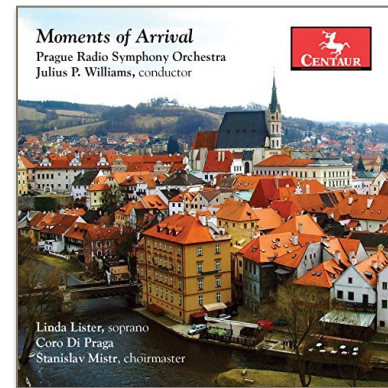


MOMENTS OF ARRIVAL • Julius P. Williams, cond;
Linda Lister (sop); Coro Di Praga; Prague RSO • **CENTAUR 3456** (65:17)



ROUSSANOVA *Moments of Arrival*
MCQUILLAN *Poet Song*
The Long Goodbye
J. WILLIAMS *InEquities In A Society*
QUALLIOTINE *Celestial Nights (Part I)*
BURNS *The Voyage*



Moments of Arrival
MP3 Music
Centaur Records, Inc.



The present Centaur disc is the third CD

I'm aware of that combines the talents of conductor/composer Julius P. Williams with composers Lee T. McQuillan and Armand Qualliontine. This should not be surprising, as these gentlemen have had a long-standing collegial relationship, apparently extending back to their student days. The reader interested in more information about these three men may refer to the interview of Williams by Peter Burwasser in 30:2 and my own review of music by them in 35:5. The disc under review here also includes works by two composers who are new to me, and each of them turns out to be a master of the craft of composition, as are the three herein whose music I already knew.

Opening the program is **Elena Roussanova's** *Moments of Arrival*, a three-movement suite that flows along graciously, its opening Pointillistic section giving way to long fluid lines that caress the ear of the listener. Roussanova was born and raised in Moscow, but emigrated to the U.S., and teaches at the Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory. The ragged jumping lines in portions of this work remind me a little of Copland, but the lush harmonic language is entirely her own. This is a most ingratiating work, and would be a real audience pleaser on any concert. The tender moments would fit perfectly into a love scene of a film, as my musician wife noted as she walked into my office while the piece was playing. (She also loved the piece).

Lee T. McQuillan is represented by two works, *Poet Song* and *The Long Goodbye*. Both of them are orchestral songs, nobly presented by soprano Linda Lister. The former deals with the necessity of the composer or song writer to society, and the poem by Margaret Carbo culminates with the lines, “Music, lifting my heart, Stroking into life’s greatest joy. Every song a prayer, Every prayer a song.” This sentiment receives a hearty “amen” from yours truly. There is an elegance and simplicity to this music that is very appealing, and the shifts into and out of tonal centers are done with such skill that the whole forms a seamless tapestry. A substantial part is given to a chorus, accurately sung by the Coro di Praga, as is the solo part by soprano Lister. I wasn’t able to discern the words of what was being sung, but no matter, as texts are supplied in the booklet. *The Long Goodbye* sets a second poem by Carbo, this one dealing with the slow painful separation from her father as he declined and eventually succumbed to Alzheimer’s disease. This also resonated with me, as my own mother, a most vivacious and intelligent woman, was taken by degrees by a similar degenerative disorder. The music is almost painfully sad, but at the same time is achingly beautiful, and ends on an optimistic note.

Inequalities In A Society by Julius Williams follows the preceding work very well, and almost seems to flow out of it. The work was written in memory of Trayvon Martin, the young African-American man who was killed in Florida some years ago. In this piece, Williams seeks to portray the racial profiling that has sometimes blackened our society, one supposedly built on the equality of all men. We fall short of that standard, as Williams seeks to remind us here. The harmonic language, while generally tonal, employs dissonant and dramatic gestures, including some *fortissimo* strokes on the timpani, and the piece thereby produces a powerful effect, including its bitonal ending, reminiscent of the ending of *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

With Armand Qualliotine’s *Celestial Nights* (Part I), the listener is transported musically to another world. The ethereal sounds and colors the composer creates in this work suitably evoke the concepts of interstellar space, nova, and binary star, each of which is the focus of a movement of the work. Particularly prominent are sustained mildly dissonant chords in the strings that are punctuated with strokes on the vibraphone and other instruments. This work would make a stunning backdrop to the show at a planetarium, so if any planetarium managers happen to be reading this, they’ll know the perfect music to accompany their presentations.

The Voyage by Reynard Burns returns to more overt tonality, and in fact begins with a fairly straightforward setting of *Amazing Grace*. Other tunes, including *America the Beautiful*, *We Shall Overcome*, and *Yankee Doodle*, are melded together into this pleasing 15-minute multi-section work. The work provides a suitable closer for the concert, and would be a welcome addition to any outdoor summer patriotic pops concert.

Conductor Williams keeps everything moving along at a good pace (in Burwasser’s interview, he speaks of the necessity of finding just the right tempo for any new piece of music), and the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra plays with consummate skill. With the high level of writing found on this disc, and the substantial variety of styles of music, this disc is self-recommending, but I also recommend it, just in case you need that extra nudge to acquire it.

David DeBoor Canfield