

Victoria Bond - Instruments of Revelation (2019)

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Bond, V: Instruments of Revelation 13:14 1. I. *The Magician* 3:25 2. II. *The High Priestess* 5:09 3. III. *The Fool* 4:40 Bond, V: *Frescoes and Ash* 22:01 4. I. *Street Musicians* 2:09 5. II. *Marine Mosaic* 4:31 6. III. *Scenes from a Comedy* 3:14 7. IV. *The Sybil Speaks* 3:48 8. V. *Chiron Teaches Achilles to Play the Lyre* 2:35 9. VI. *Alexander Mosaic* 1:26 10. VII. *Ash [Awareness of Mortality]* 4:18 11. *Bond, V: Leopold Bloom's Homecoming* 20:51 12. *Bond, V: Binary* 7:40
Chicago Pro Musica (tracks: 1 - 10) Rufus Müller - tenor (track 11) Jenny Lin - piano (track 11) Olga Vinokur - piano (track 12)

Victoria Bond is a distinguished force in contemporary music. She is known for her melodic and dramatic flair, and her orchestral works, chamber pieces and operas have been lauded by The New York Times as “powerful, stylistically varied and technically demanding.” This collection of world premiere recordings by GRAMMY® Award-winning ensemble Chicago Pro Musica provides an essential overview of Bond’s multi-faceted inventiveness – from a musical interpretation of tarot cards in *Instruments of Revelation*, to descriptive and dramatic images of the tragic city of Pompeii in *Frescoes and Ash*. *Leopold Bloom’s Homecoming* expresses in music what is left to our imagination in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, and the mathematics of *Binary* turn the digits 0 and 1 into variations on a Brazilian samba. ---prestomusic.com

The Chicago area is something of a hotbed of modern classical music: a new Naxos CD of chamber works by Victoria Bond shows this clearly, with first-rate performances by Chicago Symphony members playing as Chicago Pro Musica. Actually, only two works on the disc were recorded in Chicago; the other two were done in New York – and the recording dates range

from 2012 to 2016. But wherever and whenever the recordings were made, they clearly show Bond's style and her approach to chamber-sized ensembles. Bond is nearly a decade younger than Glass – she was born in 1945, he in 1937 – and stylistically very different, but her style is quite as fully formed as his, if not so immediately distinctive. Like the Skidmore piece on the Glass-focused release, one of the works here is in seven sections: *Frescoes and Ash* (2009) uses clarinet, strings, piano and percussion – in varying combinations – to paint musical portraits of the ancient city of Pompeii, its doom by volcanic eruption, and (to a lesser extent) its place in the modern world. The work, which is about the same length as Glass' *Perpetuum*, has an intriguing final movement called "Ash" that Bond turns into a meditation on human mortality. This works particularly well because Bond is essentially a tonal composer, so her works can and do evoke emotional responses effectively. She is also skilled in managing the sounds of this small instrumental complement, whether in the virtuoso requirements of "The Sybil Speaks" or in the intriguing violin-and-bass duet in "Chiron Teaches Achilles to Play the Lyre" – a case in which the instruments particularly neatly encapsulate the characters. Just as substantive as her Pompeii pictures is Bond's *Leopold Bloom's Homecoming* (2011), a song cycle for tenor (Rufus Müller) and piano (Jenny Lin) based on James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Bond handles the voice and piano parts well, and the performers do a good job with the material, but the stream-of-consciousness text becomes rather wearing to hear after a while, and the cycle comes to seem overly long, if not quite interminable. More successful, and not just because it is shorter, is *Instruments of Revelation* (2010), a three-movement set for winds, strings and piano based on three Tarot cards: "The Magician," whose meaning of ambiguity is neatly encapsulated through quick juxtapositions of solemnity with verve; "The High Priestess," representing wisdom and secrets, with music that starts calmly enough but then becomes impassioned; and "The Fool," both mystic and lunatic, with music that appropriately contrasts chaotic elements with amusing ones. Here and in the Pompeii miniatures, Bond shows her skill in short-form portrayals: musical visualizations neatly captured. The CD concludes with *Binary* (2005), a work for piano solo (Olga Vinokur) whose bright liveliness, based on the Brazilian samba, ends the disc pleasantly. ---classicalmusiccommunications.com

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