

Lost Treasures

Glenn Van Looy (Euphonium) and Geert Callaert (Piano)

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The first thing to say about *Lost Treasures* is how beautifully and stylishly Glenn Van Looy approaches this unfamiliar repertoire from the 19th century. He is alive to all its twists and turns, and performs with seemingly effortless technical aplomb throughout. It might not be truly authentic, as the instruments for which the music was conceived, the ophecleide and six-valved trombone, have faded into the historical background of the brass family, but Glenn is certainly authentic in spirit.

The second thing to say is that the accompanying documentation, especially the historical and biographical notes, scrupulously researched by Luc Vertommen, contribute greatly to the enjoyment of the music and its context, especially when we read of the fundamental impact of Adolphe Sax as the inventor of the trombone with six independent valves. Sax invented this complex array of tubes and valves in 1852 and that 'no other brass instrument was capable of playing technical passages with such brio, whether played legato or staccato'.

The third thing to say is that, rather like the repertoire of the brass band, many of the solos and air varies were composed as examination pieces for various brass

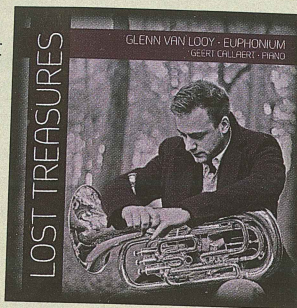
classes at the Paris Conservatoire. While the composers' names are largely unknown - the two I had heard of were Peter Benoit and Jules Demersseman - their music will sound familiar to those who know the traditional brass band solos from the turn of the 19th and the early 20th century.

The first *Lost Treasure* to be unearthed is the once popular *Variations sur un thème de Bellini* for ophecleide and piano by a leading exponent of the instrument from the Nord-pas-de-Calais region, Stanislas Verroust (1814-1862). This elegant and ornate Italian styled confection sits comfortably on the modern euphonium, and Glenn negotiates its tricky passage work with consummate ease. Not all the items for the six-valved trombone are of the same quality. Jean-Baptist Singeleé's *Premier Solo de Concert* isn't the most dynamic of 'openers', and Phillipe Gattermann's *Air Varié* is rather uninspired, but *Fantasie Variée* by the cornet virtuoso Dieudonné Dagnelies is more substantial and inventive in the technical hoops the soloist (possibly a bassoon or ophecleide) is put through. The most ambitious work on the album is a three movement 'Beethovenian' Sonata for trombone by Belgian Peter Benoit (1834-1901). The sustained lines and the interplay between soloist and pianist contrasts well with the brilliant but one-dimensional virtuoso high jinks of the preceding tracks. The most individual item is by Georges Pfeiffer (1835-1908).

Simply titled *Solo* and composed right at the end of the 19th century, this introduction and allegro reveals the influence of Liszt and Wagner in the ebb and flow of the high register writing

in the slow opening movement and in the dramatic rhetoric of the second. For his grand finale, Glenn Van Looy is joined by a second euphoniumist (himself!) for a terrific performance of a fine *Grand Duo* on themes from Meyerbeer's 'hit' opera of the age *Robert le Diable* by Jules Demersseman (1833-1866). Composed in the early 1860s, this introduction, theme and four variations was often featured in concerts organised by Adolphe Sax played by famed exponents of the six-valved trombone, Hollebeke and Robyns. The piece ends with a sequence of fearsomely difficult triple tonguing that would bring the house down if it were part of a brass band concert. Perhaps someone ought to arrange it. Lastly, while the euphonium is beautifully recorded throughout, the piano sound is a bit thin at times. Nevertheless *Lost Treasures* is a significant voyage of discovery and given the immaculate performances of Glenn Van Looy, well matched by pianist Geert Callaert, a thoroughly absorbing 'listen' as well.

Paul Hindmarsh



Nefarious

Fairey Band conducted by Garry Cutt and Tom Davoren

Doyen, DOY CD343

The latest concert CD from a fine sounding Fairey Band interleaves perennial concert favourites with a selection of well-contrasted novelties. The band's Professional Conductor, Garry Cutt, renowned in the brass band world for his attention to detail, musically and technically, brings those qualities to his contribution. Peter Graham's *Phoenix* from his H.G. Wells inspired suite *War of the Worlds* provides a dynamic opener, while *I'll Walk with God* (Brotsky, arr. Richards) raises the emotional temperature - with nobility and not an overblown sound to be heard. Garry Cutt is a past master at presenting a contest march, as Fairey's pristine and poised performance of *Knight Templar* conveys. James Horner's evocative Academy

Award winning theme from *Braveheart*, *For the Love of a Princess* (Horner arr. Duncan) comes up as fresh as a coat of new paint - beautifully done.

Excellent solo/ensemble contributions are provided by principal cornet Paul Hughes, *Dimitri* by Rodney Newton, principal euphonium Jim Fieldhouse, cleverly multi-tracked in *Earth Rise* by James McLeod, bass trombone Josh Cirtina, who is terrific in Bill Geldard's take on Grieg, and principal horn Paul Bennett, who tackles a flute concerto by Quantz. The percussion section gets the feet tapping in Damien Harron's *Okavango*.

Garry Cutt's contribution also includes a spacious performance of *An Irish Blessing*, but the remainder of the full band numbers are directed by Fairey's young Associate Conductor, Tom Davoren, who creates considerable energy in the title track *Nefarious*, an ear-catching jazzy item originally composed for the

band's 2014 Brass in Concert programme by Jim Fieldhouse. Ben Tubb's witty take on Saint Saëns' *Dance Macabre* brings a smile to the face with its dislocated rhythms and skeletal colours. Richard Strauss's rarely heard *Solemn Entry of the Knights of St. John* (1909) is given an epic treatment. Starting in the same tonal landscape, Jim Fieldhouse's colourful rendering of Chuck Mangione's jazz-latin fusion *Land of Make Believe*, takes us into a very different sonic landscape, with flugels and French horn providing the riffs. A light, enigmatic payoff leaves this listener wanting more.

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