

Norman Bolter Press

Boston Globe, Monday, February 18, 2002

Bolter's Trombone Concerto a Natural – Music Review by Richard Dyer

"BSO trombonist Norman Bolter has composed most of his life. Yesterday he was soloist in the premiere of his own trombone concerto '*IOURS*' with Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra under Isaiah Jackson. The piece is in three movements devoted to the moon, the earth, and the sun, respectively, and the music reflects Bolter's personal relationship to nature, ecology, and myth. It also reflects his relationship to the trombone, for it is both imaginatively and idiomatically written for the instrument, with magical muted effects (the stand holding the mutes even looked like a magician's table). The first movement is a sound-tapestry; the second is both tender and jazzy; the third is full of striding fanfares of praise.....ideas are interesting and Bolter plays a mean trombone. A kindly one too. Jackson and the orchestra entered into the proceedings with enthusiasm."

Boston Herald, Monday, February 18, 2002

Pro Arte Performs Proficiently – Music Review by T.J. Medrek

"Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Isaiah Jackson, at Sanders Theatre, Cambridge, yesterday. ...a planetary encounter via Norman Bolter's marvelous new trombone concerto, '*IOURS*'.... Bolter, a composer and, since 1975, a trombonist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, has created in '*IOURS*' (pronounced EYE-oars) an altogether winning concerto that chamber orchestras should now be lining up to perform – if, that is, they can find a soloist capable of meeting its virtuoso demands the way Bolter himself did here. A 21st century man who hasn't forgotten humankind's place in the universe, Bolter composed this three-movement concerto to depict members of what he calls our 'cosmic family' – the moon (child), the Earth (mother) and the sun (father) – in musical terms focused on his own instrument, which he played fully voiced as well as muted in various ways. He even, briefly, sang through the trombone as he played it, a haunting effect. Bolter's music for the moon conjured up the vastness of space with long, widely spaced string notes onto which was grafted

trombone music that was sweet and playfully childlike. The Earth, by contrast, sounded like a place of lush wonder with, however, echoes of the moon music to remind us of the gravitational ties – a cosmic umbilical cord, perhaps? – between mother Earth and child moon. Finally, the sun arose in blazing brass splendor, grand and just a bit forbidding – fatherly, indeed. Music Director Isaiah Jackson directed the work with customary confidence and polish..."

Online Trombone Journal, April 2005

Return of the Alto – Record Review by Brent Phillips

"*Sky Dreams*, a truly collaborative effort by the icons of the BSO [Norman Bolter's BSO colleague Ronald Barron performs Bolter's work] and composed specifically for this disc, brings a profound and modern element to this project. Norman Bolter stretches our imagination, renews our soul with a sense of destiny and perhaps order in this world of ours with this eclectic yet original composition. One can appreciate Mr. Bolter's vision and depth as we explore a sunset in late August in all of its glory, color, mystery and revelation. The opening statement of the work is solid. One gets a sense of the epic nature of this scene with this bold and thematic opening. As is the nature of a sunset, the mysterious element of this composition begins to unfold with gradually more contemplative, haunting and distant chants which begin to emerge with muted statements (con sordino) in the alto. As the night time constellation begins to emerge, the occasional shooting star, as echoed by muted glissandi juxtaposed to this haunting melody, might be discerned. The question of transcendence and how one fits into this grand design is demonstrated in this recording by the use of an alto harmon mute or some hybrid version thereof. The work may be interpreted as ending in the form of a question or perhaps the peace that one might find in being comfortable without feeling the need for an answer."

ITA Journal, Summer 1999

Reflections at the Century's Closing – The Eastern Trombone Workshop
in Review: Guest Artists by Michael A. Parnell

"...Norman Bolter presented an entertaining program of his original compositions.... In the course of explaining his musical visions, Bolter invited us

to 'shed our impressions of him' and to 'simply imagine ourselves in an atmosphere' [as if we were visiting him at his home]. In this voyage of imagination, his performance transcended the technical sense of the trombone, and all that remained was pure music." Concerts: "On Saturday evening, several artists joined the U.S. Army Orchestra, conducted by Lieutenant Colonel Tony Cason.... Norman Bolter [performed] a fiery composition, *Passions of Survival*.... Saturday night's Grand Concert was an impressive culmination of the three-day event.... As had been the case with earlier programs, Norman Bolter and his compositions took center stage. Bolter performed his *Timeline Contemplations* to lead off the evening. Tracing the composer's philosophical strife to rise above the mundane was quite powerful, putting his wonderful sound and expression to good use."

