

## Utah artists and composers showcase their talent

By Edward Reichel

Deseret News

Published: Saturday, Jan. 16, 2010 4:51 p.m. MST

LAUREL ANN MAURER, FLUTE, JOHN WARNER JENSEN, PIANO; "Songs From the Heart" (Laurel Ann Maurer) ★★★★★

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH SINGERS, BRADY ALLRED, CONDUCTOR; "Alleluia: Sacred Choral Music" (University of Utha Singers) ★★★★★

STEVEN RICKS; "MILD VIOLENCE: STEVEN RICKS" (Bridge) ★★★★★

Below are three CDs by Utah artists and composers who put the spotlight on the talent and diversity found among classical musicians in the Beehive State.

Although she no longer lives in Utah, Laurel Ann Maurer has spent quite a few years of her career here as principal flute of the Salt Lake Symphony, as a recitalist and as a teacher. She still returns to the state to perform at the Park City Music Festival and as part of the Contemporary Music Consortium.

One of her frequent collaborators over the years has been pianist John Jensen, who is an exceptional pianist in his own right and a remarkable collaborator. Maurer and Jensen are in many ways a perfect musical partnership — they are like-minded musicians who share the same high artistic standards and musicality. And so it's a delight seeing them together on Maurer's most recent album, "Songs From the Heart."

This CD is a wonderful collection of 17 pieces, many of which are transcriptions for flute, and all of which are well-known. Among the tracks are "Meditation" from Jules Massenet's opera "Tha?"; J.S. Bach's "Siciliano"; Claude Debussy's "Claire de Lune"; and Gabriel Faure's "Berceuse" and "After a Dream." Maurer plays these and the other pieces with feeling, expressiveness and exquisite lyricism.

Whether or not one plays the flute, this is an album that's hard to resist.

"Alleluia: Sacred Choral Music" is the University of Utah's most recent release. And once again the performances on this CD are truly amazing. Under director Brady Allred the U. Singers is a wonderful choir. They bring a level of professionalism to their performances that is rare among

college choirs. And while there is a fairly large turnover in singers from year to year, the sound remains the same.

This is a versatile group, and the selections that Allred has chosen for this album — many of which were recorded in Europe during the choir's tour last summer — highlight their talents.

The 21 songs represent a great selection of pieces from the sacred repertoire, and the choir sings each with wonderful expressiveness and sincerity. This album is a delight from the opening track (Bob Chilcott's "The Singing Heart") to the end (the traditional "How Can I Keep From Singing" and "Peace Like a River," which has become one of the choir's signature pieces).

BYU's Steven Ricks is one of the more innovative among today's composers. And he is making a name for himself well beyond Utah's boundaries — and deservedly so. His music isn't shallow or gimmicky; it has substance and he has something to say. And he says it well.

"Mild Violence" is his latest album. It features six works, four of which employ electronics. The CD takes its name from a piece Ricks wrote for the New York New Music Ensemble and their performance is on this album.

A couple of the works feature local performers — flutist Carlton Vickers playing the solo piece "Boundless Light" and a group of BYU colleagues playing "American Dreamscape."

While new music puts some people off, this album is worth listening to. It just might expand one's musical tastes. But at the very least it gives a wonderful glimpse into one composer's musical visions.

e-mail: [ereichel@desnews.com](mailto:ereichel@desnews.com)

© 2010 Deseret News Publishing Company | All rights reserved