



*cules* by Michael Markowski, *Kindred Spirits* by Brian Balmages, *Variations on a 16th Century Chanson* by Masahiko Suwa, *Fetês lointains* by Yo Goto, Donald Hunsberger's transcription of the *Festive Overture* by Dmitri Shostakovich, *Lux Aurumque* by Eric Whitacre, and *Postcard* by Frank Ticheli.

Kevin Walcryk's *Celebration Fanfare* was commissioned by the Oregon Symphony for the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition across the American Northwest in 2003. Walcryk made the wind band version performed here in 2008. It is an exciting four-and-a-half-minute concert opener, performed very enthusiastically here.

Michael Markowski's *Remember the Molecules* (2013), which was commissioned by a consortium of nine American universities, was inspired by Norman Maclean's novella *A River Runs Through It*. The work is based on a three pitch motive: Ab-Bb-G, which imply the major second and the major seventh, which are the closest and furthest removed intervals within the diatonic octave. The composer tells us that "[t]his juxtaposition of neighboring pitches and distant ones suggest a kind of intervallic duality, which is intended to echo an ever-present theme throughout Maclean's story, that 'it is those we live with and love and should know who elude us'." The work, which is very effectively scored, is minimalism with direction that nicely concludes when it has made its point.

*Kindred Spirits* (2009) by Brian Balmages was composed as reaction to a tragedy in the composer's hometown; Nicholas Browning, an honors student, incomprehensibly murdered his parents and two brothers. The composition is sorrowful and reflective as well as a celebration of the lives of those who died. Although employing techniques used for much film music, this is a very gripping composition, given a stunning performance.

The recording includes two compositions by Japanese composers written in 2009. Masahiko Suwa's *Variations on a 16th Century Chanson* (2009) is a set of nice but not very

distinctive variations on the 16<sup>th</sup> century chanson "Une jeune fillette". Yo Goto's *Fetês lointains* (distant celebrations), which quotes excerpts from Giovanni Gabrieli's *Canzone No. 2* (1597) and Claude Debussy's *Nocturnes*, concurrently presents jubilant and solemn music so that the listener may, as the composer writes, "consider that joy and sadness can and do coincide". This work is a fine example of "New Simplicity", contemporary writing with pellucidity and charm. This is introspective music that captures and holds the listener's attention.

The Drake University Wind Symphony fully demonstrates its technical and expressive capabilities with the last three compositions on this recording. Shostakovich's *Festive Overture* receives a very exciting and well controlled performance with a clarity not always attained in many renditions. Eric Whitacre's very beautiful *Lux Aurumque* receives a splendid reading, and Frank Ticheli's energetic and rhythmically intricate *Postcard* a very spirited performance. You should certainly enjoy the playing on this fine recording.

Leon J. Bly

**Transitions** (Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg, Björn Bus, conductor) available from: [www.landesblasorchester.de](http://www.landesblasorchester.de)

This is a live recording of works from two concerts performed in 2013 by the Baden-Württemberg State Wind Orchestra under the direction of the Dutch conductor Björn Bus. The eighty-piece Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg, which was founded in 1978, consists of outstanding amateur and semi-professional players which rehearse intensively on four weekends each year. The recording contains the *Overture to Rienzi* by Richard Wagner, *Transitions* by Henk Badings, *Vasa* by José Suñer Oriola, *Terra Australis* by Thorsten Wollmann, *Cap Kennedy* by Serge Lancen, and *Times Square* from "On the Town" by Leonard Bernstein.

The CD opens with Douglas McLain's excellent transcription of Richard Wagner's *Overture to Rienzi*, which is given a first class reading, capturing all of the drama inherent in this work. It is followed by *Transitions* by Henk Badings, which was composed upon a commission from the College Band Directors National Association in 1972. The work begins by juxtaposing various musical parameters, creating a great deal of tension which gradually is resolved, concluding with a quite pleasant melody. Bus gives the work a very dedicated

reading, keeping it focused and interesting throughout its eleven minutes.

José Suñer Oriola's *Vasa* (1999) is a musical impression of the Vasa Museum in Stockholm, where the great battleship Vasa is on display. The three-movement composition, which is played without pause, captures the majesty of the great ship and its tragic end. (The battleship sank on its maiden voyage due to faulty construction.) Bus and his players give this very emotional and dramatic work an excellent performance. Thorsten Wollmann composed *Terra Australis* for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Landesblasorchester Baden-Württemberg in 2008. Each of its three movements portrays a part of the Australian continent – the Rainforest, the Outback, and the Great Barrier Reef. Using a wide variety of compositional techniques, the composer captures the atmosphere of each of these areas very well. Wollmann uses the Aborigine folk instrument, the didgeridoo, quite effectively in the second movement, and it is performed here very convincingly by Frank Heinkel. Serge Lancen's *Cap Kennedy* (1970) was inspired by the United States Apollo Space Program and is named for the space center in Florida, which in 1973 was renamed Cap Canaveral. Bus gives the work a very fine symphonic reading albeit quite Germanic with dark instrumental colors and reserved emotions. Lancen's music has fallen somewhat out of popularity in recent years. However, here is a recording that may convince you to re-examine this composer's music.

The recording concludes with the *Times Square* dance episode from Leonard Bernstein's Broadway musical *On the Town*. Bus and the wind orchestra capture the character and style of this delightful music very well. As mentioned above, this is a live recording, but you will notice very few lapses in intonation or any other problems. Since the concerts were performed at two different locations, you will notice a difference in the recorded sound between the two locations. However, unless you are a fanatical audiophile, this should not hinder you from enjoying this fine recording.

Leon J. Bly

