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<http://classicalmodernmusic.blogspot.com/2014/10/pat-okeefe-contents-may-differ.html>

Pat O'Keefe, **Contents May Differ*

The development of woodwind virtuosi is nothing especially new. Of course in the realm of jazz there have been many and continue to be. Modern classical has its share as well. Today's players tend to have mastered both conventional and less-conventional techniques of sound production, including complex-toned harmonics, alternate fingerings and falsetto range development.

Clarinetist-bass clarinetist Pat O'Keefe most certainly fits in with these trends as an excellent instrumentalist with a sure sense of purpose. He tackles six contemporary modern works for the two clarinets on **Contents May Differ* (Innova 888).

Most all the works embody the new music extension and alteration of woodwind sound production. That they do so in different ways enables us to sample a broad spectrum of possibilities. Jeff Lambert's "Dissonant Grooves" and Ann Millikan's "Dendrite" explore the possibilities for solo Bb clarinet and bass clarinet, respectively.

Scott Miller gives us his "Contents May Differ", a dramatic exposition for bass clarinet and amplified, electronically transformed bass clarinet sounds. (Miller has several albums out of his own that I've reviewed on these pages. One features Pat O'Keefe. Type his name in the search box above for those.) It is expressive, dynamic and almost orchestral towards the end.

Brett Wartchow's "Unbound" takes Shelley's poem "Prometheus Unbound" and constructs a very lively solo clarinet piece around it. The music exemplifies a kind of analog to the poem's unbinding, and does so in interesting ways.

O'Keefe's own "Silent Snow" introduces Paul Cantrell on piano for a duet work that begins softly with quiet melodic figures that touch on harmonic overtones, the piano entering with equally quiet accompaniment that evokes the hush a newly covering blanket of winter snow can uncannily produce, especially in the evening when nature and humanity seem in suspension. The concluding portion of the piece becomes more emphatic and strident, appealingly so. As quiet as the snow falling may be, perhaps the music is saying, its accumulated effects can be more than a sort of fairyland. We who endured last winter in some areas know that all too well. Nonetheless it is a magical moment in real life that transforms well the overall compositional, airy lightness of the work, becoming in the end something a good deal more heavy in what it leaves behind for us.

The final work is in four parts, a bass clarinet-piano duet by Paul Cantrell entitled "The Broken Mirror of Memory". This is full-blown modernist expressionist poetics, a fitting end to the program and a bit of a tour de force. The chorale-like passage at the conclusion of the work gives us closure, a kind of "amen" to the entire program.

Pat O'Keefe provides us with a great deal to appreciate in **Contents May Differ*. It shows his considerable artistry as it also gives us vibrant modern music. All who follow the contemporary new music scene should readily respond to this one. It is an exemplary program that shows virtuoso sensitivity and some excellent compositional work as well. Recommended.