



The Red House Ensemble present an array of new works on their latest disc

haunting depiction of a free fall from plane to earth. Somehow, the music hovers in air, the instruments conjuring the aura of a downward journey in minimalist gestures that merge with a soprano singing a surreal text by John Coletti.

Alex Shapiro creates flickers of sound amid lyricism in *Perpetual Spark*, a concise dazzler for sextet. In Jesse Limbacher's exhilarating *Air*, a trio playing oboe, clarinet and bassoon use their breath and assorted instrumental techniques, including key clicks, to explore the many meanings of the work's title.

The members of 5HE, as they call themselves for short, give each piece vivid treatment. Everything is freshly considered and shaped with expressive finesse. In *Excelsior*, soprano Martha Cluver renders the text with ethereal beauty.

Donald Rosenberg

### 'Flourishes, Tales and Symphonies'

Marlatt Earthscape Meechan *Velvet Blue*  
 Saint-Saëns Symphony No 3, 'Organ', Op 78 -  
 Adagio; Maestoso C Sharpe Flourishes. Prelude,  
 Elegy and Scherzo Verdi *La traviata* - Brindisi  
 Weinberger Schwanda the Bagpiper - Polka and  
 Fugue W White *The Dwarf Planets*  
 Chicago Gargoyle Brass and Organ Ensemble /  
 Rodney Holmes  
 MSR Classics © MS1598 (68' • DDD)



The Chicago Gargoyle Brass and Organ Ensemble, which rolls off the

tongue like a tending American craft brewery, must be every organ-and-brass ensemble composer's dream. They play their solo riffs like angels, they trump along with a resolute, raucous beat when energy and martial notes are sounded, and they play the lollipops with as much gusto as they do the conservative modern stuff.

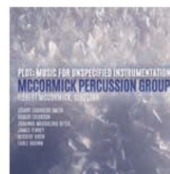
Carlyle Sharpe's mighty *Flourishes* opens the CD, full of purpose, conviction and personality, followed by his similarly absorbing, beautifully written 10-minute *Prelude, Elegy and Scherzo*, which verges on memorable while being very satisfying. William White's *The Dwarf Planets* – a cycle of five short pieces inspired by Holst with each movement representing a variety of immortals – is studded with striking sonic moments such as the exquisite trumpet solo in 'Haumea' (Hawaiian goddess of fertility), the splendid horns in 'Ceres' and the large closing noises of 'Makemake' (chief god of the Easter Island Rapa Nui bird-man cult). David Marlatt's inspirational *Earthscape* has an open, Western populist, hymn-like

feel. Peter Meechan's *Velvet Blue* for rock organ and brass is heavy-duty cool.

Interspersed with their betters, Craig Garner's brilliant arrangements of Verdi, Weinberger and Saint-Saëns perfectly break up an otherwise serious programme. The sound of the ensemble and organist Jared Stellmacher, whether playing on the 2006 Rodgers 1038 at the Saint Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in Wheaton, 30 miles west of Chicago, or the 1982 Casavant Frères, Limitée, Opus 3544, at First United Church in suburban Oak Park, is spatially imposing and grand. Laurence Vitte

### 'Plot'

'Music for Unspecified Instrumentation'  
 JM Beyer Percussion E Brown December 1952  
 Brün Plot Erickson Nine and a Half for Henry  
 (and Wilbur and Orville). Pacific Sirens SS Smith  
 Bones. Winter Tenney Percussion Responses  
 McCormick Percussion Group  
 Ravello © © RR7916 (118' • DDD)



With a programme based on an ingenious suggestion by Stuart Sanders Smith, the Tampa-based McCormick Percussion Group (they are artists-in-residence at the