



'Heavy Pedal'

Cacioppo 'di cibo celeste' (Ciaconna-fantasia on Themes from Mozart's Don Giovanni)^a

Middelschulte Organ Concert on a Theme of JS Bach^b - Perpetuum mobile; Passacaglia

Nagorcka Fantasia^c. To be a Pilgrim^d **Russo**

Salzburg Prelude^e. In Paradisum^e **Summers** Variations on a English Folksong^f

^bBrink Bush, ^aRobert Gallagher, ^dDavid Scott Hamnes,

^cMichael Kraft, ^fKarel Martinek *orgs*

with ^cYhasmin Valenzuela *cl* ^dOle Jørgen Melhus *tbn*

^dRon Nagorcka *didj*

Navona © NV5853 (64' • DDD)



Exploratory organ with clarinet, and didgeridoo thrown in

'Heavy Pedal' gives the impression that our ears need to take cover but that's rarely the case on this disc. The eight works – performed to vibrant effect by five organists and colleagues – go well beyond clamorous sonorities, exploring myriad moods and registrations.

For celebratory brightness, there's Tadd Russo's *Salzburg Prelude*, which is followed by the contrasting darkness of his *In Paradisum*, based on a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. Even more menacing is Curt Cacioppo's 'di cibo celeste', an expansive narrative that treats a theme sung by Mozart's Commendatore to imposing transformations and a panoply of instrumental colors.

The organ welcomes partners in Ron Nagoreka's *Fantasia*, a jazzy and lyrical teaming with clarinet, and *To be a Pilgrim*, which unites trombone, organ and didgeridu, the ancient Australian wind instrument that drones with sepulchral resonance. Michael

Summers's urgently dramatic *Variations on an English Folksong* goes against the pastoral grain of the genre by taking up a grim tune, 'Hanged I shall be', about a man who kills his pregnant lover.

The disc's only departed composer is Wilhelm Middelschulte, a German-born organist who performed with the Chicago Symphony in the early 20th century. The *Perpetuum mobile* from his Organ Concerto on a Theme by Johann Sebastian Bach is a thing of sonorous beauty for pedals alone. In his *Passacaglia*, Middelschulte honours Bach within 62 variations and a toccata on a chromatic theme.

The recording of each work captures the grandeur and chameleon-like character of organs in the United States, Norway and the Czech Republic.

Donald Rosenberg