

CD REVIEWS 105 AND 106

CD REVIEW 105

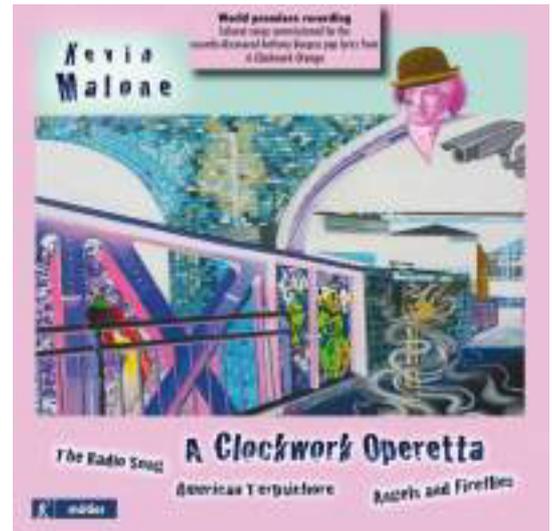
KEVIN MALONE

The Radio song, American Terpsichore, Angels and Fireflies, A Clockwork Operetta.

Emily Howard (mezzo) John Turner (recorder). Fidelio Trio, Ebb Trio.

Metier mmv28543
(70.05)

Kevin Malone was born in Buffalo, New York and studied at the Eastman School of Music, New England Conservatory, University of Michigan and London University. He studied with Leslie Bassett, William Bolcom and Morton Feldman and won a Fulbright Scholarship to Paris and was the musical director of the Brecht company. He completed the music by Antony Burgess's A clockwork Orange.



His work A Clockwork Operetta appears on METIER MMV 28543.

The sleeves notes leave a lot to be desired. I would have preferred each work to be set out with the individual names of all performers. The Fidelio Trio are clearly identified but the Ebb Trio is defined at the bottom of page six in small print

I have a great difficulty with this Clockwork operetta. Some of the sections are called Feeling a bit shagged, Feeling shagged again, Unrepentant sinners and You've got that violent thing and such subjects do not appeal to me but rather repulse me. The novel and the film were ultra-violent with amorality and the taking off Beethoven which did not please me as I am a committed Beethovenian. The perverse relationships in the film are sadly relevant to our times with the constant decline in morality and decency. This operetta in three scenes concerns a female who takes charge of two depraved males. One, Alex, who is fifteen, is already sexually depraved.

Of course, there are other works which have elements of depravity such as Berg, Ligeti and Tippett but in this Malone work the singing is cabaret style with require bad intonation, screaming and ghastly vocal noises. Emily Howard makes a good job and her vocal acting is excellent as is her electronic singing. There is one section of strange beauty but this nightclub music rather than classical or serious music. The take off of an Irish type song has some hideous vocal effects.

The accompanying music is impressive especially when it is fast. But the music becomes tedious as most of it is all in the same vein. However, if you like cabaret music I suspect you will like this. This CD begins with A radio song for mezzo, clarinet and piano apparently about a bored housewife and a radio in which the piano part tries to emulate Liszt but is a sort of deranged pop songs. There is more of a hint of Schubert. The lyrics are also by the composer. The music would be acceptable without the vocal line which is irritating and quite absurd.

American Terpsichore is a two movement work for piano trio is a combined rock/soul/funk music/jazz/pop type orgy. Would someone please tell me what funk music is?

This is not classical or serious music either although the word classic has become a vague term. We now have pop music called classics and some are called classical anthems whereas an anthem is a sacred work.

This piano trio is probably the best work on the CD. Its second movement does have a classical/romantic feel about it and stands out from all the other music on this CD.

Angels and Fireflies is scored for flute and string orchestra and is not his only work which refers to 9/11. The composer speaks of his viewing one of the crash sites and witnessing fireflies hovering over the site wondering why this is the only site they are visiting. This work is said to be a tone poem in four sections but whether it evokes what is intended is doubtful. The flute part is played on the recorder by the excellent John Turner. There are some fine moments but Malone's works do not flow.

This music will have a limited appeal and will probably be regarded as curiosities but each listener will have to make up their own mind.

CD REVIEW 106

KEVIN MALONE

The music of 9/11 volume 1.

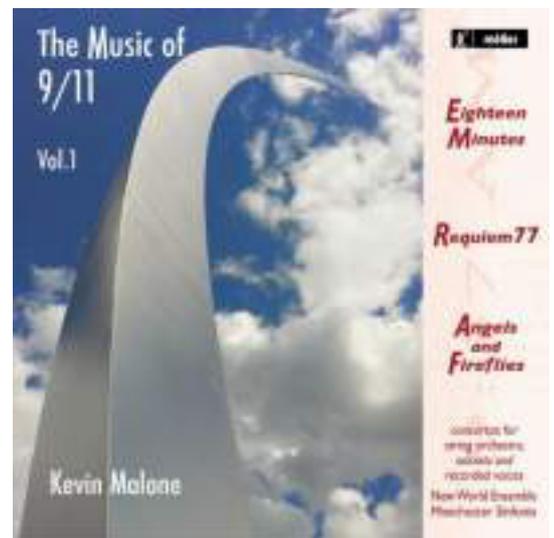
Eighteen Minutes, Requiem 77, Angels and Fireflies.

Dan Heyes, Don Styffe (double basses), New World Ensemble, Malone. Requiem 77 for cello, Christian Elliot, Angels and Fireflies Victoria Daniels (Flute), Manchester Sinfonia, Richard Howarth

Metier MSVCD 92106

(46.25)

I have real problems with this CD. Eighteen Minutes is the time that elapsed between the two aircraft crashes into the two towers and uses musical material based on things said about this disaster including Holy shit and other distressing representations.



Dr Malone is not the only composer to have made music about this appalling disaster and I do not doubt either his sincerity or humanity. I have discussed this work with fellow professional musicians, performers and composers alike, and the majority of opinion is that music on this topic is intrusive and insensitive. But it could also be said that the film coverage is intrusive and potentially harmful and adds to the grief of the relatives who died. Dreadful memories are not given chance to heal in works such as this. If this work had no historical connection and was merely a Concerto for two double basses and string orchestra it would fare far better and reveal itself as a work of some appeal which I enjoyed. It has vigour and may be compared to Bernard Herrman's score for Psycho.

Many composers have written works with decorative titles that do not suit the music. For example, Fireworks by Debussy does not convey fireworks at any stretch of the imagination.

It is true that more established composers have written music about disasters such as Martinu's Memorial to Lidice which is a very beautiful crafted work. Other composers have composed sensitive elegies such as in Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings and the superlative Elegy for viola and small orchestra by Matyas Seiber. Penderecki excelled in his Threnody for the victims of Hiroshima, but Malone's work is far too close for comfort and may not have the clarity and propriety of these other composers. Some of the glissandi which often sounds like sirens may not be in good taste.

Requiem 77 concerns the crash of American Airlines Flight 77 into the Pentagon. This includes the voices of the air traffic controllers accompanied by the cello. I wonder whether this is in good taste.

Angels and Fireflies has already been discussed.

(1058)

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