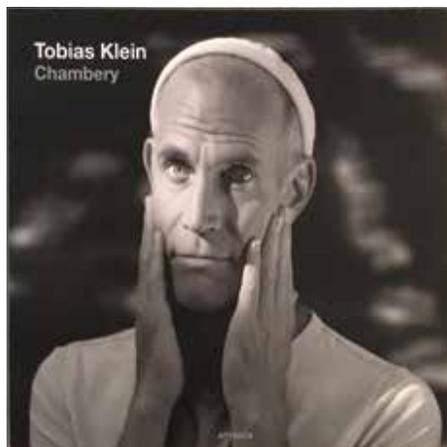


Jelte Althuis, bass clarinet; Goska Isphording, harpsichord; Bart de Vrees, percussion; Tarmo Johannes, flute; Taavi Kerikmäe, piano; Marko Kassl, accordion. T. Klein: *Leichte Überlappungen*, *Kengboginn*, *SteinHolzGummiWasser*, *Bogus Bogey*, *Vermutung*, *Tōmba Tōmba*; E. Poppe: *Schlaf*. Attacca, ATT 2018156. Total time 50:00.



This album is truly outstanding and represents bass clarinet playing and chamber music at the highest level.

Chambery is a collection of six chamber music works by Tobias Klein – all featuring the bass clarinet – and one contrabass clarinet duet by Enno Poppe. Aside from the beautiful musicianship within each track, it must also be mentioned that the album as a whole has a clear artistic arc and musical clarity that is a welcome addition to the world of contemporary music and clarinet recordings.

The newest piece on the recording, *Leichte Überlappungen*, is an exploration of proportions between notes and tempos, which, according to Klein, was a fairly strict compositional landscape. However, the piece itself sounds expressive and free with an impressive variety of tone color and musical textures from bass clarinetists Fie Schouten and Jelte Althuis. *Kengboginn* is a duet for bass clarinet and harpsichord and is thoroughly and delightfully weird. The combination compliments itself exceedingly well, due in no small part to Schouten's magnificent bass clarinet playing, which is so agile that any potential balance or color problems

are totally nonexistent. Schouten and harpsichordist Goska Isphording expertly navigate the weaving in and out of synchronicity, both in terms of rhythm and tonal language.

SteinHolzGummiWasser adds percussion with bass clarinet to create a sound world that is seemingly endless in its colors. Percussionist Bart de Vrees has full control over every sound he makes which is equaled, as usual, by Schouten. Multiple sounds and extreme register changes alternate quickly with a groove rhythm but neither interrupts the other. While this track is somewhat less cohesive than the others, the presentation is still excellent. *Bogus Bogey* adds Tarmo Johannes on flute and Taavi Kerikmäe on piano with Schouten on bass clarinet to bring a free jazz element to the album – and does so brilliantly. It evokes the feeling of short musical vignettes that are linked unison lines between the bass clarinet and flute. The ensemble work from all involved is jaw-droppingly clean and leaves nothing to be desired.

Vermutung pairs bass clarinet with Marko Kassl on accordion in a work that is exceedingly complex rhythmically and sonically. The blend and ensemble achieved by Schouten and Kassl is astounding, especially considering the difficulty of the task at hand. It's perhaps no bass clarinet player's dream to be told they sound like an accordion, but in this case it's a compliment. At times the color of the instruments matches so perfectly they are practically indiscernible from each other. *Tōmba Tōmba* is an exploration of sound for solo bass clarinet. Tone color, multiphonics, trills and rhythmic noise from the instrument are all beautifully woven together in a tonal tapestry that is fascinating and engaging. This work can certainly hold its own among contemporary solo bass clarinet pieces and should be considered for performance by every bass clarinetist. Enno Poppe's *Schlaf* (*Sleep*), for two contrabass clarinets, is calm and peaceful – true to its name – but the peace is punctuated by stark outbursts and tone quality variations that transform into thematic material. The result is a piece that breathes by starting at rest and expanding to the point of rupture only

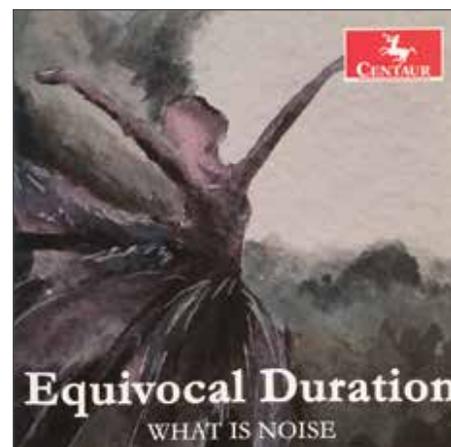
to return again to peaceful unison. The execution is again perfect from Schouten and Althuis.

This album is as close to flawless as any I can think of. The cover art, selection of the pieces, recording quality, editing and execution from the performers all have a clear artistic vision in mind. The musical language is modern but has every expressive musical element one would hope to hear in a piece, regardless of when it was composed. There is nothing cold, expressionless or academic here, only beauty presented in a language that reflects the world in which we live by world-class performers with a distinct musical vision. This is the first album I've heard from this collection of artists, but I hope it won't be the last.

– Spencer Prewitt

Equivocal Duration. What Is Noise:

Anastasia Christofakis, clarinets; Dalia Chin, flutes; Joshua Burrell, violin; Justin Page, cello; Cholong Park, piano; Megan Arns, percussion. S. Stucky: *Ad Parnassum*; J. Burrell: *Roanoke*; D.T. Little: *Descanso (waiting)*; L. McLoskey: *Requiem*. Centaur Records, CRC 3689. Total Time: 47:33.



Contemporary music often provokes strong reactions. Some people simply love it and are curious to discover new works; others have an aversion against it and perceive it as noise rather than music. What Is Noise, the name of the chamber music ensemble featured on this CD, seems to provocatively hint at exactly that polarizing aspect of contemporary