

Eloquentia

Martinu, Challan, Chaynes, Jongen

Charles Saenz, tpt; Solungga Liu, p

Beauport 41524—52 minutes

A disclaimer: Ms Liu and I were classmates at Eastman. Mr Saenz and she both teach at Bowling Green State University, which has over the years established an extraordinary reputation as a center for new music performance and research. This program contains several pieces from 20th Century French or Belgian composers who compose in the tamer side of the new music spectrum.

Andre Waignein's 3 Movements are charming and deceptively simple-sounding bagatelles; Joseph Jongen's concertino, much better known, is an economical and compact work of a more or less neoclassic cast. More elusive, and far more engaging, is the 1956 concerto by Charles Chaynes, which combines spiky, well-conceived harmonies with all the bravado one might wish for a trumpet concerto. Its performance here with the composer's piano reduction should help spur other performances, particularly in music conservatories and universities. Martinu wrote his Sonatina in the final years of his life, and it's a marvelous example of his work.

The performances are uniformly poised and inspiring. The two musicians have played together for some time, and it shows in their superb ensemble and expressive interaction. I'm particularly amazed at Saenz's tonal range: his playing has a fullness and lyrical quality that never overstays its welcome. The balance between trumpet and piano is nearly ideal—no small feat to accomplish—and Liu's playing is (as always) fantastic, but the piano sound could be less brittle and strident. (This is no complaint leveled at her: as I've learned from recording, so much depends on microphone choice and placement.) That small imperfection aside, this release is a fine contribution to the crowded field of trumpet recital recordings.

HASKINS