



Trombone in Europe

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American Record Guide (Barry Kilpatrick - 2000.11.01)

This fine recording offers works composed during World War II (Martin and Hindemith), in the early 1950s (Serocki and Defaye), and more recently (Denisov and Gunes). There is no humor in either of the WW II-era pieces. Swiss composer Frank Martin's *Ballade* (1940) is a subtle, jazz-infused work that has the trombonist crooning soulfully in the high register much of the time. It requires real strength and stamina, and given Thomas Storch's stature--former principal trombone of the Berlin Philharmonic and now principal of the Bavarian Radio Symphony--it comes as no surprise that he has plenty of both.

Hindemith's *Sonata* (1941) is the cornerstone of the trombone recital repertory. Calling for powerful playing by both soloist and pianist, the work can come across as brutal unless opportunities for nuance and warmth are explored. My favorite recordings, by John Kitman (Sept/Oct 1998: 283) and Ben Haemhouts (March/April 1998), bear little resemblance to each other--except that both show warmth and lyricism. Storch's reading is powerful, driven by fast tempos. While he occasionally eases the intensity, he is too relentless for my taste.

The postwar works are light and playful. This may be the best recording of Kasimierz Serocki's *Sonatine* (1953), played with appropriate zest by Horch and spikiness by Walter-Lindqvist. Jean-Michel Defaye's *Two Dances* (1954) has been recorded more often than any other trombone piece. Why? Well, it is a pleasant foray into the pop realm--'Danse Sacree' is a soulful ballad, and 'Danse Profane' is lively--and an opportunity to show off the player's high register: Horch plays it well, as has every artist who has recorded it.

Edison Denisov explores extremes of register, microtones, and sympathetic vibration in his spooky *Choral Varie* (1979). Horch's reading is similar to one by Christian Lindberg (Nov/Dec 1991: 193) and more leisurely than one by Benny Sluchin (Jan/Feb 1990: 125). This is the first recording of *The Trombonite* (1993) by Turkish composer Betin Gunes. Horch delivers the most remarkable display of alto trombone virtuosity I have ever heard; but the modernist, meandering, and rather dreary piece does nothing for me.