

Belgian Music for Alto Saxophone and Wind Band (Alto Saxophone Soloists Pieter Pellens, Norbert Nozy, and Kristof Kerremans, The Symphonic Band of the Belgian Guides, Yves Segers, conductor) World Wind Music, WWM 500.183

This recording contains three concertos for alto saxophone and wind band composed during the last decade by Belgian composers: *Concerto Comenia* by Maarten De Splenter, *Kryptos* by Wouter Lenaerts, and the *Rhapsody for Alto Saxophone* by André Waignein. The concertos are performed by three fine Belgian saxophonists – Pieter Pellens, Norbert Nozy, and Kristof Kerremans – and the Symphonic Band of the Belgian Guides under the direction of Yves Segers.

Pieter Pellens gives Maarten De Splenter's *Concerto Comenia* a stunning performance, technically brilliant and dramatic. The concerto is dedicated to the composer's former saxophone teacher, Frank Commeene, and its title comes from combining the names Commeene and J.A. Comenius, a 17th century Czech philosopher who is considered to be the founder of modern pedagogy. The wonderfully scored, twenty-two-minute concerto, is in a traditional tonal style strongly influenced by late Romanticism and emphasizes both energy and lyricism. It consists of four movements played without pause. The slow first movement's main theme contains a motif, which is used as an *idée fixe* in all four movements, although each movement has its

own contrasting thematic material. Both the second and finale movements require some very virtuoso playing, which Pellens handles with aplomb.

Kryptos by Wouter Lenaerts was commissioned by Norbert Nozy, one of Belgian's most noted saxophonists and former conductor of the Symphonic Band of the Belgian Guides. The sixteen-and-a-half-minute concerto has five connected movements which are based on two constantly transformed choral themes and motifs for the names Nozy and Sax, which the composer established via musical cryptography, and thus the concerto's title. The work, which also is in a traditional tonal style but includes contemporary saxophone techniques, nicely captures the *Misterioso* atmosphere intended by the composer. The concerto receives an outstanding performance by Nozy, who plays with beautiful tone, virtuosity, and great expressiveness. André Waignein's *Rhapsody for Alto Saxophone* was composed for the 5th International Adolphe Sax Contest in Dinant, Belgium in 2010, and the three-movement, seventeen-minute work is definitely in the style of a *Morceau de Concours*. This is Romantic music with some contemporary harmonies from popular music and jazz. The work contains plenty of virtuoso passages for the soloist, and Kristof Kerremans, a former pupil of Nozy, performs them with bravura.

While within the context of the overarching developments in music, this recording contains three conservative concertos for the 21st century. However, it consists of three great performances by three fine soloists and a wonderful band. Anyone wishing to hear truly great alto saxophone playing should have this recording. *Leon J. Bly*

