



Moments of Arrival
MP3 Music
 Centaur Records, Inc



 **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

Taking as its starting point a quote by Proust (“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes”), and sporting the gorgeous city of Prague on the river Vltava on its cover, this disc seeks to examine both arrivals (physical and metaphorical), departures (including the achingly painful progress of Alzheimer’s), and indeed voyage itself.

Russian-American composer Elena Roussanova, who studied composition at the Moscow Tchaikovsky Conservatory, contributes the three-movement *Moments of Arrival*. The first panel, “Moving Forward,” begins with a cleverly orchestrated depiction of

rainfall before the journey begins. Roussanova’s mode of expression is direct, tonally based, and at times decidedly filmic. A moment of “Reflection,” marked *Adagio espressivo*, forms the still center, and is beautifully played by the Prague forces, with textures expertly balanced by the conductor, Julius P. Williams. The finale paints the “bright morning of a new day.” Bright and breezy it certainly is. The performance by the Prague orchestra is absolutely beyond criticism technically, the whole permeated by the warmth of sonority that is so characteristic of orchestras of this country and its environs.

New York-born Lee T. McQuillan studied with Arnoldo Franchetti (a pupil of Richard Strauss). In *Poet Song* he sets (for orchestra, chorus and soprano soloist) a poem by Margaret Carbo that initially depicts, intriguingly, meaningless words seeking the poet. Here the music is fragmented; the soprano’s initial line (“Floating words haunt/ Meanings unknown”) reflects this quality of searching. Linda Lister has all the qualities the line demands of her, including a full, loud and impassioned upper register. The choral processional at “Ah, the colors of music” has a whiff

of Vaughan Williams about it (no bad thing); the piece climaxes beautifully on a consonance for the line “Every prayer a song.”

It is Margaret Carbo again who provides the text for *The Long Goodbye*; this time the poem is about the passing of the poet’s father to Alzheimer’s. McQuillan’s scoring is tissue-delicate, the Prague orchestra’s strings perfectly judged and, indeed, recorded. Lee McQuillan’s music was showcased in another disc, this one on the Albany label (1980), in *Fanfare* 31:3, where an accompanying interview with James Reel pinpointed the long-standing connection between McQuillan and this disc’s conductor, Julius P. Williams.

There seems a rather short gap in between the haunting ending to *The Long Goodbye* and Williams’s own *InEquities In A Society* (subtitled, “An Ode to Trayvon,” and commissioned as recently as 2014). Williams’s piece is a musical reaction to racial violence, such as that that led to the tragic death of Trayvon Martin. The slow, inevitable tread of the music towards its climax is potent indeed, and impeccably paced both compositionally and indeed in performance terms (perhaps unsurprisingly,

given that the composer is on the rostrum).

Intended as a serenade for chamber orchestra, Armand Qualliotine’s *Celestial Nights* intersperses nature painting in music with folk dance; the work differs from its Romantic-era counterparts by using cosmic phenomena. The composer’s name is unfortunately misspelled on the disc back cover. The present disc features only Part I of the sequence (there is a Part II, but they may also be performed as separate pieces). The first panel of Part I, “Interstellar Space,” is slow-moving and mysterious, dissonances perhaps reflecting the icy cruelty of space itself. (The title comes up as “Into Interstellar Space” on my CD player.) The static beauty of “Nova” is most arresting and bleeds into the rather more forbidding “Binary Star.”

Finally, there is Reynard Burns’s *The Voyage*. Described by the liner notes as presenting “a melting pot of melodic ideas ever present in the American tradition,” the musical collage is a skillful compendium of melodies that are part of the American life-blood. Burns’s combinations of themes are meaningfully considered, as in the case of *Life Every*

Voice and *We Shall Overcome*, or, as inspiration, the combination of *America the Beautiful* and *God Bless America*. The *Dies irae* makes an appearance, too. This is a fascinating, and entertaining, tapestry.

Recorded to the highest standards in May and June 2014 at the Prague Radio Orchestra Studios, this is a most thought-provoking disc. It tackles deep matters (Alzheimer’s, racially-motivated murder). Far more than a travelogue, it asks questions— questions of man and of Nature that may perhaps never have answers.

Colin Clarke

This article originally appeared in Issue 40:3 (Jan/Feb 2017) of *Fanfare Magazine*.