

Winter

Music of Eric Ewazen and David Snow

Chris Gekker, trumpet

Eric Ewazen            Three Lyrics for Trumpet and Piano  
                          God's World  
                          Wraith  
                          Afternoon on a Hill

Ted Guerrant, piano

David Snow            Winter

Rita Sloan, piano

Eric Ewazen            Elegia

Ted Guerrant, piano

Eric Ewazen            An Elizabethan Songbook

                          Come Away, Come Sweet Love  
                          There is a Lady, Sweet and Kind  
                          Weep You No More, Sad Fountain  
                          Jack and Jill, They Think No Ill

Milt Stevens, trombone  
Rita Sloan, piano

David Snow            A Baker's Tale

                          Le Promenade du Patissier  
                          Meditations a la Croissance Spirituel  
                          Hymne au Village Celeste  
                          Denouement

Ted Guerrant, piano

Eric Ewazen            Aftershock, for solo trumpet

Eric Ewazen            A Hymn for the Lost and the Living

Ted Guerrant, piano

Eric Ewazen, David Snow, and I all entered the Eastman School of Music as freshmen in 1972, and in fact David and I were roommates that first year. We all became friends quickly, and I frequently prepared and performed their music during those student years. In the more than thirty years since then, rarely has a year gone by that I have not been involved in their works, and in some years there have been very many performances. When I joined the American Brass Quintet in 1981, it was with great pleasure that I introduced pieces by David and Eric to the group, and was very happy to see them so enthusiastically received. As far as our friendships have gone, well, some things do get better with age, and it is with a deep sense of gratitude that I look upon all our years as colleagues. Both Eric and David write music that is important to me, music that I hear when I am away from my instrument, and music that has challenged me to keep improving as a musician and trumpet player.

Eric's Three Lyrics for Trumpet and Piano are transcribed from three songs set to poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay. God's World begins with a strumming, harp-like figure on the piano, leading to trumpet phrasing that reflects the poetry's rapture. In Wraith, the trumpet writing still sings the beautiful vocal lines, but with more questioning turns and pauses, as Ted Guerrant spins a delicate, ghostly web of sound on the piano. Afternoon on a Hill is pure pastoral, as gentle as an infant's lullaby.

David Snow wrote Winter during the summer of 1999, in memory of his friend, the pianist Wendy Maraniss. I premiered it that fall, at the University of Maryland, with Bob McCoy on piano. Winter starts with a long piano solo, strikingly thoughtful and colorful. The trumpet seems to emerge out of a cloud, and from there the piece evolves, exhibiting an almost pastiche-like character, with processionals, chorales, marches, a touch of the blues, Latin figures, and nocturnal passages. This is really a work for "piano with trumpet," and Rita Sloan is beautifully eloquent throughout.

Eric's Elegia comes from his Quintet for Trumpet and Strings, where it is the third movement; he has also made a Concerto version with string orchestra. I have performed and recorded both, but never thought of playing this movement with piano. At the University of Maryland, there was an occasion in 1999 where a daytime performance was needed, on almost no notice, and I asked Bob McCoy to perform this Elegia with me. I can still remember his grin and the glint in his eye as he agreed, with no rehearsal, to do this, and how wonderful the piece was with piano, taking on a different character from the string scoring. (It also helped that Bob was a uniquely expressive and spontaneous musician.) The next year, Bob was taken from us, so quickly and tragically that it is still hard to believe. At his memorial service, Rita and I performed this Elegia, right after Ted had played some organ preludes from the Chapel balcony. And here Ted and I have recorded it - I cannot play this piece now without thinking of Bob, and also of Rita and Ted, and of our little musical family here at the University.

Eric originally wrote An Elizabethan Songbook for mezzo soprano, baritone, and piano. When he showed it to me in New York, I immediately

heard the sounds of trumpet and trombone, and asked him if he would mind if Milt and I tried it. I'm so happy he said yes, because it seems just right, how the two brass instruments mix and blend. Milt Stevens is principal trombone of the National Symphony, conductor of the Washington Symphonic Brass, as well as a professor here at Maryland, and I couldn't have asked for a more lyric, sonorous performance. To have colleagues like him, Rita, and Ted is a real blessing. (I'd also like to make special note of the contributions of Antonino d'Urzo, a recording engineer of graceful skill and musicianship.)

David Snow originally composed A Baker's Tale as a humorous, thinly veiled alegory about artists and society, with a narration about a thoughtful, idealistic baker. Scored for violin, clarinet, trumpet, bassoon, and piano, it was premiered at Carnegie Hall in 1983. I was very happy to participate in that first performance. David subsequently produced a suite, with no narrator, for clarinet, trumpet, piano, and percussion, and more recently has kindly created a version for trumpet and piano, that Ted and I enjoy very much!

Anyone reading this will be able to remember where they were on the Tuesday morning of September 11, 2001. Eric Ewazen was in the building of the Juilliard School in New York City, where he has been a professor for many years. I can remember speaking with him on the phone that week, as everyone was so stunned and shattered. On the following Friday, Eric joined thousands of other New Yorkers on the Upper West Side in a candlelight procession. Shortly afterwards, he composed A Hymn for the Lost and the Living. First scored for wind ensemble and premiered by the Air Force Heritage of America Band from Langley Air Force Base in Virginia, Ted and I performed a transcription for trumpet and organ several times during the winter of 2002-2003. Here we present it with piano. I once mentioned to Eric that sometimes I heard, in my mind, an image of a solo soliloquy that might serve as an introduction the the Hymn, and he offered Aftershock to me, which I have gratefully recorded here, preceeding A Hymn.

It has been a hard couple of years in the Washington D.C. area, after the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the anthrax threat that was so real here, and the serial snipers who affected life in every way for three weeks in the fall of 2002. This recording was done, at fairly large intervals, during that time period, and I can't help but say that a great deal of solace was drawn from working on this music, with these friends. My gratitude goes to David, Eric, Ted, Rita, Milt, and Antonino, and my hope is that some of the feeling we had doing this recording will resonate with sympathetic listeners.

Chris Gekker