

Brouwer

*Aurolucent Circles**. Mandala.

Pulse: a 50th Anniversary Fanfare.

Remembrances. SIZZLE.

*Evelyn Glennie (percussion); Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra/Gerard Schwarz.

Naxos American Classics B.559250 (super-budget price, 1 hour 5 minutes). Website www.naxos.com.

Producer Michael Ogonovsky. Engineer David

A. Pigott. Dates July 12th-14th, 2004.

Who has done more than Evelyn Glennie to request new works for percussion and orchestra? Some, such as Michael Daugherty's *UFO* (reviewed in December 2004), are unlikely to outlive her advocacy. Others, such as James MacMillan's *Fest, Fest, Eusemius* and now Margaret Brouwer's *Aurolucent Circles* (2002), have a good chance of standing the test of time.

Brouwer (b.1940, and no relation to Leo) studied with some very fine American composers (including Donald Erb and George Crumb) and currently heads the Composition Department at the Cleveland Institute of Music. In notes with a worthwhile New World CD devoted to her chamber works (reviewed in March 2004), Brouwer explains that both consonance and dissonance interest her, and that, while her music can be dark, she likes 'a lot of ringing sounds' associated with consonant intervals and notes in the overtone series. One understands why a percussion concerto intrigued her.

Brouwer writes that her aim 'was to make a concerto that would be as musically sophisticated as the ones usually written for violin and piano'. She has succeeded. *Aurolucent Circles* is not a primitive 'bash-fest', but a structurally refined and sensitive work

Orchestral

of frequently haunting beauty. The interactions between Glennie and two smaller concertino groups give rise to exquisite sonorities. (Halfway through the first movement, the marimba gorgeously combines first with a trombone and then with a violin.) One does not expect to be seduced by a percussion concerto. It happens here.

The remaining works were composed between 1996 and 2003. *Mandala* was partly inspired by watching Tibetan monks creating, then destroying the eponymous sand-painting. While not literally Eastern, the music 'is very much constructed in circles that spiral inward'. (Too bad the recording cannot replicate the effect created by arranging the brass players around the perimeter of the performance space.) The moving *Remembrances* is 'an elegy and a tribute' to a deceased colleague. Its 15-minute span allows it to move with unhurried sincerity from mourning to hard-won reassurance. With its consonant tonality, it is the most stereotypical 'American' piece on this disc. *Pulse* and *SIZZLE* are brief occasional pieces – effective within their modest objectives.

Gerard Schwarz and his Liverpoolians respond to Brouwer's refined music with performances which leave nothing to be desired. Glennie's playing, as always, is a source of awed disbelief. With fine sound and Brouwer's booklet notes to cap the project, Naxos has come up with a winner once again.

Raymond S. Tuttle