

ARTIST: ROBERT MARTIN, COMPOSER

TITLE: 9 STELLAR PIECES: SOLO MUSIC FOR WINDS  
AFTER THE HEAVEN'S BRIGHTEST STARS

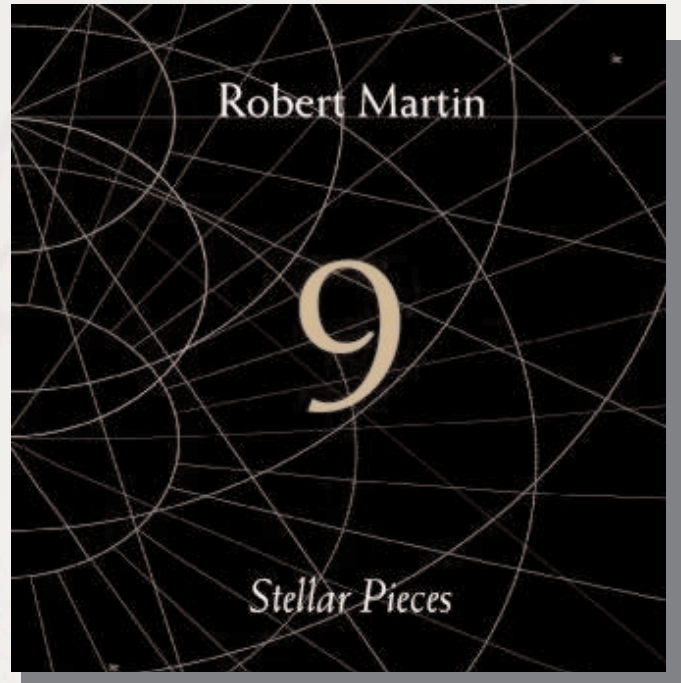
GENRE: CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL

CAT. No.: FACD6803

FORMAT: CD WITH 24 PAGE BOOKLET

LABEL: FURIOUS ARTISANS

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Nine Stellar Pieces is a collection of exquisite wind solos each named after one of the heavens' brightest stars. Exhilarating and delicate, they are exuberant statements celebrating the wonder of the night sky.

*from the liner notes; by Paul Griffiths of The New York Times*

Knowledge of the stars has not dispelled their wonder. Our stories about them have altered—we see in them now huge gravitational force, immense age, vast distance and the synthesis of the atoms of which we are made, not the dotted outlines of gods, heroes and celestial animals—but that change has not diminished the awe they evoke, for our stories are as extraordinary as those of an older time.

Robert Martin's Nine Stellar Pieces seem to belong to both times, both sets of stories. Their vigorously modernist style places them in a contemporary world of quantification, precision, and disinclination to accept received ideas without acute analysis. But their sound-poetry also pursues the stars' ancient associations, besides taking account of their appearance—the luster that has stayed the same through the millennia, all nine subjects being among the brightest in the sky.

What would a star sound like? As points, they could only be single tones. As unchanging, they would have to be tones going on eternally. But though there are indeed some long, if not eternal, tones here, each of these pieces is essentially an extended melody: not so much the song of a star, perhaps, as a song addressed to a star, a hymn.

Each is, though, in another sense the song of a star: the star performing it. The pieces are virtuoso items, 'stellar' for sure, one for each of the common orchestral wind instruments,

including saxophone. And wind instruments are suitable for the star-singing purpose because they are wordless voices, mouth-blown, and because of their pure colors.

The pieces were composed over a period of sixteen years, from autumn 1981 (Sirius) to spring 1997 (Achernar), and yet they are stylistically consistent and share many features. Each moves through a sequence of connected but diverse phases, defined by markings that recur from piece to piece: Deciso, Espressivo, Drammatico, Agitato, Appassionato, and the rarer Elevato (suggesting indeed a hymn-like character, present in Antares, Sirius, Achernar and Shaula) and Velato (for the 'veiled' sounds of clarinet or saxophone tremolos, or trumpet flutter-tonguing, all pianissimo).

The changes of pace and rhetoric are brought about by melodic developments that go right through each piece. Such developments would include repetitions and transformations of small motifs (easy to hear in Arcturus), periodic rises to progressively higher notes or falls to progressively lower ones, widenings or narrowings of intervals, revolvings around a particular interval, and varyings of phrase by keeping the rhythm much the same but altering the pitches. Very often development takes place within a context of dialogue: an idea grows, or diminishes, when it is confronted in alternation with a contrasting idea.

*"Nowhere do I detect any particular influences at work, the score coming from a personal musical voice that has an instinctive relationship with each of the instruments used...Do give the disk a try, for these are highly interesting excursions into the capabilities of wind instruments."*

-David Denton, Fanfare Magazine, Nov/Dec 2000

CD-REPERTOIRE:

- 1] Spica for solo clarinet in Bb 1984 [7:57]  
Michiyo Suzuki, Clarinet
- 2] Regulus for solo horn in F 1988 [7:42]  
William Purvis, Horn
- 3] Arcturus for solo bassoon 1987 [8:17]  
Martin Kuuskmann, Bassoon
- 4] Antares for solo trumpet in C 1990 [7:03]  
Raymond Mase, Trumpet
- 5] Sirius for solo flute 1981 [10:17]  
Linda Wetherill, Flute
- 6] Achernar for solo Eb alto saxophone 1997 [8:35]  
Paul Cohen, Saxophone
- 7] Aldebaran for solo tuba 1994 [7:47]  
Stephen Foreman, Tuba
- 8] Vega for solo oboe 1982 [7:42]  
Robert Ingliss, Oboe
- 9] Shaula for solo trombone 1993 [7:18]  
Michael Powell, Trombone

[total time: 72:41]