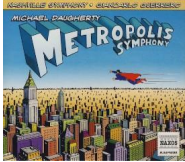


Daugherty - Metropolis Symphony □ Deus ex Machina (2009)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 26 August 2018 12:44 -

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Metropolis Symphony For Orchestra 1. I. Lex 00:10:01 2. II. Krypton 00:06:46 3. III. XYZPTLK 00:07:02 4. IV. Oh, Lois! 00:05:05 5. V. Red Cape Tango 00:13:41

Deus ex Machina For Piano And Orchestra

6. I. Fast Forward (*Di andata veloce*) 00:07:40 7. II. Train of Tears 00:14:17 8. III. Night Steam 00:11:22

Terrence Wilson - piano Mary Kathryn van Osdale - violin Erik Gratton - flute Ann Richards - flute Nashville Symphony Orchestra Giancarlo Guerrero - conductor

Inspired by the fiftieth anniversary of Superman's first appearance in the comics, Metropolis Symphony has been performed by orchestras all over the world. Hailed by the London Times as a "Symphonie Fantastique for our times," Metropolis Symphony is a musical response to the myth of Superman, expressing the energies, ambiguities, paradoxes, and wit of American popular culture. Deus ex Machina is a piano concerto inspired by trains of the future and past: Fast Forward re-creates the machine-like rhythms of modern trains admired by the Italian futurists; Train of Tears recalls Abraham Lincoln's funeral train; Night Steam evokes O. Winston Link's historic photographs of steam locomotives rumbling and whistling their way into extinction. ---naxos.com

Daugherty holds the evangel for melody and rhythmic vitality without any hint of minimalism. He emerges from the epic American high plains of Harris and 1940s Copland yet strides with confidence amid the language of high culture, popular music and classic film score. It's a volatile brew transcending any fears of comic book trivia.

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The Metropolis Symphony is a big burly phantasmagoric romp of a symphony. That it was inspired by the fiftieth anniversary of Superman's arrival in the pages of DC Comics is consistent with the work's riotous primary colours and indefatigable rowdy energy. We are assured by the composer that the five movements are not narrative. They're a series of bold mood pictures with the neon brashness and whole spectrum gaud of the pulp magazine covers. Interesting the sleeve illustration affectionately parodies the genre as well.

It's not all scorching Sabre-Jet ascents and dives. Much of it revels in closely recorded soloistic episodes including warm and hoarse violin writing, skittering bell-bright percussion and gannet-diving flutes duos: MXYZPTLK (III). The horns step up the plate in an exultant golden roar as if in tribute to Bernard Herrmann's Death Hunt. Krypton (II) makes howling-growling and minatory use of the motor siren and the wailing string ululations we associate with Penderecki and Hovhaness. The writing then becomes psychedelically evocative of Tippett and Silvestrov in its dense and slowly writhing richness. Yet there's also sufficient brightly imagined gravamen to give the work a huge shot of symphonic weight. It was quite a coup to make the dynamo finale a tango with its delicious shiver of Shchedrin meets Dies Irae meets Totentanz. The Schuman-like kinetic charge of the final pages is radiant with optimism. This adds up to a deeply enjoyable symphony with enough of the cinema about to make it often confident and exciting. Great stuff!

The dedicatee of the Metropolis Symphony is David Zinman who encouraged its writing. He gave the world première at Carnegie Hall in January 1994 with the Baltimore Symphony.

Deus ex Machina for piano and orchestra was a collegiate commission from the orchestras of Charlotte, Nashville, New Jersey, Rochester and Syracuse. This three movement piano concerto can now join the list of musical works linked to railroads and trains. Fast Forward is a storm of rhythmic sound recalling Mossolov, Honegger and Markevich. This is linked in the composer's mind with futurism and the role that trains played in that movement - breathless stuff. Train of Tears marks a shift of mood: elegiac and more musical and engaging than the visceral blast of Fast Forward. Noble Americana is the engine for this piece which leans on the image of the train that carried the corpse of Abraham Lincoln from Washington to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. The piano writing is distinctive - my closes approximation would be a sort of blend of Rachmaninov and pastoral Copland. The finale is Night Steam. Here Daugherty pays exciting tribute to the coal-burning steam locomotives that survived into the early 1960s in Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland. Each grand colossus was documented in the monochrome photographs taken by O. Winston Link. These smoke belching dreadnoughts of the rails live again in Daugherty's jazzy-bluesy kaleidoscopic and brakeless careering hayride.

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Both works are played to the hilt and the recording - especially in the case of the symphony - is the modern equivalent of Decca's best analogue vintage. ---Rob Barnett,
musicweb-international.com

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