

Although his music has garnered significant acclaim in various European countries and has been played by star musicians like Mstislav Rostropovich and Yuri Bashmet, Lithuanian composer Arvydas Malcys (b.1957) is, as far as I am aware, not particularly well known in the United States. Indeed, the present recording, which is titled *Vox clamantis in deserto* and features five substantial works for chamber orchestra written over the course of 12 years, is the first opportunity I have had to hear his music. I am glad to have finally made Malcys's acquaintance, and I believe that many of the works included here will impress contemporary-music aficionados.

Although Malcys's music is decidedly modern, it is also strikingly accessible. That seems to be the result of the composer's conscious decision not "to turn his music into mathematics or grammar" and instead to address through his musical language "the most important issues: human passion, struggle, rise and fall, love, death and friendship, evanescence and eternity." These human and emotional elements are present in all the works on this recording, and in many ways this evocative, impactful, and affecting music reminds me of Giya Kancheli's scores (minus the occasional Broadway elements) in its dark intensity, seriousness, and complex harmonic language.

In my view, the winners here are the evocative Clarinet Concerto, with its haunting second movement and grotesque finale; *Cleaved Silence*, a 13-minute dissonant meditation; and the elegiac Viola Concerto, which Malcys titled "In Perpetuam Memoriam." Even though it is apparently Malcys's most famous work, I am less fond of the neoclassical *Milky Way*, which was apparently inspired by Heinrich Schenker's theories. (No wonder it didn't do it for me!) Similarly, I find the Flute Concerto, in which soloist Camila Hoitenga occasionally shrieks with a piercing voice that invariably spikes my heart rate, a little bit too anxiety-inducing for my taste.

The quality of the sound is excellent, as is the work of conductor Robertas Šervėnikas, who has mastered these difficult works. Hoitenga's shrieking notwithstanding, the three soloists ought to be applauded for meeting the considerable demands Malcys's scores place upon them. I am particularly taken with violist Hartmut Rohde, who displays enormous range and depth of tone in "In Perpetuam Memoriam." The Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra plays expressively and convincingly, although there are occasional intonation problems in the strings.

Warmly recommended to contemporary-music enthusiasts. Radu A. Lelutiu

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