Michael Vincent Waller – Trajectories (2017)

1 by itself 5:51 Visages (2015) *2 I. A Lonely Day 1:58 3 II. Year of the Ram 1:44 4 III. Maidens Dancing 4:51 5 IV. Lashing Out 3:02 6 V. Onomatopoeia 3:12 7 VI. Obviously 2:40 8 VII. Inner World 4:33 9 VIII. Three Things 2:34*
Lines (2016)
10 Lines 9:39
Breathing Trajectories (2016)
11 Part I 8:39 12 Part II 5:56 13 Part III 8:33
Dreaming Cadenza (2016)
14 Dreaming Cadenza 4:33
Laziness (2015)
15 I 3:54 16 II 3:13 17 III 1:54
R. Andrew Lee – piano Seth Parker Woods – cello

Trajectories is the second full-length album by Michael Vincent Waller, featuring pianist R. Andrew Lee and cellist Seth Parker Woods. The edition includes photography by Phill Niblock and liner notes by “Blue” Gene Tyranny.

In these evocative works, Michael Vincent Waller details his responses to mostly situations of introspection, in which the composer reveals his most private emotions. The compositions themselves could be described as “minimalist” in their means of expression, but they are not simply repetitions of patterns without narrative invocations. We feel and we see and we realize meditations on very personal or very quiet situations that express to the listener some of the very sincere and insightful revelations about the composer’s responses to the world, and to his own creative generation of imagery. In other words, his “minimalism” is not a mere repetition of patterns but a choice of sounds that evoke distinct images and feelings that help us experience the psychic background and artistic motivations embodied within the art-work. This truly beautiful and direct music reveals deep emotion of a very fine sensibility, exacting in its subtlety of form. --- – “Blue” Gene Tyranny, recitalprogram.com

While Michael Vincent Waller's first album, The South Shore, introduced chamber works for various combinations of instruments, his 2017 release on Recital is somewhat more unified in its tone colors, consisting of works for piano solo and cello and piano. Trajectories continues Waller's exploration of calm, reflective moods, expressed in placid miniatures that typically employ a narrow range of pitches, the subtle interplay of modes, generally soft dynamics, and nonfunctional yet seemingly tonal harmonies. The apparent simplicity of Waller's music is belied by the sophistication of his techniques, which include a rather free, postminimalist approach to cycling patterns and considerable rhythmic variety, offsetting its Satie-like stasis. Waller's surfaces may seem simple or transparent in the opening piano piece, by itself, and in the Visages, played with delicacy by R. Andrew Lee, yet the ephemeral nature of the music invites a second listening, if only to capture something more of its elusive character. Lines introduces the cello, smoothly played by Seth Parker Woods, and the contrast of its lyrical part with the essentially harmonic piano accompaniment sets up a fragile equilibrium. Breathing Trajectories and Dreaming Cadenza, both for solo piano, offer more chromatic hues in the piano's slowly broken arpeggios, though the widely spaced pitches avoid harsh dissonances. The closing triptych, Laziness, outwardly resembles a conventional piece for cello and piano, though the periodic shifts of major and minor harmonies and the curiously gnomic cello part serve as a reminder that, in Waller's music, familiar sonorities and forms are usually treated unconventionally. --- Blair Sanderson

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