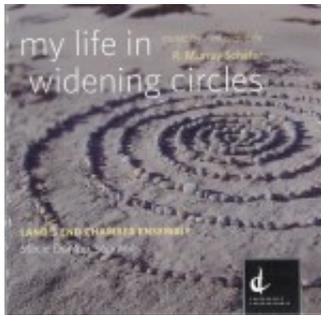


# EDITOR'S CORNER - July 2012

Written by David Olds Published: 30 June 2012

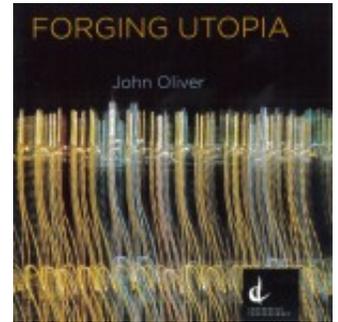
If i keep it brief, I'll have room for all seven of the discs that have been in rotation on my player over the past month ...



First there were a couple of hot-off-the-press releases from the Canadian Music Centre. **My Life in Widening Circles (Centrediscs CMCCD 17712)** features music of **R. Murray Schafer**, both new and old, performed by **Land's End Chamber Ensemble**. The disc begins with a string trio written in 2006. Quasi tonal and dramatic, with echoes of previous Schafer (and Mahler) motifs, it is a beautiful addition to the repertoire of this neglected combination of instruments (violin, viola, cello). The ensemble playing is immaculate and the blending of sound is enhanced by the fact that all three instruments were constructed by the same luthier, Christopher Sandvoss, who was also the producer of the recording session. Book-ending this collection is another 2006 composition written for guest soprano **Stacie Dunlop**, *Six Songs from Rilke's Book of Hours*. I find the juxtaposition of purely instrumental sounds and the powerful voice of Dunlop quite jarring, but as both works were written for Land's End I understand why they wanted to showcase them together. In between, we hear Dunlop in a set of songs from very early in Schafer's career, *Kinderlieder* from 1958, and core member John Lowry in two works for violin and piano: *Wild Bird*, originally for violin and harp, which was written for Jacques Israelievitch's 50th birthday celebrations, and *Duo for Violin and Piano* from 2008. Curiously there are three pianists listed in the credits, but I have been unable to discern who actually plays on which cuts. The *Duo* received a 2011 Juno Award for Classical Composition of the

year in its recording by Duo Concertante for whom it was written. It is an all too rare opportunity to have a second recording to compare with the first, but a little surprising to find them both on Centrediscs in such close proximity.

The other new **Centrediscs** release is very different in nature. **Forging Utopia (CMCCD 17612)** features four powerful orchestral works by Vancouver composer **John Oliver**, also known for his electroacoustic compositions and as an accomplished guitarist. The works presented here span more than a decade and are performed by orchestras from Vancouver, Windsor and Ottawa. The title track was commissioned by the National Arts Centre Orchestra's Generation XYZ festival in 1998 and reflects Oliver's thoughts and feelings about the world at the turn of the new millennium, striving to "forge a future for music, rather than dwell too much on the past." The CBC commission *Unseen Rain*, which takes the mystical writings of the Sufi poet Rumi for its inspiration and texts, features renowned opera mezzo Judith Forst in full voice and splendour. The settings are mostly meditative yet manage to convey the dense textures of the poetry. *Face in the Abstract*, which takes as its premise the multi-layered, quasi-narrative visual art of Johannes Deutsche and Anselm Kiefer, seems a convincing aural representation of a similar approach to art. The most extended work, *Raven Steals the Light*, is an effective tone poem wordlessly re-telling the dramatic Native American story of the same name as told and illustrated by Bill Reid and Robert Bringhurst. All in all this is an important addition to the Canadian orchestral discography and a timely reminder that there are a number of composers in this country who have created a significant body of large scale works.



A third disc devoted to the music of a single Canadian composer, in this case **Barbara Monk Feldman**, also captured my attention this past month. Released on the American contemporary music label **Mode Records**