

## Discoveries

by BRUCE HODGES



## 2 String Mavericks Mix Classical With Pop and Jazz

Kristina Reiko Cooper: *Stone and Steel* (LINUS 270103)



In her liner notes to her latest CD, *Stone and Steel*, cellist Kristina Reiko Cooper writes about living in Israel and its vibrant juxtaposition of the present and the past, which inspired this unusual hybrid of old and new. Cooper, who holds the Triple Crown of degrees—bachelor’s, master’s, and doctorate—from Juilliard, dives as far back as the 12th century, giving Baroque and Renaissance icons a confident, laid-back jazz makeover, nicely recorded by producer and engineer Tom Lazarus. With the help of Satoshi Takeishi on

percussion and John Novacek on piano, she begins with two sober Henry Purcell pieces adapted by Patrick Zimmerli and Kenji Bunch. Much livelier music follows, with John Dowland’s *George Whitehead’s Allemand* and *Flow My Tears*, each still recognizable even after Zimmerli’s arrangements kick them into high gear, pumped full of syncopations and juicy percussion accents. The Gregorian chant *Auctori Vite Psalmis* finds Cooper sailing over a palette of shimmering piano, wind chimes, and bongos, and then John Novacek’s *After Rameau* gives the Baroque composer a quiet yet unmistakable Caribbean flavor.

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A claustrophobic episode under Cooper’s house inspired Kenji Bunch’s *Crawlspace* (originally from 1996), for a restless cello “escaping” from extreme low pitches. Although Bunch—a Juilliard alum and faculty member—later arranged it for viola, this new version takes advantage of Takeishi and his crisp percussion improvisations. Hildegard von Bingen makes an appearance with *Columbia Aspexit*, which melds quiet meditation with upbeat solos for Novacek.

The title track, which Zimmerli wrote for Cooper, is a mix of grunge and sparkle that draws on everything from Gregorian chant to Brahms, with motifs that echo the other selections like 21st-century ghosts. It is a challenging vehicle, well-suited to show off Cooper's virtuosity. At the end the opening Purcell track returns, this time in a different guise, with Zimmerli and Takeishi providing electronic drones and crackles as foils for Cooper's melancholic intensity.

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*Bruce Hodges is a regular contributor to MusicWeb International, a London-based online classical music magazine, and the creator of Monotonous Forest, a blog focusing on contemporary music and art.*