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Spin (Jeanell Carrigan)

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Spin
Jeannel Carrigan, piano
Vox Australis VAST029-2

The release of*Spin* continues Jeanell Carrigan's impressive promotion of Australian piano music. This collection of short pieces by sixteen composers, half of them from the younger generation, involves considerable variety of style and technique.

Matthew Hindson's "Moments of Plastic Jubilation' is a satirical exploration of popular music piano textures. Opening with a parody of Richard Clayderman's decorative style, Hindson strings together a collection of rock, gospel and R&B riffs and grooves, occasionally degenerating into an atonal morass. It's potentially a good idea but needs better structuring and timing to make it genuinely funny.

Hindson should take another lesson from his recent mentor, Ross Edwards, whose *Three Australian Waltzes* demonstrates a high level of discipline and wit in combining the composer's signature stylistic gestures with references to Chopin, Joplin and Grieg. Carl Vine's *Red Blues,* a three movement piece employing blues riffs, romantic movie-theme melodic design and quartal harmonic ideas, displays a similarly high level of craft.

Laurence Whiffin's *The Serious Clown* is a playful but compositionally cunning investigation of the potential of the major second interval, including whole-tone scales and various chromatic melodic patterning devices. At times one senses that Laurie has worked in the odd tone row as well.

Other appealing works on the CD include Ian Farr's *Baby Under The Bridge*, a set of (sometimes dramatically) contrasting thematic variations on 'London Bridge is Falling Down'; Eric Gross' idiomatically varied *Jeanelligans*.; David Rasden's flamboyant *Spin*; Wendy Hiscock's 1987 classic, *Rainforest Toccata*; Paul Stanhope's *Three Little Pieces* (particularly the luminescent 'Bell Chorale'); and Cathie Travers' meditative and sometimes edgy *Patient Zero* (a moving tribute to the first AIDS victim).

The most impressive work is Robert Davidson's *Circumferance*. Inspired by the vista from the peak of Mount Warning (in Northern NSW), this piece is a dramatic and richly resonant exploration of extended-chord progressions and the decorative aspects of various descending scales and melodic patterns. It makes one want to climb Mt Warning yet again.

Unfortunately not all the pieces on the CD are recommended. While the works by Andrew Peachey, Bernadette Dowling, Stephen Cronin and Amanda Handel demonstrate potential, they all suffer to some extent from a lack of structural coherence and compositional invention. Though stylistically competent, Philip Wilcher's *Consolation* is the most blatantly derivative work in the collection.

Spin has been well recorded (at the University of Queensland) and for the most part is well played by Carrigan. There are, however, a few quick passages in *Moments of*

Plastic Jubilation, *Spin*, and *Rainforest Toccata* that sound laboured and rhythmically ragged.