

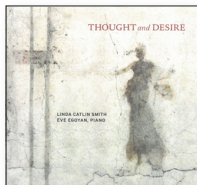
Editor's Corner

DAVID OLDS

If ever there were two artists more suited to each other's aesthetic than composer **Linda Catlin Smith** and pianist **Eve Egoyan** I'm sure I don't know who they are. Their latest project, **THOUGHT and DESIRE** (Earwitness Editions EE2015, eveegoyan.com) was realized at the Banff Centre in December 2014. The CD contains first recordings of three works by Smith written at six year intervals beginning in 2001. The most recent, *Nocturnes and Chorales*, will receive its Toronto premiere performance October 16 to 18 at the Small World Music Centre. It consists of nine movements which the composer says "seemed to be either nocturne-like or chorale-like in nature. At the heart of the music is the voice of the piano, its resonance and character, the way inner voices work in a chorale for instance, or the way melody and arpeggiation can create a landscape." She goes on to say that Chopin and Satie were in the back of mind during the creation of the work which was the result of a residency through ArtSpring on Salt Spring Island. The overall sense of the pieces is quiet and contemplative, but in the hybrid *Nocturne Chorale* there are moments when the repetition of strangely sonorous note clusters brings to mind an anecdote about New England composer Carl Ruggles back in the early part of the 20th century. One day, drawn by the seemingly tireless banging of a single complex tone cluster on the piano over and over again, a neighbouring farmer dropped by to ask what the infernal noise was. Ruggles reportedly told him he was giving the chord the "test of time." Admittedly Smith and Egoyan's "banging" is gentle by comparison, but there is a certain relentless quality at times. The overall impression however is one of timelessness.

Thought and Desire (2007) is quiet and introspective. The pianist is called upon to realize a setting of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 45* "to be sung quietly as though to oneself or someone close by." Egoyan's fragile, barely audible voice brings to mind another Shakespeare reference, mad Ophelia's songs.

In an extended essay that accompanies the disc, Doina Popescu discusses the final, and earliest composed, work presented. "*The Underfolding* is a composition that digs into a multi-layered reservoir of sounds while moving elegantly through the musical fabric of the piece. The title evokes a well-known oil-painting technique called 'underpainting' developed by the masters of the Renaissance. The hidden under-layer was used to sketch the basic design of each work, its tonal values and shadings of light and dark." Smith says, "I became interested in working in a layered way, to create a more ambiguous



or diffuse sense of harmony This was my way of creating a subtle complexity, which comes not from an attempt at virtuosity, but from a desire to create a hovering atmosphere." I think this well describes not only the piece in question but Smith's oeuvre in general – a hovering atmosphere where the nature of sound itself becomes the subject. It takes a good deal of patience to fully appreciate this slowly unfolding music, but the effort is well-rewarded.

Concert notes: As mentioned above, Eve Egoyan has performances at the Small World Music Centre in the Artscape Youngplace facility on Shaw St. on October 16, 17 and 18 at which she will perform Linda Catlin Smith's *Nocturnes and Chorales* and new works by Nick Storing and John Mark Sherlock. Smith's *Gold Leaf* will be performed by Vancouver's Turning Point Ensemble at Betty Oliphant Theatre on October 17 under the auspices of New Music Concerts.