

Annea Lockwood

Tiger Balm/Amazonia Dreaming/Immersion

Black Truffle LP

Jocy De Oliveira

Estórias For Voice, Acoustic And Electronic Instruments

Blume Editions LP

The speed of contemporary digital communication is double-edged. For all the near instantaneous access it allows us to the cornucopian content available, there's a counterbalancing loss: of slow-forming communities, of gestating ideas and intuitive leaps. Both of these albums celebrate such compositional communities of ideas, and they are hugely welcome for that.

The Brazilian Jocy De Oliveira and the New Zealand born Annea Lockwood are two composers separated by a distance that is geographical only. One of the deep pleasures of these two reissues is a sense of how both composers connected with a growing soundworld, deep and sonorous, even as they helped to expand it, spurred on by the exhilarating possibilities proffered by the remoulding of contemporary classical music from the late 1950s onwards.

Separated in age by only three years (the Brazilian De Oliveira is the elder), both started out as pianists. De Oliveira made a name for herself at an early age as a recitalist who later specialised in avant garde music, particularly that of Messiaen. During their classical studies, both women came to see limitations in the instrument of their virtuosity. Their respective searches to create and rethink composition led them to expansive sonic territories: Lockwood from process and ritualistic music to the sonification of natural phenomena; De Oliveira to the musics of indigenous Brazil and of the Far East. Both branched into contemporary experimental music at approximately the same time in the early 1960s. Lockwood, following a conventional musical education in New Zealand and then at London's Royal College of Music, had her compositional thinking turned upside down by her studies in Darmstadt.

A diligent attitude to unpuzzling serialism and electronic music gave her confidence in the compositional toolkit that she still uses today; De Oliveira's piano studies in Paris similarly opened her ears to the possibility that music and sound have resonances beyond the staff. This proved to be important within the context of, and wider artistic responses to, the Brazilian military dictatorship in the 1970s.

But both composers are also linked within a specific musical community as contributors to *Source: Music Of The Avant-Garde*, the California based magazine edited by Larry Austin between 1966–73. It's hard to overestimate the importance of the 11 issues of *Source*: simply, they connected people and created a situation in which ideas could be expressed and explored, all with enough time to percolate. Lockwood and Pauline Oliveros first recognised one another as kindred spirits through writing for *Source*; for her part, as the magazine's only Latin American contributing artist, De Oliveira was perfectly positioned to comment on Brazil's own rendering of modernism and the avant garde.

Blume's bright red vinyl reissue of De Oliveira's album *Estórias For Voice, Acoustic And Electronic Instruments* ends a long absence for this music. Originally released in 1981 by Fermata Indústria Fonográfica (there was a 2006 CD-R reissue on Keith Fullerton Whitman's Creel Pone label) the LP received little attention outside Brazil, while at home its range of sound sources proved controversial. Scored for voices and a variety of electric and acoustic instruments, De Oliveira presents a diverse range of music with no unifying mood. The two *Estórias – II* and *IV* – for extended vocals, percussion and electronics sound a bit like a hörspiel in a rainforest: there is a storyline of sorts running through its breakage of Portuguese vowel sounds and naturalistic noises. *IV* in particular breaks out in many directions: a clave-suggested dance rhythm, raga structures and, in the vocal shaping, a sensuous form of electronic oscillation. The keyboard focused *Wave Song* has its



Journey to the oneiric: Annea Lockwood

beginnings in a maximalist approach to minimalism, expressed in dramatic swerves of timbre and tempo. *Dimensões Para Quatro Teclados* is tropicalismo electronica, combining a swooping, modulated tone with scatters of far-off piano, percussion and a throbbing pulse.

Lockwood's 20 minute tape work *Tiger Balm* (1970) owes its first release to *Source*, via a 10" LP accompanying the ninth issue. *Tiger Balm* has since received three other releases, most notably on Lockwood's *Early Works 1967–82* (EM). On this Black Truffle LP, *Tiger Balm* is accompanied by *Amazonia Dreaming* (1987) and *Immersion* (1998), both previously unreleased.

The natural world is never far off in Lockwood's music. *Tiger Balm* was the first work that she composed after her glass concerts of the late 1960s. For tape, it's a work of deep flows, the motive forces of which are generated by Lockwood's juxtapositions of sounds and their innate rhythms. *Tiger Balm* begins its 20 minute journey with virtuoso purring, courtesy of Carolee Schneemann's cat Kitch. The purring is looped and deepened, as a slow, swaying gamelan of percussion (actually, pitch-shifted Carl Orff instruments) melds into the dub of a heartbeat and a jaw harp. And then some distorted tiger mating growls, feed into an erotic female voice. *Tiger Balm* arose out of an interest in creating a ritual that makes sonic links between the depth of time and

the contemporary. There is an intentionally oneiric quality to the work as Lockwood carefully elides her sounds to a point where her listener is enveloped in a joined up world of sound.

The primacy of rhythm as an anchoring medium is again stressed in *Amazonia Dreaming* and *Immersion*, both released for the first time on this disc. In the four and a half minute *Amazonia Dreaming*, Lockwood scores a voice and a single, prepared snare drum, performed by percussionist Dominic Donato, to imagine the sounds of the rainforest at night. Plops of snare drum rain fall down; marbles rolled across the drum skin suggest the tangle of plants, while the constantly shifting sonic volume is suggestive of space. Beyond this is a deeper space that the word dreaming in Lockwood's title points to, namely the use of stories – words, sounds and otherwise – as navigational tools through a world of old knowledge wrought anew. At nearly 15 minutes in length, *Immersion* is a substantial soundbath of subtle resonances from tam-tam, gong and marimba. Donato and second percussionist Frank Cassara display a beautiful control in their performance of Lockwood's slow-moving tones. Her compositional work has always been about bringing new sound into the range of human hearing. As much as it is a method of composition, it is also a methodology that allows us entry into a joined up world. □

Returning to the *Source* reveals common ground between the pioneering compositions of **Annea Lockwood** and **Jocy De Oliveira**. By **Louise Gray**