

CD REVIEW

Rex Richardson

Freedom of Movement: 21st Century Trumpet Concertos

As one of the finest virtuosos of our time, American trumpeter Rex Richardson is no stranger to the pages of this magazine. His latest release, "Freedom of Movement: 21st Century Trumpet Concertos", contains no less than four of the most technically demanding concerti I have heard. Each commissioned and premièred by Rex, these world-premiere recordings are a true testament to the depth of his musical expression and boundless versatility.

The disc opens with Allen Vizzutti's *Three World Winds*, a colourful work that immediately showcases Richardson's warm piccolo trumpet sound, effortlessly floating throughout the entire range of the instrument. Dazzling *scherzando* sections are interspersed with beautiful singing climaxes and the dramatic middle movement (*Chinook* - 'a moist warm wind from the Pacific ocean') highlights Rex's stunning flugelhorn playing. Superbly accompanied by Salt River Brass under the direction of Patrick Sheridan, the piece reaches dizzying heights in the third movement (*Cyclone*), as soaring high passages and 'tornado-like cadenzas' bring the finale to a blistering close.

There is a jazzier feel in Andy Scott's title track, *Freedom of Movement*, a through-composed concerto for trumpet and wind band, and recorded here with the sensitively balanced accompaniment of Maidstone Wind Symphony and their musical director, Jonathan Crowhurst. Whether in the opening swing section or the luscious 'ballad' that follows, this shows Richardson at his lyrical best, his sublimely rich sound and fluency of improvisation combining to magical effect. As the work traverses a range of idioms so the soloist adapts perfectly, leading to a virtuosic and ultimately powerful conclusion.

Anthony Plog's *Trumpet Concerto No. 3* uses paintings by the Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky as the inspiration for its five movements: *Rowing*, *Dreamy*, *Deluge*, *Gravestones* and *Rider*. Plog's musical language contrasts vividly with the other works on the disc: more angular and with distinctive rhythmic interplay between soloist and band (the highly accomplished Brass Band of Central Florida conducted by Chad Shoopman), it is the perfect vehicle for Richardson's musicality. His mellifluous flugelhorn melody in *Dreamy* - superbly controlled, and with perfect production and intonation - is particularly impressive; as is the

lightening quick multiple-tonguing in *Deluge* and *Rider*.

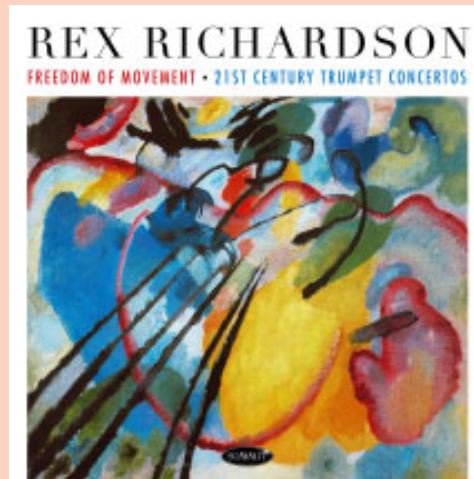
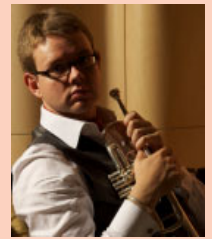
The final work is James Stephenson's *Concerto No. 2 for Trumpet and Wind Ensemble*. Subtitled "*Rextreme*", it is written for and dedicated to its namesake; and from the virtuosic flourishes of the opening *Vivo* it is easy to hear why! Despite the stamina-sapping passages of extreme agility, Richardson's interpretation remains organic throughout, spinning melodious lines alongside high improvisatory gestures, as well as cadenzas of gymnastic-style extended techniques, incorporating multi-phonics and circular breathing!

Stephenson's concerto, recorded here with the composer directing the Symphonic Winds Tokyo, is the most successful in straddling both classical and jazz idioms while remaining true to a traditional form, allowing Richardson's flexibility in a myriad of styles to come to the fore. From the flugelhorn sound in the second movement (which melts beautifully into the texture) to the piccolo trumpet jazz of the Latin-infused 'Tarantella' finale, this is seriously impressive trumpet playing. Stephenson's writing invites Richardson to find his

'groove', which he delivers with plentiful charisma and aplomb.

To conclude: you simply won't find a better trumpet CD released in 2018! Among the frequent fireworks, outstanding high register and sumptuous tone, it contains some of the finest vocal playing I have heard on disc. Listening to Rex on this recording is simply a joy and a pleasure!

Huw Morgan



Rex Richardson.