

## World Music

### The Music of Stones

Compositions of Stephen Micus for the Resonating Stones of Elmar Daucher, 1989, ECM Records.

### World Dance

Do'ah (formerly Do'a World Music Ensemble), 1988, Global Pacific Records.

### Seven Heaven

Glen Velez with Steve Gorn and Layne Redmond, 1987, CMP Records.

Today, a large part of the music world seems increasingly caught up in electronic instrumentation, high-tech synthesizers, drum

machines, and so forth, with the result being robotic-sounding tunes (or non-tunes). This type of music works fine as a statement of humanity's alienation from self, society, and nature, but listening to it can be about as much fun as open-heart surgery. At the same time there's a counter-movement afoot among musicians eager to rediscover humanity's neglected musical roots and to make innovative use of traditional ethnic instruments. These musicians are not indiscriminate technology-bashers, though, as they put out quality recordings that take advantage of the most sophisticated studio equipment and techniques. Nor are they content to compose and play in musical idioms of the past—this music crosses national, musical, and cultural boundaries with joyful abandon.

Three of the most talented and inventive individual/groups working in this "world music" tradition are Stephan Micus, Glen Velez, and Do'ah. Each has developed a rich, distinct sound while sharing a humanistic approach to music.

Micus's *The Music of Stones* was recorded in the Cathedral of Ulm in West Germany in collaboration with Elmar Daucher, Gunther Federer, and Nobuko Micus, who play an instrument known as a resonating stone. These are stone chimes, built by Daucher, that range in size from suspended chimes modeled after the ancient Chinese "pien ch'ing" stones, to large blocks, which may be rubbed, bowed, or struck with mallets. Micus also plays the stones, as well as a Japanese shakuhachi bamboo flute and an Irish tin whistle. The result has been described as "a palette of perpetually-changing sound colors which create an atmosphere of total tranquility." Alternately ancient-sounding, other-worldly, and futuristic, it is marvelous listening.

Glen Velez is a classically trained percussionist who likes to make use of an assortment of ethnic instruments from Africa, Asia, India, and South America. With Layne Redmond also playing traditional percussion instruments such as the mbira, raman, and gaval, and Steven Gorn on the

Bansuri bamboo flute, *Seven Heaven* will open up a new world of drumming for most listeners. Velez's four-minute solo piece called "Semi-Pileated Human," on a wood drum that's not much different from a salad bowl, is an amazing demonstration of percussive musical range. The other cuts as well offer music that has been described by *JazzTimes* as "eclectic, cross-cultural and unexpectedly fascinating."

Do'ah was founded in 1974 by Randy Armstrong and Ken LaRoche for the purpose of combining numerous authentic and hand-made instruments from around the world with high technology. On *World Dance* one hears an artful fusion of acoustic guitar, the West African balofon, Chinese yueh-chin, mbira (a Zimbabwean thumb piano), and some two dozen other instruments. Like the recordings of Stephan Micus and Glen Velez, this is music that transcends our time while being rooted in the past, music that soars to the heavens while keeping us in touch with the earth.