ITA Journal, Summer 1999

***Anew at Home: Music composed and performed by Norman Bolter* –**

Record Review by Douglas Yeo

"Boston Symphony Orchestra trombonist Norman Bolter has offered us something far more than just 'another' excellent trombone disc. Rather, he has raised the bar for players and listeners alike by creating a unique, challenging and stimulating experience. In recent years, Bolter has turned his attention to composition and has written over 60 works for various combinations of instruments, most including trombone. In addition to this he has begun, in conjunction with his wife, Carol Viera, to explore the 'why' of music – indeed its very essence – and together they have worked to create performing and listening environments which can make the experience of music a deep and meaningful one. It is within this framework that *Anew at Home* has been offered. Here is a recording which consists entirely of music of a single composer and is expertly performed by its creator. This in itself is a ground-breaking achievement. From the first sound on the CD, a shattering rimshot on snare drum in *Dances of Greeting* followed by the delicacy of finger cymbals, *Anew at Home* rivets the listener's attention. The 14 compositions cover a wide range of instrumentation and character, and Bolter's playing is a model of

fluidity, beauty and trombone mastery. Yet his blistering technique, stunning range and expressive involvement never occur for their own sake. It is refreshing to see a trombonist create an album that not only goes below the surface of what we have come so often to expect, but which also builds a whole new foundation and creates an impressive model for what an album can be. Norman Bolter's music requires us to think, and in partnership with his wife, he has set out to impact us in unexpected ways. Obtain this album, listen, reflect; and then go and do likewise."

ITA Journal, Winter 1998

A Big Sound in Beantown – Music Review by David J. Begnoche

"Boston Symphony Orchestra trombonist Norman Bolter gave a recital of his own compositions at Jordan Hall in Boston.... Donning several caps in the evening's extravaganza, Bolter demonstrated his multitude of talents. As composer, conductor, speaker and performer, Bolter captivated in rapt attention all those in attendance.... The recital began with *On With the Battle of Life* for trombone choir. The juxtaposition of independent themes wove a tapestry of uplifting sonorities.... Next up was *Passions of Survival* for solo trombone and orchestra. It was clear from its dramatic opening statement that this was no ordinary trombone piece. From plaintive solo recitatives to bold themes echoed in unison brass, Bolter showed a total mastery of the instrument. Tender delicate moments gave way to powerful distinctive brass chorales. The fullest range of dynamic and expressive capabilities of the instrument was explored. It truly showcased the virtuosity of this talented trombonist and embodied the heart of its title. *The Song of King David*, for piano and trombone was to follow.... It flowed like the soulful wailing of a prayer with the subtle poignant feeling of resolve. The interplay between piano and trombone was artfully crafted and rendered. There was a softness of tone and expansive palate of colors in Bolter's playing, which drew the listener in and left the hall speechless. Finishing the first half was *Ancient Twinkle Appearing* for two tenor trombones and bass trombone.... Although each player had a distinct voice, they were intertwined with a clever playful quality. The grand finale for the evening was a triple

concerto entitled *Of Mountains, Lakes and Trees* [for bass trombone, tenor trombone, alto trombone and orchestra]. This work was the entire second half with each movement featuring a different soloist.... The music was as dramatic as its stunning execution. It was indeed a thrilling conclusion to the evening's performance."

The Trombonist, Magazine of the British Trombone Society, Summer 1999

At the Turn of the Century – Record Review by Dudley J. Bright

"Norman Bolter, trombonist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is an accomplished and prolific composer. His *Arctic Emanations* are deeply evocative of the freezing wasteland that gives the soloist opportunity to revel in extended tonal colours. If this seems inappropriate to that location, Bolter has used the inspiration of the spectacular Aurora Borealis to justify the richness of his invention. Here, as with the *Crespo Improvisation*, the composer's experience has enabled him to use the instrument's and Joe Alessi's capabilities (to whom the work is dedicated) to the full."