

BERNSTEIN: *West Side Story*

Gwendolyn Masin, v; Melisma Saxophone Quartet—Orchid 100145—42 minutes

Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* has had many, many recordings from Broadway, concert productions, movie soundtracks, jazz combos, dual and single piano versions, and vocal soloists. Bernstein's music has a jazz and Latin influenced sound that lends itself to various orchestral arrangements. This new recording is the first time I've heard the music scored for a chamber-size orchestra, in this case a saxophone quartet and violin. The arrangements by Henk Huizinga are true to Bernstein's intentions but also creative and highly listenable.

Mr Huizinga's ingenious scoring has individual instruments represent the main character roles while also providing additional orchestral color. He uses the score's songs and dance sequences and reorders them so that they are grouped by light and somber themes. The arrangements are so creative and satisfying that you look forward to the next track even when out of narrative sequence. The performers rarely ramble off into solo moments. All the players are excellent and the stereo separation puts them in sharply defined areas so that you hear each instrument clearly.

This recording is a welcome surprise both in the playing and scoring. The arrangements bring freshness to familiar music.

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