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# BRASS TRIOS

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BRASS TRIO

CHRIS GEKKER, TRUMPET & FLUGELHORN

GREGORY MILLER, HORN

MATTHEW GUILFORD, BASS & TENOR TROMBONE

WORKS BY ERIC EWAZEN, LAUREN BERNOFSKY, ANTHONY PLOG,  
VACLAV NELHYBEL, ALAN HOVHANESS, AND DAVID SAMPSON

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## BRASS TRIOS

Small ensembles of brass instruments have existed since antiquity, for the most part intended for military signals, civic functions, religious ceremonies, and outside entertainment. Fully developed concert works exclusively for brass, the true beginning of brass chamber music, first appear between 1870 and 1915 in St. Petersburg, Russia: approximately 25 extant works written by composers such as Ludwig Maurer, Anton Simon, Victor Ewald, Vladimir Glazunov, and Oskar Boehme. This literature, ranging from trio to sextet, reflects the romantic aesthetic of the nineteenth century. It is widely accepted that the first major work of modern brass chamber music is a trio, Francis Poulenc's 1922 *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet, and Trombone*, a concise work of light hearted humor and tender lyricism.

Modern brass chamber music is dominated by quintets. The emergence of this literature began in the 1940's with works by Robert Sanders and Ingolf Dahl, and started to flourish in the 1950's, especially in the United States, with the emergence of professional quintets in major metropolitan areas such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and quickly proliferating elsewhere. The New York Brass Quintet and the American Brass Quintet, in particular, began a tradition of energetically commissioning composers, inspiring other groups and leading to a worldwide flowering of literature that continues unabated today. To date no established trio has been able to sustain a similar longevity, and music for brass trio has mostly been presented within the context of quintet programs, or for individual appearances. The relative scarcity of trio performances is belied by the number of outstanding compositions, some of which are presented here on this recording.

Worth noting is the daunting challenge inherent in the ensemble itself. As with the string trio (think of Mozart, Beethoven and Schoenberg), each musician basically functions as a soloist throughout — the transparency of the three voices demands that even secondary lines project with identity and color, no retreating into the background allowed! When performed on a high level, there is a deeply gratifying intensity to the experience, shared by audience and performers alike.

Eric Ewazen's *A Philharmonic Fanfare* was composed in 1996 as a gift to a retiring patron of the New York Philharmonic, at the request of Philharmonic trombonist David Finlayson, and was premiered by David with colleagues Philip Smith, trumpet, and William Kuyper, horn. The appropriately bold main theme leads to intense contrapuntal development before the concluding return of the opening fanfare.

In her *Trio for Brass* (commissioned by trumpeter Mary L. Thornton), Lauren Bernofsky extensively exploits the ability of brass instruments to articulate toccata-like passages with brilliance and color. She encourages the clarity that trumpet, horn and trombone are capable of, while creating many opportunities for nuance and phrase shaping. The second movement sings with open hearted generosity.

Anthony Plog's *Trio for Brass* specifies that flugelhorn be used throughout, instead of trumpet, creating a dark, blended group sound. At times it is difficult to distinguish the different instruments: in effect Plog has recreated a modern version of the 19th century saxhorn ensemble, where all the brass instruments, from soprano to bass, were of homogenous design. His *Trio* revels in weaving counterpoint and rich harmonic textures. Three of the five movements are linked by solo cadenzas, one for each player. This work was commissioned by the Faculty Brass Trio at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

Vaclav Nelhybel's *Trio for Brass* is a revelation for those of us raised on his large works for concert band — he demonstrates his well-known skill for writing sharply incisive passagework for brass, as well as plaintive, almost Kurt Weill-like lyricism. The second movement features the edgy, biting color of metallic mutes. The third movement is a series of short vignettes: circus romps, a tender waltz, and so on, with Matt's trombone having the satisfying final word.

Alan Hovhaness' three-part *Fantasies for Brass* were originally intended for large brass ensemble, commissioned by the Ohio Music Education Association, but in the publication Hovhaness also encourages performances by trio. Anyone with knowledge of his language will be on familiar ground here: the singing long lines, the melodic and harmonic references to Armenian folk music and Byzantine church modes, the cyclical and non linear concept of development, decidedly non-Western.

