



**Three-Nine Line:
Flute Music of
Nicole Chamberlain
Mary Matthews, Matthew
Angelo, Chamberlain**

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The music of Nicole Chamberlain is exciting and vibrant, and in *Three-Nine Line*, a sampler of her compositions, there are many moments reminiscent of pop and world music and of everyday household sounds like an old-fashioned percolator—sounds that would be familiar to anyone with a TV and an imagination. Chamberlain is a rare composer; she uses the flute and piccolo not only in the usual lyrical and technical ways but also as percussion, and she employs the entire body of the musician, from stomping feet and clicking fingers to singing, speaking, and beatboxing.

That in itself is not so rare these days, but with Chamberlain's music, those effects are never without purpose. They build the texture and enhance the timbre without existing solely for their own sake. They become integral to the music, rather than ornamental.

Three-Nine Line features Mary Matthews, Matthew Angelo, Chamberlain herself, and pianist Jessica Nilles. The playing throughout the program is marvelous, expressive, and acrobatic.

There's something very visceral to the blend of traditional flute playing and extended techniques, something intimate and personal about hearing a flutist's voice and breath along with her tone.

One of the highlights of the CD is "Lilliputian," a composition for piccolo and music box. The eerie, archaic sound of the music-box melody, tinny and plaintive, creates a counterpoint to Angelo's piccolo playing. His tone is sweet and pure, his interpretation effectively straightforward. As the piece ends, his pitch bends perfectly compliment the idea of a music box that is winding down.

"Percolate," for flute trio, is both innovative and entertaining. The beatboxing sections sound just like a percolator, while other sections involving foot stomping, pitch bends and a whirling flow of notes remind the listener of an impatient coffee devotee waiting for the machine to finish.

Chatter, for two flutes, is cacophonous, a loud conversation between friends who can't help but interrupt each other. The title piece was inspired by flight. Written for flute and piano and premiered by Matthews and Nilles, the four movements of the work illustrate specific techniques of air flight with driving rhythms, asymmetrical and wild, contrasted with a lovely, lyrical, mysterious second movement. Matthews' playing is lovely and elegant but also aggressively declamatory in places, with a gorgeous dark tone.

Three-Nine Line is a wonderful recording. It's exciting, inspiring, and a wonderful glimpse into the world of flutist and composer Nicole Chamberlain.

— Jessica Dunnivant



**Beta Quartet
Brittany Trotter, Eftihia
Arkoudis, Tatiana
Cassetta, and Alyssa
Schwartz**

©2017 Beta Quartet

The Beta Quartet's debut album is an impressive collection of flute quartet music played with energy, expression, and skill. Including works written since 2004 by Derek Charke, Mike Mower, Mark Fromm, and Anže Rozman, the quartet's CD also presents a classic: Jennifer Higdon's "Steeley Pause" from 1988.

The recording begins with *Aqua and Ventus* by Slovenian composer Rozman. He favors a texture in which a rhythmic ostinato supports a melody line, and the voices switch roles with regularity. This practice creates an intriguing texture, a rich tapestry of sound and color that the quartet executes with lively accuracy. *Aqua* has the feel of a saga in terms of the scope of the melody; learning that

Rozman frequently composes music for video games is not surprising! *Ventus* is reminiscent of the opening of *The Moldau*, with the top two parts playing a rolling, tumbling triplet pattern that is pleasantly repetitive. *Ventus* also requires some air effects and jet whistles, which are very effective in Rozman's setting.

Mower's *Fictions for Four Flutes* is a harmonically rich, satisfying piece, at times lugubrious and melancholy, as in movement two, *Drought*, and at other times an outbreak of rhythm and sass, as in the third movement, *Homeside*. Perhaps the highlight of the CD is the final track, Charke's "Raga Sept," in which a beatbox-like rhythmic framework supports a mellow little melody that winds its way through the piece. "Raga Sept" is charming and a little bit mysterious, with its asymmetrical meter and thick texture.

For a first effort, this recording is very, very good. There are moments of tiny inconsistencies in blend and ensemble, but the overall effect is one of virtuosic, expressive playing and tremendous musical energy. The flute community can only hope that there will be more Beta Quartet CDs forthcoming!

— Jessica Dunnivant

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