

**Intermezzo****aud 97.469****EAN: 4022143974693**[American Record Guide](#) (Barry Kilpatrick - 01.07.2001)

This ~~all-star~~ German group includes Thomas Horch, who has made two solo recordings (Nov/Dec 2000: 281; Mar/Apr 2001: 213) and is principal trombonist of the Bavarian Radio Symphony. The other ensemble members are Dany Bonvin, principal of the Munich Philharmonic; Uli Pfortsch, principal of the Bavarian Opera Orchestra; and Volker Hensiek, bass trombonist of the Bamberg Symphony.

Most of these works were arranged by Horch. Deftly executed ornaments enliven a set of sprightly dances by Paul Peuerl (c 1570-c 1625), and a Fantasia and Fugue by Pachelbel is very somber. A sonata by Massimiliano Neri (c 1600-66) is fascinating and multifaceted, and a set of Schumann miniatures ends with the delightful 'Knecht Ruprecht'. The chorale 'Nun komm der Heiden Heiland' is the basis for works by Scheidt and Bach, a very dissonant chorale prelude by Eberhard Kraus (b 1931) that includes extensive mute work, and an introspective Introduction and Chorale by Friedemann Winkelhofer (b 1951).

Munich sounds much like the Triton and Vienna trombone quartets--vibrant, beautifully blended, and intensely concentrated. Unlike most quartets, though, it often varies its instrumentation to obtain timbral variety. Horch plays alto trombone on about half of the selections. Truly unusual is bass trombonist Hensiek's use of the rarely heard contrabass trombone, an instrument that operates in tuba register with trombone tone. With it Hensiek produces the most remarkable very-low-register trombone sound I have heard--from huge fortissimos to easy, gentle pianissimos. The instrument is prominent in Julius Fucik's 'Entry of the Gladiators' and in a set of Debussy arrangements, especially 'General Lavine' and 'Jimbo's Lullaby' (the suite also includes 'Canopes' and the whimsical 'Hommage a S Pickwick, Esq PPMPC', based on 'God Save the Queen'). Plenty of contrabass trombone is heard in Hensiek's setting of Weber's Freischutz Overture. This exciting reading almost--not quite--overcomes my dislike of orchestral works arranged for chamber ensembles.