

in wartime Auschwitz. This symphony, so similar in mood and intensity to a grief-laden *adagio* by Shostakovich (Weinberg's friend and stylistic inspiration), is a truly haunting, powerful statement of personal pain and heartbreaking loss.

Nothing could be more different than the four-movement, 18-minute *Serenade* (1952) – bright, cheerful, playful, with charming dance-like melodies. The finale is even titled *Allegro giocoso* – nothing *giocoso*, of course, in the *Symphony*.

Conductor Lande is clearly committed to Weinberg's music, these vibrant performances helping to make this CD utterly unforgettable.

Michael Schulman

Morton Feldman – For John Cage
Aisha Orazbayeva; Mark Knoop
all that dust ATD 1

Matthew Shlomowitz – Avant Muzak
Asamisimasa; Håkon Stene
all that dust ATD 2

Séverine Ballon – Inconnaisance
Séverine Ballon
all that dust ADT 3



▶ The new label **all that dust (allthatdust.com)** has been established by the outstanding pedigree of its founders – composers, performers, instrument-builders

and forthright musical creators and innovators – who have cut their teeth on the most demanding concert halls across the world of contemporary music. Now from founders, soprano Juliet Fraser, Newton Armstrong and Mark Knoop come these three of the first five releases on their exciting imprint. The tongue-in-cheek title of this label, All That Dust, and the bold statements of the music under review, will probably not be lost on the listener.

Morton Feldman's *For John Cage* – literally the premiere release, which also features label co-founder and pianist Mark Knoop, together with brilliant violinist Aisha Orazbayeva – heralds something of a reborn American avant-garde, primarily concerned with the sensual qualities of sounds themselves, rather than the shaping and ordering of those sounds. Always typical of this tendency, Feldman's sound-world here consists of small, soft and unhurried musical gestures which emphasise the physical detail of instrumental timbre. The work in question seems a conscious attempt at formalizing a disorientation of memory. The effect is of a hallucinatory stasis, not dissimilar to the canvases of Mark Rothko, where little happens – very beautifully.

Matthew Shlomowitz's music is



characterized by its bizarre theatricality and biting irony couched in subversive and surreal quantum miniatures. The disc begins with four segments titled *Popular Contexts 7: Public Domain Music*, all of which are almost immediately recognizable since the segments are reminiscent of elevator and mall music upon which they are based. The next five segments feature variations with similar public-music settings, this time featuring the percussionist Håkon Stene who augments Asamisimasa, a kind of Lewis Carroll-like equivalent of a jazz quintet. *Avant Muzak* – five sketches regarding tempi and locale – brings this entertainingly satirical disc to a close.



The effect of Séverine Ballon's musical odyssey *Inconnaisance* is best elaborated as a masterpiece of music whose microscopic elements of tone, pitch

and tempi are confections of musical ideas miraculously welded together: new, alert and alive. Ballon's transparent, lyrical cello resides in an opulent sound world.

Raul da Gama

Hands and Lips of Wind
Diagenesis Duo
Independent (diagenesisduo.com)



▶ You know that you're already in for something special when you read that the Diagenesis Duo comprises a soprano – Heather Barnes – and a cellist – Jennifer Bewerse.

That Barnes turns out to be decidedly bel canto with an ability for breathtaking coloratura and that Bewerse draws from her instrument every possible sound short of a human voice is the seductively beckoning cherry on the proverbial cake.

The two settings of Mischa Salkind-Pearl's profoundly ethereal *Hands and Lips of Wind* are intensely dramatic. This work, together with *con mortuis in lingua mortua*, Stephen Lewis' powerfully elegiac piece, and a fresh arrangement of the constantly shifting *Travels* by Adam Scott Neal were commissioned by the duo. The album also includes the viscerally sprung *Nine Settings of Lorine Niedecker*, a series of miniatures by Harrison Birtwistle; all of which is music made in the realm of heaven.

Bewerse is not the only one who pushes the envelope, vaulting and diving up and down

the registers of the cello – no easy task given its tuning in perfect fifths an octave beneath the viola and an octave above the contrabass – but swathed in the leaping melisma and daring coloratura of Barnes, the duo sculpts this diabolically complex music with impossible precision. It is music seemingly in the twilight of tonality but it is utterly seductive, with the cerebral clarity and the stunning instinctiveness with which both musicians approach the five gems in this repertoire.

Raul da Gama

JAZZ AND IMPROVISED

Meaning To Tell Ya
Molly Johnson
Universal Music Canada/Belle Productions
BMM101 (mollyjohnson.com)



▶ Every now and then, a recording comes along that makes you sit up and take notice, literally stop what you are doing, and just listen. This is one such album, a

personal, soulful set of originals and covers sung by one of Canada's finest ladies of song, Molly Johnson.

Johnson sings her life experience into these songs, and the results are riveting, moving and celebratory. Of course it helps to be in great company, and she has handpicked the best to join her on this musical journey: drummer Davide DiRenzo, guitarist Justin Abedin, keyboardist Robi Botos, bassist Mike Downes, organist Pete Kuzma and guest saxophonist Bob Sheppard. The band provides beautiful, funky and understated accompaniment throughout. It also doesn't hurt to have renowned producer Larry Klein sitting in the recording booth.

As a master storyteller, Johnson mixes in playfulness, memorable melodic hooks and great grooves, along with many things to ponder. The aptly named *Stop*, a life-affirming antidote to despair, is simply stunning. Co-writers Johnson, Klein and David Baerwald deserve a place in the Songwriters' Hall of Fame for this one.

The Gil Scott-Heron tune, *Lady Day and John Coltrane*, will get you up dancing and singing, and will "wash your troubles away." Toronto composer Steve MacKinnon also deserves special mention for his collaborative efforts on the title tune and *Better Than This*.

Meaning To Tell Ya has many important things to say. And we're listenin'.

Barry Livingston