

Jennifer Walshe

Nature Data
Interval CD

Dublin born composer Jennifer Walshe is probably best known for her marionette opera *XXX_LIVE_NUDE_GIRLS!!!*, which used Barbie and Sindy dolls to explore notions of gender, violence and fantasy.

On this latest release she shows a similar ability to transmute a seemingly daft idea into something witty, strangely affecting and sometimes downright creepy. Collected here are four primarily vocal works that incorporate sound poetry, collage and improvisation, in a similar vein to the work of Norwegian vocalist and composer Maja Ratkje, and all shot through with a boisterous, confrontational sense of humour. The title piece intersperses ridiculous animal impressions (monkey hoots, horse whinnies and pigeon coos) with snatches of documentaries on the animal kingdom, before spiralling off into comically energetic Daffy Duck raspberries and wild ululations. It's a neat reminder that people are animals too, via an exuberant illustration of the human voice's almost limitless potential. "(your name here)" is a montage of a vacuous Valley Girl recounting her teenage preoccupations with boys, kissing, hairstyles, Metal and malls. With added layers of hiss, episodes of orgasmic panting and found street-sounds, it's an arch – and almost Hypnagogic – squint back at the 1980s. "i: same person / ii: not the same person" begins with a melodramatic narrative of murder and dislocation delivered in theatrical stage whisper, then twists into epiglottal choking, sobbing and pleading, accompanied by Psycho-esque string stabs, suggesting torture and mutilation: a genuinely disturbing example of the power of suggestion. Finally, "G.L.O.R.I.–" is a lunatic micro-medley in which Walshe races through tiny snippets of pop songs, from Abba to Cream to Dizzee Rascal, all smashed together and sung in a frenzied, real-time onrush, like a malfunctioning synaptic jukebox. Sure it's silly, but Walshe's obvious skill and keen, bubbling intellect make it – and the whole disc – not just fun but also oddly rewarding.

Daniel Spicer