

Fantastique: Premieres for Trumpet and Wind Ensemble

Eric Berlin, trumpet · UMass Wind Ensemble, James Patrick Miller · MSR Classics MS1506

Review by Barry Kilpatrick, American Record Guide, May/June 2015

FANTASTIQUE Holmes, Stephenson, Paulus, Hause Eric Berlin, Charles Schlueter, Richard Kelley, tpt; Greg Spiridopoulos, trb; UMass Trumpet Ensemble/ Eric Berlin; UMass Wind Ensemble/ James Patrick Miller — MSR 1506—61 minutes

Trumpeter Eric Berlin is principal of the Albany Symphony and professor at the University of Massachusetts. His first two recordings (Jan/Feb 2008: 203 & Nov/Dec 2013: 159) showed his beautiful tone, good taste, and technical skills in excellent programs of modern works. Here new works are heard in their first recordings.

The heart of the album is two concertos for trumpet duo. Berlin teams with his former teacher (and former Boston Symphony principal) Charles Schlueter in James Stephenson's *Duo Fantastique* (2007). The very attractive work includes lyrical material, technical displays, and solos for each player. Schlueter still sounds good! Berlin is joined by Richard Kelley in Stephen Paulus's *Concerto for two trumpets and band* (2003), a big 3-movement, 23-minute piece. I enjoy the opening of I, where a single sustained trumpet line is played by the soloists, who take turns with it, each entering seamlessly. It sets the tone for some intricate, difficult, often subtle interaction. The 10-minute II (*Elegy*) has the soloists playing much lyrical material, together and alternately, often leading to high climactic moments. There is a pointillist middle section where the soloists alternate notes, resulting in a single staccato line. The movement ends in an ominous mood. III (*Dance*) is all fast articulation, energy, and spectacular ending.

Berlin is soloist in Evan Hause's 3-movement, 18-minute *Trumpet Concerto* (2001), a more modernist, less tuneful piece than either of the duo works. Harmonies are abstract, but the language is not atonal. In I ('Circus', named for the Calder mobile), melodies are fragments, gestures. The ending is sudden. A mournful II ('Elegy') has Berlin on the mellow-voiced flugelhorn. III ('Chase') is a scamper.

Pieces by Jeffrey Holmes open and close the album. A fine concert reading of the colorful 'Herald Emeritus Fanfare' (2010) is by Berlin's students, the UMass Trumpet Ensemble. And the 9-minute *Continuum* (2012) is another duo concerto, this one for trumpet, trombone, and band. It speaks a jazz-influenced language, harmonically and melodically, and gives each player extended solos. Berlin's very fine partner here is the Albany Symphony and Empire Brass trombonist, Spiros Spiridopoulos.

All of the readings are excellent. My one quibble is about recorded sound, which at some fortissimo moments seems to make the band sound louder than the soloists.