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https://fanfarearchive.com/indices/itop/issues/h2_002.html

As electronic music has evolved, one branch moved away from avant-garde daring, confrontation, and anarchic aesthetics, taking a direction akin to mainstream music in one important respect: it became enjoyable. I hadn't encountered the creations of Lee Weisert, who holds a professorship in the music department of the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, but the three works on this digital album evoke adjectives suitable for Debussy: atmospheric, luminous, delicate, refined, subtle—and enjoyable. Without belonging to the coterie of dedicated New Music followers, a general listener can become immersed in Weisert's soundscapes on their own terms, an immersion that is more introspective than dramatic (another link to Debussy).

The genre here is electro-acoustic, and the contour of each piece is loose enough to be described as a collage, although I readily accept that each composition is intuitively structured by the composer, as the program notes tell us. New Focus provides some of the most helpful and illuminating program annotation for some of the most obscure, even obdurate, New Music. That's not really necessary here, however, because these pieces are self-explanatory: acoustic fragments, often diatonic and melodic (there's even a passing reference to Mozart's *Rondo alla Turca*) are blended or contrasted with a shifting, dynamic mosaic of electronics.

The mix rarely deviates from natural or quasi-natural sounds. In *Recesses I, Part I*, the sound picture is accessible through methods that aren't jargon-ridden or overloaded with techno-speak: "Vocal samples of children's voices, ethereal string harmonics, airy chords on a Fender Rhodes and melodic gestures on electric guitar ebb and flow in a hypnotizing fashion." That's a fair description of the listening experience throughout; the notes make a point about the sustained or continuous affect that emerges from a wide range of effects.

Another link to Debussy might be the intricate detailing to which Weisert subjects his sounds. In the space of a few seconds dots and dashes of clipped sounds, overheard voices, and single notes on the piano rush by, but are so carefully organized (hence the introduction of "intuitively structured") that a sustained line is created for the listener to engage with. I'm impressed with the way that Weisert, described at UNC's website as a "multimedia sound artist," is so convincingly artistic in using such fleeting sounds. Perhaps the pointillism of Georges Seurat is just as apt as any reference to Debussy. Close up, you hear points of sound, but backing away, an overall image emerges.

It would be futile to anatomize each point, not only because they range so vastly—from clicks to tidal sounds, from stummed guitar to static, from faint scraping to tuned bells—but also because there's no conventional way to relate one point to the next. *Recesses I* and *II*, together lasting 44 minutes, are so alike as to form one listening experience, which is in sharp contrast with *Similar Speeds*. It, as the title implies, focuses on the elements of timing and rhythm. Metallic blips, whose timbre is like gamelan or perhaps Jamaican steelpan, start out in a synchronized stream that diverges into separate micro-patterns that become more and more disjunct. This experiment in dislocated

tones wasn't something I could appreciate—I was irritated two minutes into a six-minute work whose appeal, beyond abstract de-synchronization, is beyond me.

Naturally, since this digital release is to be accessed through streaming or downloads, each listener can sample online before choosing which pieces are the most appealing. The two I prefer, *Recesses I* and *II*, are enjoyable without sacrificing skill, intricacy, and detail. On that basis, Weisert has achieved something rare in New Music, reaching the listener directly and creating an intimate, satisfying connection.

- Huntley Dent

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Best of Bandcamp. The Best Contemporary Classical on Bandcamp: April 2023

<https://daily.bandcamp.com/best-contemporary-classical/the-best-contemporary-classical-on-bandcamp-april-2023>

North Carolina composer and performer Lee Weisert unveils a dazzling universe of electro-acoustic sound on *Recesses*. The composer himself plays electric guitar, piano, and percussion, and a number of guest collaborators add other instrumentation, but ultimately it's what the composer does with these sources at his mixing desk that forms the sure-handed development.

The bulk of this album is occupied by two iterations of the title track, in which electronics and acoustic sounds blend meticulously, steadily shifting focus in the most organic, seamless fashion. The wordless voice of Melissa Martin bleeds into ambiguous piano patterns, sizzling static, orphaned guitar chords, synthetic gurgles, and the swelling strings of violinist Nicholas DiEugenio, but ultimately it misses the point to pinpoint all of these evolving elements. The second version relies more on decidedly synthetic tones, but the rich blend is no less kaleidoscopic. *Similar Speeds* is a work for percussion—this account features electronically-generated sounds—that employs almost microscopic phasing, with each of eight percussive lines voicing one less quarter-note sound each, evoking either a mini-gamelan or a strummed, electronic zither. In the end it's far more rewarding to get lost in these dense, hyper-detailed sound world and marvel at Weisert's impressive, intuitive grasp on the entirety of these materials.

- Peter Margasak

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The Whole Note (Sept. 10, 2023)

<https://www.thewholenote.com/index.php/booksrecords2/moderncontempo/32924-recesses-lee-weisert>

The album *Recesses* is a fantastical sonic journey of melting ice, acoustic piano, degraded tape and voices, a kind of hustle and bustle mixed with water droplets and electronic fuzz. Layers of time, stratus clouds shifting, streaks of water moving through air, frost on metal, children speaking. Colours of purple, grey and green. Sparkle and dust. Layer under layer under layer. Windows open

and close, breezes blow through, curtains move. Empty walls fill up with images and empty out again. Conversations rise and fall. This album is a masterful creation, a demonstration of visually listening peripherally with a third eye, of noticing and letting go.

Never feeling preachy or heavy, these four beautiful tracks morph between mindful and wild, a flowing sonic movement that feels unrushed but is never still. This is a magical space to enter without the wastefulness of extraneous noise or volume. The fourth track, *Similar Speeds*, is a rather mesmerizing visualization of subtle stretching of mis-timing, reminiscent of the metal ball toy Newton's Cradle.

Professor of composition at Northwestern University, DMA pianist and multi-instrumentalist Lee Weisert has collected a brilliant team of collaborators to build his journey with. Allen Anderson on modular synth, Nicholas DiEugenio, violin, Jonathon Kirk, electronics and Melissa Martin, vocals. This is an album to listen to while doing nothing else.

- Cheryl Ockrant

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Take Effect Reviews (Nov. 25, 2023)

<https://takeeffectreviews.com/november-2023-4/2023/11/24/lee-weisert>

9/10

The composer Lee Weisert returns with a sophomore album on the New Focus label, where his electroacoustic and electronic pieces welcomes strings, keys, guitars and vocals to the 4 involved compositions.

“Recesses I: Part 1” opens the listen with much warmth and mystery, where Weisert’s chilling electronics, guitar and piano are met with Nicholas DiEugenio’s subtle, stirring violin, and “Recesses I: Part 2” follows with Melissa Martin’s wordless vocals and Matthew McClure’s well timed sax adding much dreaminess to the soothing landscape.

The back half includes the manipulated modular synth from Allen Anderson and haunting electronics of “Recesses II”, while “Similar Speeds” exits with Weisert’s electronics making hypnotic percussive noises that draw the listener in with its abstract appeal.

Also a professor in the music department at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Weisert’s ability to blend orchestral ideas, found sounds, field recordings and digital and analog moments makes for another unclassifiable and enjoyable illustration of creativity.

- Tom Haugen