

An adventurous journey through jazz, be-bop and serial avant-garderie

Extension Ensemble

'New York Presence'

Brown December 1952 **Cage** Five
Douglas Private Music **Erskine** When
You Are Old (arr McWhorter)
Goldenthal Quartet No 2 **Loeb** Sephardic
Quintet **Moondog** Instrumental Rounds
Nos 1 and 2 in Snaketime. Pastorale (arr
McWhorter) **Sharp** Arterial
Extension Ensemble (Sycil Mathai,
Brian McWhorter *tpts* Theo Primis *bn*
Mike Boschen *tb* Andrew Bove *tba*)
Summit Records © DCD389 (64' • DDD)

This delightful album from New-York based brass quintet Extension Ensemble erodes the boundaries between jazz, classical and experimentalism. Take the piece by jazz drummer Peter Erskine. *When You Are Old* was originally written for the Hilliard Ensemble, that dedication is apparent in the long, winding solo lines, but the lugubrious writing for trombone and tuba works very well in the context of this arrangement.



Elliot Goldenthal is best known for his film scores, yet the composer shows a deft handling of smaller forces in his three-movement Brass Quintet No 2. The opening 'Quinque' presents jagged trumpet fragments in a serial style; 'Cortege' effectively paints a mood of ceremonial solemnity with a Bydlo-like tuba tread, before the lively interplay of the 'Rondo-Burleske'.

Less ambitious but no less intriguing are three items from the American expatriate and musical primitive Moondog. The meandering line of *Instrumental Round No 1 in Snaketime* has a relaxed blues quality that makes a fine foil to the jauntier *Round No 2*. Elliott Sharp's *Arterial* opens with staccato density and whimsical individual serial polyphony rising in a raucous multi-line *crescendo*. Dave Douglas's *Private Music* segues from a bluesy opening to a more syncopated middle section before closing with a sassy bebop-like finale.

Earle Brown's *December 1952* takes the composer's free notation of the 1950s to its limits, but the quintet's flavourful, focused performance makes the improvisational elements seem more organised than they



Extension Ensemble: at the heart of New York

actually are. A second, starkly different performance is even more freewheeling.

David Loeb's *Sephardic Quintet* avoids direct quotation of Spanish Jewish melodies; Cage's *Five* uses computers to transform separately recorded notes into a waveform. Like many such Cage pieces the results manage to be both off-putting and hypnotic in their mechanised inevitability. The relaxed bonhomie of Moondog's *Pastorale* makes an apt closer.

With performances of technical brilliance and full-throated fervour, this is a thought-provoking disc. **Lawrence A Johnson**