

in explorations ranging from free improvisation and noise music to traditional blues and folk, country and western and mainstream pop. *Guitar in the Space Age* is a direct invocation of the music that first influenced Frisell, the world of electric guitar instrumentals of the late 1950s and 1960s, spanning country, rock and its own genre, surf music.



Pedal steel guitarist Greg Leisz extends Frisell's fondness for bending, reverberant tones, suggesting the period song that's key to this project may be one that's not here: Santo & Johnny's 1959 hit *Sleepwalk*. This is a sonic dreamscape, in which melodies like *Surfer Girl* are slowed down and magnified, with sound so rich and dense that Sputnik-era nostalgia (pedal steel virtuoso Speedy West's *Reflections from the Moon* – almost C&W Sun Ra in its original form – and The Tornado's *Telstar*) assumes cathedral-like dimension.

Frisell both reimagines this music and restores it, along the way touching on the fundamental synthesis of jazz and country in pieces like Merle Travis' *Cannonball Rag* and Jimmy Bryant's *Bryant's Boogie* as well as invoking the broad sweep of the moral compass of the times, from the Byrds' ringing arrangement of Pete Seeger's Ecclesiastes-fuelled *Turn, Turn, Turn* to Link Wray's juvenile delinquent anthem *Rumble*.

Stuart Broomer

## POT POURRI

### Great Wall of China Canadian Brass Opening Day ODR 7433

Having listened to recordings of the Canadian Brass for many years, I was sure that this CD would be in the same style as previous recordings. Not so. While it has all of the performance polish that is the hallmark of this group, there is a big difference. None of the music is familiar. All 18 tracks are adaptations of Chinese music. First time through I simply sat back and listened from beginning to end. In a few words: It is delightfully listenable.



Since there are no program notes, I was at a bit of a loss as to where to start to obtain information on the selections. Taking the bull by the horns, I called both Howard Cable (who wrote nine of the eighteen adaptations) and Chuck Daellenbach, the founder and tubist of the group. The selections are called "adaptations" because the original material was received as recordings on original Chinese instruments which were then

adapted for performance in the brass quintet.

As Daellenbach pointed out, just as the day-to-day life in China has evolved due to Western influence, so has Chinese music. From soft melodies like *The Moon Represents My Heart* which features the trombone in a jazz style and a very melodic tuba passage to *Catching Butterflies While Picking Tea* with its definite Chinese flavour and amazing ending, or the lullaby-like sensitivity of *Colourful Clouds Chasing the Moon*, it's a new musical experience. In particular, Daellenbach's sensitive melodic tuba is a joy rarely heard. This CD should be added to the listening material for the classes of instrumental music teachers to show students the range of subtleties and colours achievable with brass instruments in the right hands.

Jack MacQuarrie

### Pampa Blues Tango Boreal ATMA ACD2 2706

Bandoneonist/composer Denis Plante cunningly equates the music of *Pampa Blues* with an aural musical journey of a horse travelling north to south across the Americas. Plante's tongue-in-cheek wit catches one's attention with his opening liner notes sentence "Tango is dead." Start to listen, and *Tango Boreal* begins to prove the statement wrong. Plante's compositions are rooted in the tango tradition with touches of different styles abounding. His performances with double bassist Ian Simpson and guitarist David Jacques gallop into an exciting treat of tight ensemble playing, strong writing and heart-warming lyricism.



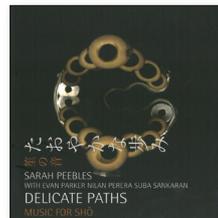
The tracks are grounded in themes. Highlights are the great car-beeping-sound performance of *Ciudad (City)*, an extract from Piazzolla's *Noche de Tango*, while two of Plante's own stylistically similar exciting works pay homage to the Argentinian great. In contrast, Plante's four works dedicated to his family members are introspective and stirring. The trio plays with sensitivity to nuance resulting in breathtaking musicality. I love Plante's idea of writing the world's longest phrase for the bandoneon in his *Tango Romance*. The long phrase with no bellow change is executed with agility and surprising tonal control at the end of the line for both the beautiful melody and the completely extended bellows!

The musicianship is superb. The tonal expertise of Plante's bandoneon is unmatched. Simpson drives the bass rhythm with colour and bounce. Jacques is equally great in both guitar lead melody and supporting roles. Together they are keeping more than just tango alive!

Tiina Kiik

### Delicate Paths – Music for Shō Sarah Peebles; with Evan Parker, Nilan Perera, Suba Sankaran unsounds 42U (unsounds.com)

For some quarter century the Toronto-based American composer, improviser and installation artist Sarah Peebles has conducted a musical love affair with the *shō*, the Japanese mouth organ. Ever since studying its foundational repertoire embedded in the music of the antique *gagaku*, performed by the orchestra of the Japanese court, she has sought to explore the *shō*'s sonic strengths. She has particularly identified with its ability to produce microtonal and psychoacoustic effects reifying sound, often unfolding leisurely over time.



There is yet another key element on this album. Bees. Peebles' installation art practice explores the lives of wild bees, pollination ecology and biodiversity, a branch of BioArt. This concern not only explains some of the titles of the works here – i.e. *Resinous Fold* – but it is also reflected in the synergistic relationships between mouth organs and the resinous production of bees. Tropical stingless bees secrete a resin which has been gathered from wild nests for millennia and applied to many human artifacts, including mouth organs. The *shō* is no exception. You can view a number of fascinating photos, of both bee habitats and the delicate *shō* reeds for which their products are an essential ingredient, on the web page for *Delicate Paths* hosted by the "unsounds" label.

Peebles' music employs both improvisation and composition, embracing acoustic as well as digitally processed performance. While *shō* is clearly featured, the album invites other musicians into the music making. On *Delicate Paths* she has included three star improvisers: a familiar reed instrument, a string, and a voice. Free jazz-rooted saxophonist Evan Parker, prepared electric guitarist Nilan Perera and multi-genre vocalist Suba Sankaran join Peebles. They are canny choices. Each effectively supports, contests and offsets her *shō*'s melodic long tones and clusters, providing welcome musical tensions, cultural reframings, as well as textural and timbral richness.

Slipping the CD out of its handsome black trifold case I was delighted by its striking, subtly translucent honey-coloured appearance. Repeated listening revealed music of refinement, occasionally graced with a gentle aural sweetness, which in my imagination at least, resonates with a key component of the *shō*'s inner workings.

Andrew Timar