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Review: [To The Point](#)



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To the Point (Higdon, Rudin, Schuller, Cascarino, Reise)
Diane Monroe, violin (Rudin); Dorothy Freeman, English horn (Cascarino);
Maria Bachmann, violin (Reise); Orchestra 2001/James Freeman, Gunther Shuller
Innova 745
Total Time: 73:42
Recording: ****/****
Performance: ****/****

Orchestra 2001 is a Philadelphia-based ensemble that promotes contemporary music (20th & 21st century) often premiering new works and reintroducing older, rarely performed pieces. The present release is a fine combination of their dedication to new music. Most all the pieces here come from the past decade with a surprise of a 1945 work by Romeo Cascarino (1922- perhaps the greatest name recognition on the disc.

The brief piece is adapted from a string quartet written for the of Debussy and Ravel, the music features aspects of pizzicato and is a fine scherzo for orchestra that makes a fitting opening.

uring soloist Dianne Monroe. Composer Anthony Rudin built Fellini's *Satyricon*. He wrote the first large scale work for the appeared on an important Nonesuch record of electronic music. The color palette here in what plays like a spun out ritornelloified sonata form. The title refers more to the "return" at the o line is a mix of quite lyrical soaring lines and almost d dissonances in rhythmic syncopations, but the real highlight nd section is the bulk of the work and it has almost tragic tra provides perfect support allowing to really shine in the .. Rudin's harmonies, while not romantic in the traditional intensity cast against the solo line. The piece ends quietly do. Emotionally, the piece is quite intense and engrossing.

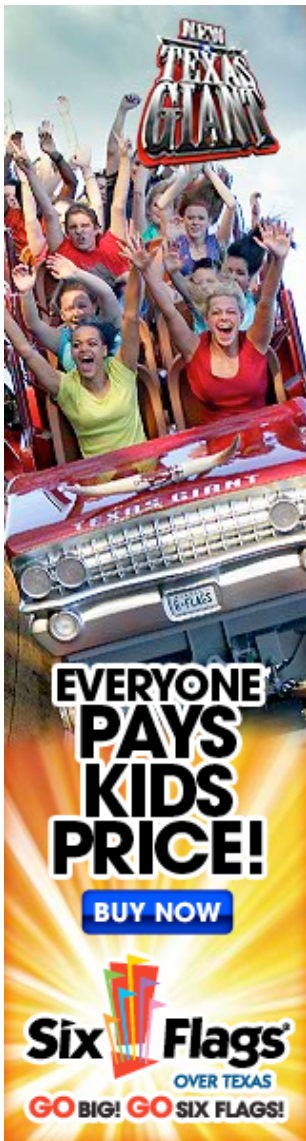
iece with altered orchestral forces—the composer's ds in paired trumpets and trombones. The piece becomes a The opening slow section features a long string idea cast rious winds and brass. The long tense opening gives way to a al punches. Schuller makes some use of the trombone slide thout a score, the work's construction feels serial with pitch, he work gains in some momentum towards the end. Overall,

osition and theory at the Combs College of Music. His *Blades* in the army and his hearing Carl Sandburg's poem *Grass*. is a breath of fresh air and a break from what may feel like is sound is unique. It might be easy to lump the work in line d sweep comes from a Romantic tradition. Decidedly one of visibility, *Blades of Grass* is a minor masterpiece for English ng. American music lovers would be advised to track down this it is surrounded by here.

or violin and orchestra by Jay Reise. Reise teaches at the quite widely. The work is inspired from a 19th century novel ed in more traditional form. The primary difference here is using more intriguing color combinations. What is interesting lines that cut through and support the soloist very well. One hony," takes rhythmic motives and develops them within a linear writing are on display as well which aid in the opening movement's focus on rhythm, gives way to a slow

central section whose opening measure are quite beautiful and continue to be so even as the tension builds underneath. The harmonic language here is most interesting to hear unfold. The final movement seems a blend of the rhythmic polyphony Reise mentions in his program note and the long linear solo writing that comments upon and essentially deconstructs and reworks these ideas. The movement is more a conversation between ensemble and soloists at times and the energy takes off and is reigned in repeatedly with a fine dramatic sense over the 9-minute playing time.

Orchestra 2001 is to be commended for the daring of their programming for this disc. Each of the works here is well-composed and highlights different styles quite well. The sense of dramatic writing in Rudin and Reise's concertos is quite different but both works are quite good. Their separation by a more cerebral atonal work and a more mid-century elegiac semi-Americana style give them enough distance so that they can be appreciated well. Higdon's piece opens the disc



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innocuously enough so that it draws the listener in preparing their ears for what is to come. The Cascarino is programmed in time to give the ears a rest from the "contemporary" sounds that can be off putting to newer listeners of contemporary music. And Reise's piece serves to provide a fitting conclusion. If the disc is any indication of the group's concerts, it should make many converts.

The sound of these live performances is very good and there is no audience noise (coughing can be a rather contagious problem especially in new music concerts!). The pieces have been mastered to disc and equalized fairly well though the Reise has a more lively and close sound than the previous works. This is a fine release of mostly 21st century works that should have a little something for each musical taste. (In the interest of full disclosure, this writer is a member of the American Composer's Forum, the sponsoring organization behind Innova's recordings.)

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