

"RE:SOUNDINGS PRESENTS CHORAL MUSIC + OF MARY JANE LEACH." The New York Treble Singers, Virginia Davidson, conductor, and the Cassatt String Quartet. Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, NYC. Sept. 25, 1997.

In a beautiful small sanctuary within this fine church, the stop-on-a-dime Treble Singers, were most ably conducted by their founder, Dr. Davidson, along with her special guests, the noteworthy Cassatt String Quartet and soprano soloist Arlene Travis. Funding from Meet the Composer made this elegant musical tribute to the tragic Cretan queen Ariadne possible during a time when The Met gave several performances of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The composition is a feminist spin on the reign and abandonment of Ariadne, as she languishes alone on Knossos.

Ms. Leach's program included *Bruckstück* (1989) about which she writes: "...the piece is polyphonic, with a lot of closely resolving intervals. Rather than writing linear melodies for one voice, I wrote melodies that are passed from voice to voice." This quote sums up Ms. Leach's idiom, which harks back to Monteverdi and hints at Steve Reich, and maybe Terry Riley and Philip Glass, too.

To give you a handle of sorts, let me tell you what this musical program was NOT. It was NOT modulated fishwives' cries in the marketplace. Nor was it vocal knitting or Andy Warhol music. It was NOT the musical rearranging of angels on the head of a pin. It was NOT mere vocal exercises. It was NOT all the Ansonia's female sinners practicing from the same book but starting at different moments within the same ten-minute interval. It was NOT sing-song. It was NOT the slow steady change of the ocean's surface as one drifts mid-Atlantic on a calm day. It was NOT time-bound droning.

What did Ms. Leach's pieces do? They made every atom within the sanctuary come alive with the hum of the universe. There was microtonality, meshing, doodle-doodle-doo. There was a hypnotizing fusion of sounds. There were vocal fainting spells. There were pools of vocal sound. There were exquisitely delicate shifting and sliding tones. There was a cumulative soothing effect.

Marlene Harding

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