



The National Brass Ensemble recreate a classic disc of Giovanni Gabrieli's antiphonal music

Comparing playing styles across nearly 50 years reveals the original three-orchestra-band performances to be more silvery, virtuosic and thrilling, whereas the new versions, arranged beautifully by San Francisco Symphony trombonist Tim Higgins, are more golden and splendid but also more predictably straightforward.

John Williams's eventful five-minute *Music for Brass* – written for the National Brass Ensemble in 2014 – is, as the composer says in his booklet-note, an affectionate salute to 'the diverse groups forming the ensemble', and even includes a *Till Eulenspiegel*-type musical joke just before the end.

The Skywalker SoundStage sound, even in conventional mode, is impressive; as a hi-res SACD it is a breathtaking demonstration of the enveloping warmth and sense of space the medium has to offer.

Laurence Vittes

## 'Fantasia'

'Solo Flute Music of the American Continent'  
Acosta Solo de Pajarillo Chávez Upingos  
MC Guarneri Three Improvisations Higdon Song  
Izarra El amolador Lauro La negra Serebrier at  
dusk, in shadows... Vivanco Fantasia andina  
Martha Councill-Vargas //  
Blue Griffin © BGR375 (47) • DDD • S/T/I



Martha Councill-Vargas returns for her second CD on the Blue Griffin label

with a varied programme of music for solo flute by composers spanning the American continents. Peruvian indigenous music's harmonic language inspired the evocative display piece that opens the recital, *Fantasia andina* by César Vivanco, longtime principal flautist of the National Orchestra of Peru. Along the way, Carlos Chávez's energetic *Upingos* represents the Mexican folk tradition. Jennifer Higdon, herself a flautist, takes a North American bow with an absorbing seven-minute *Song*. The marvellous billing and cooing of Adina Izarra's *El amolador* ('The axe grinder') is the only music using extended techniques. Venezuelan traditions are reflected in a charming transcription of 'La negra', one of Antonio Lauro's *Valses venezolanos*, and in Omar Acosta's irresistible arrangement of *Solo de Pajarillo*, a well-known Venezuelan folklore piece.

The superb craftsmanship of Camargo Guarneri's *Three Improvisations* adds up in a musically profound 12-minute piece in

which a powerfully rhythmic central 'Ritmico' is flanked by wistful outer movements. Uruguayan composer (and, more notably, conductor) José Serebrier's *at dusk, in shadows...*, with its probably unintended similarity to Stephen Foster's 'Jeanie with the light brown hair', shows a command of creating mood and merging a wide range of materials within a short period of time.

The music is played seductively by Councill-Vargas, Assistant Professor at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo; recorded at the Blue Griffin studio near the campus of Michigan State University, the vivid, full-range sound captures her instrument's infinite nuances of shape and texture. **Laurence Vittes**

## 'Scrapyard Exotica'

M Bates Bagatelles<sup>®</sup> Fairouz The Named Angels  
Ueno Peradam

Del Sol Quartet; <sup>®</sup>Mason Bates *elec*s

Sono Luminus © (CD + SACD) DSL92193 (64) • DDD •  
DTS-HD MA7.1 24/96kHz, DTS-HD MA5.1, 192kHz



A sense of adventure pervades many of the projects the Del Sol Quartet undertake,



Horn player Denise Tryon in performance: her new disc features works showcasing the lower reaches of the instrument

which is certainly true of their newest disc. Drawing from many corners of contemporary music, the ensemble slip into each piece with chameleon-like ease, as if the different styles and demands are all in a day's work.

Which isn't to say the Del Sol players ever sound like they're slumming. On the contrary, the musicians thrust themselves into the disc's three diverse compositions, not only playing but also singing and even hissing. All of those abilities are required in Ken Ueno's *Peradam*, a 20-minute burst of modernism with roots in a novel by René Daumal that features the titular object, described as 'a rare mythical diamond-like stone'. Ueno portrays the phenomenon through myriad drones, riotous flights, group vocalism and, from versatile Del Sol viola player Charlton Lee, throat singing. The work is at once challenging and mesmerising.

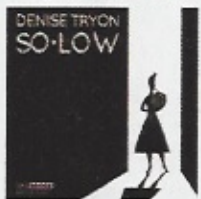
The title of the disc, 'Scrapyard Exotica', comes from the second movement of Mason Bates's *Bagatelles* for string quartet and electronica, whose own moniker should pique any listener's curiosity. The electronica turns out to be samples of the Del Sol players that mix with the musicians' acoustic contributions. Bates provides a smorgasbord of colourful and pulsating interactions, including elements from the worlds of jazz and pop.

The Del Sol are equally at home in Mohammed Fairouz's *The Named Angels*, four movements built of haunting Middle Eastern material. You're likely to find yourself playing the disc more than a few times in succession. **Donald Rosenberg**

### 'So Low'

**Anonymous** Gummi Polka **Askim** A Door Into the Dark **Clearfield** River Melos **T Martin** Lament  
**B Miller** Hunting Songs **Neuling** Bagatelle **Nielsen** Canto serioso **Pawelek** Irremediable Breakdown  
**Yenque** Tanguito

**Denise Tryon** *with Julie Nishimura* of Bridge © BRIDGE9455 (58' • DDD)



Horn players who spend much of their time in the instrument's low

register tend to get the short end of the solo stick, a situation Denise Tryon has set out to remedy. On her new disc, the fourth hornist of the Philadelphia Orchestra performs works written for artists in the sonic nether regions and intended either for recital or audition purposes. The only composer most listeners may know is Carl Nielsen, but the other pieces show their creators in imaginative and appealing form.

From the audition side are Nielsen's *Canto serioso*, a poetic and sweeping miniature, and Hermann Neuling's *Bagatelle*, which blends Straussian swagger and songfulness as it subtly weaves descending episodes into the narrative. Likewise, many of the remaining pieces are cannily crafted to avoid signalling the fact that they're written for low horn. Tim Martin's *Lament*, for example, places the unaccompanied horn in a series of wailing episodes, complete with hand-stopped and ascending passages.

The instrument's low register is exploited to dramatic effect in Peter Askim's *A Door Into the Dark*, which evokes a blacksmith shaping metal with varied equipment. Brett Miller avoids the horn cliché of 6/8 galloping in his *Hunting Songs* by portraying crow, owl and falcon in music of atmospheric lyricism.

Tryon plays these works and other winning pieces by Nathan Pawelek, Dante Yenque and Andrea Clearfield with sonorous fluidity and dexterity, ending with a bit of captivating acrobatics, *Gummi Polka* by an anonymous composer. Julie Nishimura is an ideal partner whenever a piano is called upon to team with this down-but-definitely-never-out hornist.

**Donald Rosenberg**

### 'Soft Blink of Amber Light'

**DiOrto** A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass **Hagen** soft blink of amber light **Oquin** O magnum