

***The Light Wraps You: New Music for Oboe.***

**Michele Fiala**, oboe; Donald Speer and **Bill Douglas**, piano; **Joseph Salvalaggio** and **Martin Schuring**, oboe; **Frank Morelli**, bassoon; Karl Olsen, double bass; John Cipolla, clarinet; Heidi Pintner, flute.

MSR Classics MS1217, 2007.

**Michele Fiala**, oboe professor at Western Kentucky University who earned both her graduate degrees under **Martin Schuring** at Arizona State University, made her debut album, *The Light Wraps You*, a classy affair from start to finish, with premiere recordings of the works of six composers and the collaborative performances of eight fine players, including **Martin Schuring** and **Frank Morelli**. In the liner notes, Dr. Fiala collected brief descriptions of the seven featured compositions as written by the composers, along with brief performer biographies. The project was supported by WKU faculty grants; photographer Sheryl Hagan-Booth and whoever designed Fiala's arresting make-up, hair, and pose for the cover photo should get honorable mention, as well.

Rodney Rogers' *Lessons of the Sky* for oboe and piano was written in 1985 and belongs to that music of the late 20th century that transcends the various academic and east-coast art music trends, evoking a wide-open expression of melody coupled with quasi-jazz harmonies that are realized through arpeggiation in both oboe and piano. A moderate level of post-minimalist repetition laced with syncopated irregularities infuses the ABA form of this nine-minute piece. At first, this style did not seem much different to me from bassoonist/pianist/composer **Bill Douglas**' 2004 oboe sonata. Repeated hearings clarified Douglas's dissimilarities. In each of his three-movement works on this recording, which also features his *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano*, he tends toward a Latin modal background as well as Latin rhythmic gestures. Both the sonata and the *Trio* of 2006 (an IDRS commission) are described by the composer as following a "jazz form" in the first and third movements. The slow movements invoke, respectively, "British Isles folk music" and a Middle-Eastern (Iberian to my ear) tonality. The composer performs the piano parts on both of these performances, while the bassoon part in the *Trio* is played by Frank Morelli. The interpretations are elegant without an over-abundance of passion, perhaps as the pieces were conceived. Fiala's tone is light, mellow, and flexible; her inflections to the quasi-jazz licks subtle and understated. The first movement of the trio features oboe and bassoon in octaves for an