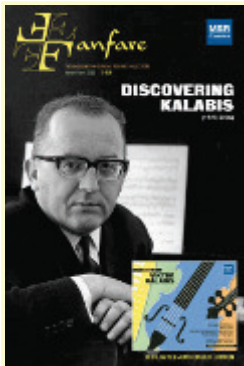

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U Maryland Br Tr: BRASS TRIOS on ALBANY



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Classical Reviews - Ensemble

Written by [David DeBoor Canfield](#)

Monday, 14 February 2011

BRASS TRIOS • [U Maryland Br Tr](#) • [ALBANY 1222 \(66:12\)](#)

BERNOFSKY Brass Trio. **EWAZEN** *A Philharmonic Fanfare*.
HOVHANESS 3 Fantasies. **NELHYBEL** Trio. **PLOG** Trio. **SAMPSON**
Duncan Trio

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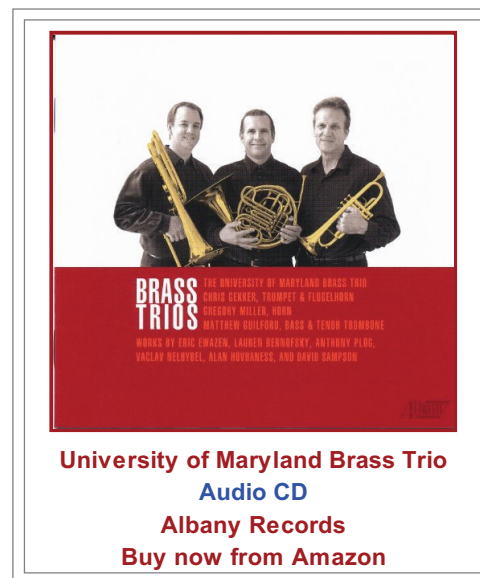
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This anthology of brass trios (trumpet/flugelhorn, horn, trombone) is a delightful compilation of ingratiating works, exquisitely performed by Chris Gekker, Gregory Miller, and Matthew Guilford, all members of the faculty of the University of Maryland. It would be difficult to imagine brass ensemble playing any cleaner than what we are offered here. The variety of styles of the several composers herein also makes for a nice contrast; there is not a weak piece in the lot.

The CD opens with *A Philharmonic Fanfare* by Eric Ewazen, a composer well-known to aficionados of band music. The present fanfare skillfully weaves the three voices together in a pleasing texture. This fanfare strikes me as more evocative than assertive, and contains a good deal of rhythmic variety.

Lauren Bernofsky (b.1967) resides in Bloomington, Indiana (also the home of this reviewer), and has had a number of works performed here and around the world. She works in a wide variety of media, from choral to brass choir to string ensemble. All of her works evidence a craftsmanship of the highest order, and the present trio is no exception. Two lively outer movements frame a meditative middle movement, the singing melodic line of which hints at Bernofsky's interest in the voice. The rather Stravinskian opening uses imaginative sonorities that often produce an effect of



more than three players being involved. The final movement skillfully employs the interplay of repeated notes among the members of the trio. This trio is a major addition to the brass literature.

The five-movement trio by Anthony Plog (b. 1947) is probably the most chromatically conceived work in this recital, but it demonstrates considerable skill in its interweaving of the three instruments, and contains nice contrasts between its movements. Substituting the flugelhorn for the trumpet throughout, Plog thereby evokes a darker sonority, and the blend of the three instruments he achieves is quite remarkable.

Another name ubiquitous in the band world is that of Vaclav Nelhybel. His playful trio, shot through with humorous touches, will delight any auditor. Nelhybel was clearly as at home in chamber music as he was in works for larger ensembles.

Alan Hovhaness's Three Fantasies will immediately be recognizable as his to anyone familiar with his music, containing as it does the same non-Western modal flavor and flowing lines that characterize his oeuvre. Although much of his music strikes me as boringly similar, this work does not impress me that way in the least.

The *Duncan Trio* of David Sampson (b. 1951) is named for its dedicatee, having been commissioned by his sister for his 50th birthday. It opens with gentle, modally sustained counterpoint that soon breaks into a vigorous rhythmic episode. In the second movement, "Solemn Hymn," Sampson substitutes the darker flugelhorn, giving the movement a reverential tone. The lively final movement has something of the flavor of Aaron Copland to it, even though it is spoken with Sampson's own distinctive musical language.

There is simply nothing not to like about this CD—the recorded sound gives the brass real presence, and the appeal here certainly extends beyond the brass community. Definitely recommended. **David DeBoor Canfield**

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