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**Laura Andel Orchestra - Doble Mano**  
**Rosbin Records RS029**

Completely inured to the challenges of contemporary composition, Buenos Aires- born-New Yorker Laura Andel writes pocket-orchestra pieces in which notated sounds blend with improvisation, as staccato and lyrical passages vie for supremacy. *Doble Mano*, whose title reflects the twinning of different orchestral groupings, raises the ante further by interjecting into the performance characteristic sonic fragments from the South American bandoneon and Indonesian gamelan.

With the slurs and discordance available from a prepared Fender Rhodes often used as an additional rhythmic source, Andel, who conducts here, strives for an appropriate balance between the rhythmic and melodic sections of this eight-part suite. Double bass, viola, piano, cornet and clarinet – plus squeeze-box – are arrayed to produce resolute cabaletta-like pulses, with the rattling and scraping timbral beats arrive from the vibraphone, gamelan instruments and electric piano – with Ursel Schlicht's acoustic piano meditating between both solitudes. Enharmonic notation may even help balance this mirroring.

Multi-directional, *Doble Mano* proceeds along circumfluent paths. There are points for instance, where a trio interlude for traipsing viola runs, rattling gamelan bells and relaxed piano plinks could be a rustic eclogue. Several measures later the interaction is among metronomic piano string stops, accordion thumps and buzzing electronic wave forms – with the two self-contained section separated by contralto reed puffs.

Elsewhere the ratcheting gamelan tones are used as a multi-rhythmic backdrop. That happens for instance when cornetist Taylor Ho Bynum's braying plunger tones and Raul Jaurena's bandoneon pulsing evolve in double counterpoint, or when wide-ranging glissandi and singular pizzicato plucks from the string section meet Danny Tunick's spiraling vibraphone pulse.

Slinky and built around contrapuntal displays, the eight-part suite becomes almost programmatic in its final sections. Evolving chromatically during *Doble Mano* (Part VII), there are points at which spiccato pops in different pitches from violist Stephanie Griffin and bassist Ken Filiano, clarinetist Matt Bauer's affiliated runs, jokey accordion quivers and clanging percussion cumulatively suggest the plot line of one of those Meet the Orchestra exercises for young children.

Luckily just before the performance is buried beneath repetitive, indolent fragments from the massed ensemble, individuals redefine the final movement. Bynum's slippery plunger work recalls the piece's jazz-improv affiliation, while squeeze-box propulsion, dual piano thumps and ringing gamelan bells blend to confirm the rhythmic impetus which speaks to *Doble Mano*'s originality.

Leaving aside a breakdown of just how much of the suite actually is or isn't completely through-composed, the CD captures a notable moment in Andel's conducting and composing career. By utilizing the proven talents of many of the same musicians over the years, even more impressive work can be expected from her in the future.

-- Ken Waxman