

Along the Continuum: Music for Trumpet, Trombone and Piano

Eric Berlin, trumpet · Greg Spiridopoulos, trombone · Ludmila Krasin, piano · MSR Classics MS1728

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Along the Continuum Holmes, Ewazen, Plog, Turrin, Casterede, Clarke Eric Berlin, tpt; Greg Spiridopoulos, trb; Ludmilla Krasin, p — MSR 1728—67 minutes

Trumpeter Eric Berlin and trombonist Greg Spiridopoulos are colleagues at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst), as well as in the Albany Symphony, Empire Brass, and Majestic Brass Quintet. Pianist Ludmilla Krasin is their colleague at UMass. Here they collaborate in a program—in reverse chronological order—of works for trumpet, trombone, and piano.

Jeffery Holmes composed the 9-minute Continuum in 2011 for these artists. The work runs through a gamut of styles, giving these brass players ample opportunity to show strength, flair, and dazzling commercial skills.

I'm a little surprised I haven't heard Eric Ewazen's beautiful Double Concerto (2012) before. It is unmistakably his, with the chord progressions, rhythms, and melodic gestures—often mere chord tracery—we hear in all of his works.

And where has Anthony Plog's 13-minute Concertino (1999) been hiding? Part I includes movements 1-3: 1 portentous and startling, 2 lyrical and furtive, a trombone cadenza leading into an energetic and angular 3. Part II opens with a slightly sinister 4 ('Valse Triste') that leads directly into a finale that often recalls 1. Every time I hear a Plog piece, I am more impressed than before. What a terrific piece.

The rest of the program is familiar. Joseph Turrin's winsome Fandango (2000) leads to Jacques Casterede's breezy, polymetric Concertino (1958), a reworking of his popular Trombone Sonatine. The program ends with Arthur Pryor's 'Cousins' (1904), which recalls a time when the band concert in the town gazebo was America's favorite form of entertainment. This is an outstanding recording.