

GRAMOPHONE

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

Reviews

Paterson

The Book of Goddesses. Freya's Tears.

Embracing the Wind

MAYA; Clockwise; American Modern Ensemble

AMR © AMR 1034 (62' · DDD)



**The composer's own ensemble
in a broadly influenced work**

Robert Paterson's *Book of Goddesses*, inspired by a lavish volume by illustrator Kris Waldherr, makes a connection that seems both obvious and inspired. Just as the idea of feminine divinity expresses itself differently around the world, so too do the basic musical impulses that Anna Russell once cheekily broke down into 'bang, scrape and blow instruments' take on different accents when expressed in different cultures.

Paterson's *Goddesses*, nine movements performable individually or in subsets from his full 40-minute suite for flute, harp and percussion, take on trappings of various musical cultures (specifically from India, China, ancient Greece, Ireland, natives of North and South America, Nigeria and Cuba). Yet this becomes less an ethnomusicological exercise than the composer's personal challenge to maintain a consistent voice despite shifting stylistic perimeters.

While making use of specific ornaments and different tuning systems, Paterson provides a vast timbral playground, deftly rendered by his instrumentalists and sensitively recorded by Grammy-winning producer Adam Abeshouse. As earthy as folk music, as rhythmic as dance tunes, Paterson's suite nonetheless unfolds in the satisfying arc of a well-conceived structure.

The other works on the recording – *Freya's Tears* for violin and harp, and *Embracing the*

Wind for flute, viola and harp – are drawn largely from the same playbook: take individual instruments of starkly contrasting sound production, let them wallow in their idiosyncrasies, then find a way to bring them together into a coherent whole. Despite the wealth of cultures represented in the music, the thinking behind it is distinctly American.

Ken Smith