

## CONSUMER GUIDE Kyle Gann

**Deny inherent sex** differences as you will, there is a specifically female aesthetic rooted in the voice's potential for externalizing the inner spirit. At least, that's the conclusion forced by Monk, Leach, Shields, and the Dice compilation below. After being thrown by the recession, women have made a stunning comeback on CD.

**Mary Jane Leach: *Celestial Fires (XI)*** The title notwithstanding, Leach's droning, slowly growing tone-complexes won't set your blood boiling or your foot tapping. Her aesthetic is a survivor from the mellow '70s, drawn more from Phill Niblock than from Feldman. But if you've got the patience, her smooth choral and multiple-instrument continuums accumulate into radiant sonorities pulsing with overtones and a delicately tuned personality. In *Bruckstuck* the New York Treble Singers stretch a Bruckner passage into otherworldly undulations as soft as velvet. *Feu de Joie* for multiple bassoons and *Green Mountain Madrigal* for voices show a fondness for prolonged half-step dissonances, but mostly in a tonal context that resolves into consonance, or at least ambiguity, by work's end. Despite its staticness, Leach's choral writing is effective enough to find fans outside new music circles.