David Sampson's *Duncan Trio* was commissioned by Dorothy Duncan, in celebration of the 50th birthday of her brother, James Duncan. Within its compact form, *Duncan Trio* serves up a wide range of textures, colors, and rhythmic creativity. The first movement opens with flowing lines leading to intricate staccato figures passed around the group. The second movement's deeply resonating harmonies are enhanced by the use of flugelhorn. The third movement is a two minute kaleidoscope of devilishly abrupt tempo shifts and wide intervals that thoroughly challenge the trio's reflexes — this is serious "playtime for grownups"!

Which is what this whole project was for us — on behalf of Greg, Matt, our engineer (and “ears in the booth”) Antonino d’Urzo, and Aaron Muller, who listened and advised, we hope this collection of music for brass trio will entertain listeners as much as it did all of us — please enjoy!

—Notes by Chris Gekker

(with assistance from Shelley Davis, Robert Hazen, and Anthony Plog)

## THE PERFORMERS

**Gregory Miller** is equally at home as a soloist, teacher, chamber musician, and symphonic horn player, and is fast becoming one of the most accomplished horn players of his generation. As hornist with the internationally acclaimed Empire Brass, Mr. Miller has performed in nearly every major concert hall in the world, including Carnegie Hall, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Tokyo Opera City, the Mozarteum, Petronas Towers, the Barbican, and Suntory Hall. His solo career includes appearances with the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional, San Jose, Costa Rica, the Daegu City Symphony Orchestra, South Korea, and the U.S. Navy Band of Washington D.C. His recordings with Empire Brass, which include *Classic Brass: Firedance* and *The Glory of Gabrieli*, can be heard exclusively on Telarc. In 2003, Mr. Miller released his solo debut recording *From Bach to Bernstein: Romantic Music for*

*Horn and Piano* on MSR. In 2006, *Solos for the Horn Player* was released on MSR, the first recording of the complete Mason Jones Solos for the Horn Player.

Mr. Miller joined the faculty of the University of Maryland School of Music in the fall of 2000 and was appointed Chair of the Wind and Percussion Division in 2005. Prior to his appointment, he served on the faculties of Florida International University, the Conservatory of Music at Lynn University, and the University of Hawaii. His orchestral experience includes principal positions with the New World Symphony under Michael Tilson Thomas and the Honolulu Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed with the Pittsburgh, Jacksonville, National, and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras, and with the Florida Philharmonic. Mr. Miller is a founding member of the New World Brass

Quintet, and has recorded the Ingolf Dahl *Music for Brass Instruments* on Argo Decca. He is a clinician for Conn-Selmer Musical Instruments and performs exclusively on the Conn 8D.

A native of Youngstown, Ohio, Mr. Miller received his BM in Performance from the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music where he studied with Robert Fries, former co-principal horn of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

**Matthew Guilford** has served as bass trombonist with the National Symphony Orchestra since his appointment by Mstislav Rostropovich in 1991. Previously he was a member of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and he has also performed with several of America’s leading orchestras including the Boston Symphony, New York Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, and the Boston Pops. He has also appeared with Music of the Baroque in Chicago, the Chicago Chamber Musicians, and the Grand Teton Music Festival.

Matthew has studied with Jerry Shaw, Norman Bolter, Douglas Yeo, and John Swallow, and is a graduate of the New England Conservatory where he received both bachelor and master of music degrees. He was the 1988 winner of the Donald Yaxley Scholarship, a bass trombone

concerto competition sponsored by the International Trombone Association. His career has included such varied engagements as the *Les Miserables* national tour, the Boston Symphony recording of Richard Strauss’ *Electra*, the soundtrack for *Predator II* and fellowships to Tanglewood and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Institute.

Matthew is an Associate Artist in Residence at the University of Maryland School of Music, where he has taught since 1993. He is also on the faculty at the National Orchestral Institute and at Catholic University in Washington D.C. Many of his students have gone on to enjoy successful performing and teaching careers. He has presented solo recitals and master classes at most of the top conservatories and universities in the United States and abroad.

