

End of the Matter: Premieres for Trumpet

Eric Berlin, trumpet · MSR Classics MS1199

Review by Barry Kilpatrick, *American Record Guide*, January/February 2008, p. 203

The End of the Matter

STEPHENSON: *Trumpet-Percussion Vignettes*;
BESTOR: *Concerto Piccolo*; **MACCHIA:** *The End of the Matter*; **ELLISON:** *Elegy*; **HAUSE:** *Street Jam*;
BRADSHAW: *Trumpet Sonata*

Eric Berlin, tpt; Eduardo Leandro, perc; Lynn Klock, sax; Nadine Shank, p—MSR 1199—70 min

Trumpet in all sorts of settings, most involving percussion. Most of the pieces were composed for Eric Berlin, Albany Symphony principal trumpet and faculty member at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.

Berlin teams with UMass percussion professor Eduardo Leandro in *Vignettes*, seven very attractive miniatures by James Stephenson III. My favorites are 'Running with Lionel', a virtuoso study for muted trumpet with

marimba; 'Chasing Igor', an intense piece for trumpet with snare drum; 'Chuck's March', a funereal one for flugelhorn with muffled drum and marimba; a starkly contrasting 'Dinner with Andre' for piccolo trumpet and tam-bourine; and 'Leandro Perpetuo', an intricate marimba solo that gives Berlin a break. In the finale, Berlin plays the flumpet, a mellow-sounding hybrid instrument created by David Monette.

Charles Bestor pits trumpet against electronics (many of the sounds are altered trumpet ones) in *Concerto Piccolo* (2004). This sort of piece is very useful for a recitalist, since rehearsals are solo affairs, and since the electronics make for a big contrast with everything else on the program. But the contrast between overtone-rich trumpet sounds and flat, tinny electronic ones is not satisfying.

Salvatore Macchia's music impressed me years ago (March/April 1998), but *The End of the Matter* (2004) is not easy to enjoy. Perhaps it's the abstractness, the stark contrast between trumpet and mallet percussion, the length (nearly 20 minutes), and so much forceful trumpet playing. Michael Ellison's *Elegy* (1994) is scored for the unusual combination of trumpet, saxophone, and marimba; and saxophonist Lynn Klock is a very good player. As suggested by the title, much of the work is mournful, but some is quite intense. Also intense is Evan Hause's 'Street Jam' (2005) for trumpet with bongos.

The program ends with Robert Bradshaw's four-movement *Trumpet Sonata* (2003). Poor recorded sound (we seem distant from both instruments, and we hear the trumpet indirectly) is a major distraction here, making it difficult to evaluate the music. Bradshaw seems to walk tightropes between tonality and abstraction, long melodies and fragments, introspection and pyrotechnics. Trumpet aficionados might enjoy Berlin's power in this work, but it's a bit much for me after a while.

Eric Berlin has all the elements people expect from a good trumpeter—boldness, big sound, impressive technique—as well as the things that make a complete musician: tonal variety, ability and willingness to blend, and expressiveness. Eduardo Leandro is a superb percussionist.

KILPATRICK