

## **INAUGURAL**

VALOR BRASS QUINTET; Matthew Harding, trumpet and flugelhorn. Michael Mergen, trumpet and flugelhorn. Hilary Harding, horn. Chris Clark, trombone. Christopher Tiedeman, tuba and cimbasso.

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James Stephensen: *Chase Sequence*. Claudio Monteverdi, Arr. Ray Mase: *Four Monteverdi Madrigals*. Darius Milhaud, Arr. Tom Holtz: *Suite Francaise*. Percy Grainger, Arr. Tom Holtz: *Coloniel Song*. Viktor Ewald: *Quintet No. 4 in A-Flat Major, Opus 8*.

*Inaugural*, the first album from Valor Brass, provides a wonderful take on new and old repertoire for brass quintet. Valor Brass is an outreach-minded quintet that formed while performing in the Marine Band in Washington DC. Their album *Inaugural* demonstrates their interest in making music for many communities by presenting extremely high quality performances of repertoire that would appeal to a wide variety of audiences.

A rather schizophrenic and frantic start to the album in *Chase Sequence* by James Stephenson grabs the listener's attention right away. Commissioned by Valor Brass, this piece features extremely precise playing and fantastic solos by all in the group, especially by hornist, Hilary Harding and trombonist Chris Clark. Tubist Christopher Tiedeman drives the group forward with fantastic energy, although his sound sometimes becomes so large that nuanced articulation and the core of his sound tend to disappear. To contrast the fast-paced energy of *Chase Sequence*, Valor Brass plays with stunning phrasing and a keen sense of balance in the lyrical selections on the album, which include *Four Monteverdi Madrigals*, arranged by Ray Mase, and Percy Grainger's *Colonial Song*, arranged by Tom Holtz specifically for Valor Brass.

All five performers are immensely talented soloists and musicians in their own right, and when brought together, the results are undeniably tremendous. The trumpet playing of Matthew Harding and Michael Mergen is brilliant and synergistic. This soprano sound sits atop a wonderful merged bass sound provided by trombonist Chris Clark and Tubist Christopher Tiedeman. Hornist Hilary Harding showcases a luscious and singing sound with lyrical phrasing, especially in the pieces of Darius Milhaud. Given the stunning excellence of this first offering by Valor Brass the music world should be excited to see what comes next from this extremely talented group.

*Evan Conroy*  
*Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra*