FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Humanophone
Janet Holmes
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This book of poetry (the author's fourth) takes its name from an instrument created by George Ives: the humanophone, an instrument made up of singers, each of whom sang a single tone when called upon by the music. The title is apt, as Holmes borrows her project from history, mining lives to find a single tone to convey the creative experience, its daily trials, its processes, its awe. Holmes masters the broad metaphor, sampling stories ranging from a man beating an octopus against a counter, to the reinvention of sounds by Raymond Scott, to a small child staring at an Impala filled with mannequins parked at the ice cream shop-mannequins dressed as brides, all veiled. Each story acts as a call and response, as if Holmes sifted through history looking for lives with a purpose similar to hers.

The result is a book unified by a central conceit: how to catch life, with its beautiful, funny, and regrettable sounds, and replicate the experience for readers and listeners. In some ways, these poems are about music, attentive as they are to sound, syllabics, and the occasional form, but more often, the poems and the poet herself strive for something broader, more unexpected.

Like fellow poet Robin Becker, Holmes investigates history-actress Clara Bow, musical innovator Harry Partch-through the long poem, sequencing to elucidate an allegory regarding the creative process. Holmes's poems act as a multidimensional mirror for the characters involved, and for the readers. In "Fantasie Metropolitan," a man walks down the street singing opera, dreaming of being discovered. An easy daydream, and what might be an easy poem, except a woman in her home leans out the window to hear him and suddenly, the reader wonders, "Whose dream is this? Is it the woman's or the man's?" Holmes makes readers question the genesis of their expectations and understanding.

Perhaps what is most intriguing about this collection is the sheer eclectic nature of its subjects and the varied mind that connects them. In "A Celebration on the Planet Mars," Holmes seems to unintentionally describe her notion of history and narrative and its effect on her poems. Serenely, it compels them forward-as one is compelled to do something foolish or something

new-toward a kind of bravery. Holmes parallels the protagonist of her poems, leaving readers with the certainty that this compulsion is toward something brave.

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