

Life Path

Bart Quartier

Etcetera Records

I absolutely love this CD! Bart Quartier has created a two-disc set, the first featuring the compositions from his book, *Focus - 24 Images for Vibraphone*, and the second from *Image - 20 Children's Songs for Marimba*. The performance and production quality are first-rate, making this CD a "must have" for those interested in vibraphone, marimba, or music in general.

The first disc, *Focus*, consists of 24 tracks, each 30 seconds to five minutes in length, totaling one hour of music. Each contains a programmatic title and unique character-driven sound. My three favorites are the groove-oriented "Wander," the spacious "Time," and "Perseverance"—whose thoughtful use of extended techniques creates the effect of a drum set/vibraphone duet. While this is not a jazz vibraphone CD, Quartier's tasteful use of jazz harmony and groove throughout are welcome companions in the listening experience.

Image presents 20 tracks, with the longest being around two minutes, totaling at about 25 minutes. These have more of a "children's song" sound, with straightforward melodies and frequent homophonic writing. Like *Focus*, a characteristic harmonic language and sense of groove are ever-present. This, combined with Quartier's confidence in constructing brief, character-driven movements, evokes an aesthetic that can best be described as "Keith Jarrett meets Erik Satie." My two favorite tracks are "From the Cradle" and the beautifully simple "Lullaby."

The most important element of this collection is that it is not simply a showcase or advertisement for Quartier's pedagogical music. Much like the children's music of Bartok, Tchaikovsky, Schumann, and others, it is just as enjoyable for the listener as for the teacher or student.

—Jason Baker