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**PHEROMONE • Meerenai Shim (fl); Jacob Abela (pn) • AEROCAD E
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FIELDSTEEL Fractus III: Aerophoneme. G. C. BROWN Huge Blank Canvas Neck Tattoo. O'HALLORAN 1Pencilled Wings. LAUSTSEN 60.8%. SCHANKLER 1Pheromone. M. J. PAYNE Étude for Contrabass Flute and TI83+ Calculator

As is often true of new music in the classical sphere this program is eclectic and owes as much to jazz, folk, and popular music, as it does to any tradition handed down through the concert and recital hall. All pieces are commissions, except the Eli Fieldsteel work, made by San Jose-based flutist Meerenai Shim for this first release on her new indie classical label, Aerocade Music. The music is all electroacoustic, with instruments ranging from the standard C flute to the behemoth contrabass two octaves lower. The electronic accompaniment is provided by a number of sources: fixed media, real-time audio synthesis using SuperCollider, Ableton Live, and Max/MSP, and the output from a Texas Instruments graphing calculator running sequencing software. (Who knew?) To those who do not follow electronic music, this may all sound like gobbledygook. The bottom line is that the electronics provide an orchestral palette of sounds, almost infinitely malleable, and capable of either responding within preset parameters to what the performer is doing, or creating a rich setting to which the performer can respond.

Received concepts of electronic music don't apply. Expression of human emotions is very much the purpose, and it is in this that Shim, pianist Jacob Abela, and the various composers have excelled. Fieldsteel's *Fractus III: Aerophoneme*, whatever the method used to achieve it, is a dramatic unfolding of cooperation, conflict, hope, and eventual dissolution with the electronics as the often menacing rival. Gregory C. Brown's *Huge Blank Canvas Neck Tattoo* for alto flute and digital delay reflects on personal setbacks and triumphs in the composer's life. In it,

statements made by the soloist become the background—often enhanced—for future discourse. Emma O’Halloran uses a “tape” track and piano duo to accompany—and sometimes overwhelm—the flute’s fantasy flights in her *Pencilled Wings*. Douglas Laustsen’s *60.8%* for bass flute and electronics ponders the devastating impact of unemployment on the youth of Greece since the imposition of austerity, using, as an inspiration rebetiko, a once disreputable style of 20th-century Greek urban folk protest music. Schankler’s *Pheromone* deals, logically enough, with attraction and bonding, and Matthew Joseph Payne’s quirky Étude for Contrabass Flute and TI83+ Calculator is, with its combination of low-resolution early video-game-like sounds and the mellow contrabass flute, two minutes of unadulterated nerdy delight.

Shim is an amazingly dexterous flutist, and works brilliantly with her electronics and her live keyboard collaborator. The sound is close, in the manner of popular music recordings, but it is appropriate to the music. Notes are minimal and hard to read in the type chosen, but are expanded to usefulness online at meerenai.com/pheromone. One small complaint: If Shim was offering “original cover” LP reissues at a few dollars a disc, I would say nothing about a timing of 44 minutes. But a new mid-price disc that is little more than half-full feels like short measure. Otherwise, that which *is* offered is wide-ranging in style and timbre, extraordinarily inventive, often wildly entertaining, and not for a minute dull. *Pheromone* is therefore warmly recommended to anyone who wants to explore some of the more accessible frontiers of new music and the alt.classical fringes of the flute repertoire. **Ronald E. Grames**