

alcides lanza. Canadian Composers Portraits. Toronto: Centrediscs, 2007. 2 sound discs + 1 booklet in English & French. CMCCD 13007. \$17.98. Contents: V.1. Lanza documentary produced and prepared by Eitan Cornfield (49:46) -- V.2. *eidesis II* (New Music Concerts (Toronto), alcides lanza, conductor) (12:03) -- *penetrations II* (McGill Composers Ensemble, alcides lanza, conductor) (12:26) -- *un mundo imaginario* (McGill Concert Choir, Iwan Edwards, conductor) (13:07) -- *ontem* (Meg Sheppard, voice; Shawn Mativetzky, tablas, percussion) (10:43) -- *ektenes III* (Simon Aldrich, clarinet; Luc Maltais, DSP) (10:29) -- *aXents* (Novel Ensemble Modern, Lorraine Vaillancourt, conductor) (10:04).

The latest release in the *Canadian Composer Portraits* is a two-disc set devoted to alcides lanza, one of the central voices of Canadian experimental and electronic music during the final decades of the twentieth century.¹ Following the usual format of the series, the first disc contains a fifty-minute documentary expertly produced and presented by Eitan Cornfield. The discussion of lanza's early years in Argentina, his musical influences, and his life-long attraction to electro-acoustic music is carefully integrated to reveal his development as a composer. Intercut with Cornfield's narration are reminiscences by lanza and Meg Sheppard, his wife and collaborator on a number of compositions. Pieces by the composer are used as background to the interviews (a number of the compositions feature performances by Sheppard). However, given that four of the six works on disc two were written since lanza's residence in Montreal, I was surprised that only a small portion of the documentary is devoted to his life there. Nevertheless, the documentary is extremely engaging. Not only does it adroitly balance perspectives of lanza the composer, performer, teacher, husband and father, it also prepares the listener for the various compositions presented on the second disc.

All six pieces on the second CD are worthy additions to lanza's relatively small discography, and the size and scope of works illustrate the variety of media for which lanza is noted. The recording quality is impressive, with the performances ranging from good (*eidesis II*, conducted by the composer) to excellent. (The performances of *ontem*, *ektones III* and *aXents* will no doubt be the benchmark for years to come, and Simon Aldrich's performance of *ektenes III* is stunning.) Yet, I have to admit some bewilderment with the choice of repertoire for a disc that by its very title, *Portraits*, suggests a retrospective presentation. For instance, consider there are no pre-1967 works: Does this absence suggest there are no compositions of worth until the composer reached the age of thirty-nine? This seems unlikely, given that early pieces by lanza are played on the documentary CD. Second, there are no compositions from the 1970s and only one from the 1980s (after *Penetrations II* from 1969 the next work to appear in chronological ordering is *Un Mundo Imaginario* from 1989). Yet there are three works that date from 1995 to 2003. Clearly with an oeuvre of over 120 works, valuable pieces from all portions of lanza's

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¹ The composer prefers that his name appear in lower case, a practice I employ in this review.

career could have been selected. One wonders if the excellent recordings of recent works may have bumped more deserving earlier pieces either because of convenience or (more probably) because they were digitally mastered.

The liner notes have significantly improved compared with earlier instalments from this series—both in terms of the biography section (written here by Meg Sheppard) and details about the works themselves. One small vexation is that the original Portuguese text for *ontem* is not present; only the English translation is given.

My reservations aside, this important recording is strongly recommended.

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