow recall the first section with increased clarity. The piece sits with this isolation of the previous moment for a few minutes before returning to the full descending figure and gradually to the billows of the start. This is an elegant show of pacing.

Lonsdale's third offering, the title track of the album, performed by the Rothko Collective, is sculptural in feel. Celestial-sized forms orbit in and out of focus, as if one is standing in an effervescent Alexander Calder mobile; these are, largely, reiterations of ideas found in the first half of the album, which are readily welcomed back (the delicately placed swell at c. 11'40" is particularly beautiful and suggestive this time

around). Indeed, spatial breadth is highlighted (if not produced) through the recording method: a single Zoom microphone in one of central London's churches; as a result, there is an *immediacy* to this track. The distance between listener and players – something not convincingly replicable through DAWs – places one in St Giles' Cripplegate, and one has the sense of what it might be like to hear Lonsdale's music live in a fitting acoustic. The natural reverb captured through this single microphone does well to organically blend the timbres, particularly when the piece waxes at 9'30". However, the trade-off for this method of 'haze production' is a loss of the detail that feels important to the ambiguities Lonsdale is working with and which Apartment House and recording engineer Simon Reynell captured so beautifully. That said, this commitment to uncertainty, even within the title track of an album, is commendable. The recording style leads me to imagine how *Clear and Hazy Moons* might be extremely effective as a spatialised, performed installation (indeed, this might be said for any of the pieces on the album), capitalising on the possible ethers created by Lonsdale's music, made particularly apparent here by the slow fade-out, which allows the ensemble to artfully sink into the ambience of the recording space.

The disc closes with the fullest and longest piece on the album, *Anatomy of Joy*. At first glance, this musical stature and seemingly uplifting title might seem assertive, but there is a loss of Lonsdale's compositional voice. The feeling of 'joy' being alluded to here detracts from the nuance and novelty of expression in the previous three pieces. The loosely would-be-poignant atmosphere feels empty, like it might accompany a generic montage sequence in a romantic drama. Where Lonsdale excels in the previous pieces is in writing music that balances *doing something* alongside composing stasis through repetition. *Anatomy of Joy* only does the latter, which, make no mistake, is both graceful and pleasant, particularly in his use of the double bass low pizzicato at 19'00". But having heard what the composer can do elsewhere – that is, write really rather stunning music – I can't help but feel a little let down: musical moons irregularly wax and wane, but not in a way that beguiles me.

When using this sort of sound palette and these structures, as is not uncommon for emerging composers, it is very easy to write *nice* music, but considerably harder to write distinctive music. Long, slow and fragile sounds can conceal questions of craft because, well, they sound *nice*. However, what Lonsdale does over

the course of *Clear and Hazy Moons* is arrange this idiom in a way that is continuously compelling and his own: there is nuance to each of the four eclipsing realms, which is deftly paced to encompass and cradle listeners. Certainly, then, Lonsdale is a composer to watch.

Ed Cooper

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Matthias Kranebitter, *Encyclopedia of Pitch and Deviation*. Jäch-Micko, Klangforum Wien, Warsaw Philharmonic, Black Page Orchestra. KAIROS, 0022006KAI.

The album *Encyclopedia of Pitch and Deviation*, released by Kairos earlier this year, presents a selection of pieces with electronics for solo violin, mixed ensemble and orchestra by Austrian composer Matthias Kranebitter performed by violinist Gunde Jäch-Micko, Klangforum Wien, the Warsaw Philharmonic and the Black Page Orchestra.

Matthias Kranebitter is a composer of instrumental, electroacoustic and electronic music based in Vienna. He is the co-creator of the Black Page Orchestra, a contemporary music ensemble focusing on the performance of mixed music and multimedia by emerging composers. His music is rich in variation and nuance. His soundworld is characterised by dense sonorities: from saturated, distorted synthetic sounds with influences of glitch and 8-bit aesthetics, through midi sounds of acoustic instruments, to massive over-the-top sound design combined with highly expressive instrumental writing, which ranges from rough gestural and mechanistic-like textures to refined musical moments of acute clarity. Kranebitter takes advantage of the referential charge of sounds as socio-cultural signifiers to create complex and compelling musical works that link different themes and topics through sound beyond the inherently musical.

The first composition on the album, *Pitch Study no. 1*, from 2016, for violin and electronics, performed by Gunde Jäch-Micko, begins with a short electronic bleep, which 'presents' the pitch of the 'étude'. The title of the composition becomes explicit in this very opening: the tuning protocol before a performance of concert music. The violin 'takes' the pitch and plays it, changing the timbre somewhat, and is followed by samples of different kinds (sounds of instruments, musical sequences and electronic sounds), instances of the pitch presented in an episodic fashion. In subsequent sections, the violin and