Matthew is also the President and founder of the National Music Management Agency which contracts musical ensembles for concerts and special events in the Washington D.C. area.

**Chris Gekker** is Professor of Trumpet at the University of Maryland School of Music. He has been featured as soloist at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He appears on more than 30 solo recordings and on more than 100 recordings of chamber

music, orchestral works, and jazz. Chris is one of the featured artists on Deutsche Grammophon's 2005 compilation "Masters of the Trumpet." Some recent solo recordings include the Bach *Brandenburg Concerto no. 2* and two solo cds on Albany Records, *Winter* and *Clarion*, all critically acclaimed.

Chris was a member of the American Brass Quintet for 18 years, and on the faculties of the Juilliard School, the Manhattan School of Music, and Columbia University. He was principal trumpet with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and frequently performed and recorded as principal with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, as well as a frequent guest with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He has been a guest principal trumpet with the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, and the Santa Fe Opera. In 2009 Chris recorded and toured with Sting and is featured on his latest DVD, *A Winter's Night*.

Many of his former students occupy orchestral positions in major symphonies throughout the world, as well as being prominent in jazz, chamber, and commercial music. His *Articulation Studies*, *44 Duos*, *Endurance Drills*, *Piccolo Trumpet Studies*, and *24 Etudes* are available from Colin Publications and are sold worldwide. Chris was born in Washington D.C., raised in Alexandria, Virginia, and is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the University of Maryland. His teachers include Emerson Head, Sidney Mear, Adel Sanchez, and Gerard Schwarz.

# BRASS TRIOS

Recorded by Antonino d'Urzo, OpusRite Productions, in Dekelboum Concert Hall, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, during July and August, 2009.

#### *Equipment*

Monette B-flat Trumpet LT2000  
mouthpiece: Monette B15M with altered .420 cup  
Yamaha Flugelhorn 635ST (Plog and Sampson)  
mouthpiece: Monette FLG15

Conn 8D Horn, 300,000 series  
mouthpiece: Yamaha 30C4

S.E. Shires TruBore Bass Trombone  
(all but Nelhybel)  
mouthpiece: Monette BT1 Prana

Bach 42G Tenor Trombone (Nelhybel only)  
mouthpiece: Bach 11/2G

#### *Publishers*

Eric Ewazen: *Trio for Brass* (Southern Music)  
Lauren Bernofsky: *Trio for Brass* (Balquhider Music)  
Anthony Plog: *Trio for Brass* (BIM)  
Vaclav Nelhybel: *Trio for Brass*  
(Colgems-EMI Music, Inc.)  
Alan Hovhaness: *Three Fantasies for Brass*,  
*Op. 70* (C.F. Peters)  
David Sampson: *Duncan Trio* (BIM)

*Cover Photo*  
Debra Adler Photography

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BRASS TRIO  
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- Eric Ewazen** (b.1954)  
 1 *A Philharmonic Fanfare* [3:17]

- Lauren Bernofsky** (b.1967)  
*Trio for Brass*  
 2 Allegro deciso [4:55]  
 3 Berceuse [4:29]  
 4 Vivo [4:35]

- Anthony Plog** (b.1947)  
*Trio for Brass*  
 5 Part I: Allegro vivace [3:50]  
 6 Andante [4:11]  
 7 Allegro moderato [3:13]  
 8 Part II: Adagio [3:54]  
 9 Allegro vivace [3:57]

**Vaclav Nelhybel** (1919-1996)  
*Trio for Brass*

- 10 Leggiero marcato [1:32]  
 11 Andante moderato [2:53]  
 12 Molto vivo [7:00]

**Alan Hovhannes** (1911-2000)  
*Three Fantasies for Brass, Op. 70*

- 13 Andante espressivo [2:44]  
 14 Allegretto [2:41]  
 15 Molto largo [4:06]

**David Sampson** (b.1951)  
*Duncan Trio*

- 16 Reflection [3:29]  
 17 Solemn Hymn [2:53]  
 18 Crooked Dance [2:26]

Total Time = 66:12

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