

Ben Van Dijk - "Never Alone" - Review.

By Enrico Crippa

On Ben's request I reviewed his fourth solo album, "**Never Alone**". It was a great honor and, as expected, a great pleasure. After a few seconds of listening, this CD turned out to be something special and unique in many ways.

The first thing that struck me, listening to "Never Alone", was the extreme modernity of this work: not only for the music it contains (some compositions were performed for the first time by Ben, all were written on his request, and Ben van Dijk composed one song himself), but also for the advanced "technology" you feel from the very first notes you hear.

The musicians involved in this project use mutes with very specific requirements by "Tools4winds". They help to make the much-required sound without smudging intonation and resonance of the harmonics that are often the result of a normal mute.

The work of registration, with the use of multi-track and effects desired in the mixing of the tracks, was treated with great skill, with the same care and with the same professional skills that we found in successful recording artists of every genre.

"Never Alone", in short, is a product that offers Music, with a capital. Who listens to this work of Ben, will immediately be faced with a milestone in the history of the repertoire for trombone solo. The greatest merit of what Ben and his team have created, is something that goes beyond the concept of "music for trombone." To prove this, I can tell you that while listening to one of the tracks on this CD, a dear person entered the room, also a musician but not a trombonist, who, surprised by the wonderful music that flowed from the stereo speakers exclaimed "What is this beautiful music"?

He realized the beauty of music before he realized that this was music for trombone, and I am sure that this says a lot about the quality and sophistication of the work of Ben van Dijk on this record.

Ben involved in this work not only his students, who now occupy prominent positions in many orchestras in Europe, but also a chamber orchestra and a brass band.

The pieces chosen draw a line beautifully sinuous, snaking with taste, subtlety and intelligence of modern brass music to the Latin atmospheres, much loved by Ben van Dijk, as he showed in previous albums, through sumptuous Baroque views. All with the usual skill and technique, in my modest opinion still more wonderful, a very high sense of music and a beautiful sound of "bel canto".

The CD opens, in a very good idea, with a song entitled "**Intrada**", a spectacular fanfare for two tenor trombones, contrabass and a nine bass, who soon leaves space to a dialogue on a thick ominous ostinato adorned with flowers and pieces of choral flavor almost "Gypsy".

"The next track, "the ballad" "**Never Alone**", which gives the title to the CD, is the tune that you would like to listen during a night journey by car in the pouring rain. This song brings out Ben's technique more fully at the service of music, with a musicality that really has few parallels.

"**Concertino**", the third track, composed by Steven Verhelst, begins with a long, poetic "solo" of the bass trombone of Ben, then suddenly explodes into a phantasmagoric recreation "baroque string" orchestra. This track is unforgettable, poignant, passionate, certainly my "favorite" among those present on the CD. The headlong rush of the strings seem to raise the weight and place it at the center of Alhambra wonders of the lagoon of Venice, where he awaits the return of the soloist who does not take long, beautifully engraved with a theme, introduced by a rapid scale of D minor by simply chills ... I was three minutes in silence without saying a word after listening to this song.

The fourth song, "**Rhapsody Flamenca**" for four tenor trombones and bass trombone, by Vicente Egea, made at the request of Van Dijk, reflects the admiration of the composer and the soloist for this genre of music: the quartet interacts and supports the soloist, performing a speech beaded end of virtuosity, never an end in itself, but musically devoted to the recreation of the harmonies and ornamentation typical of this kind of dance.

The following two tracks, the "**Capriccio**" for trombone sextet and bass trombone, by Steven Verhelst, and "**My Spanish Heart**" (the title speaks volumes!) by Ilja Reingoud, for bass trombone solo and brass orchestra, are perfect examples of what is contemporary music for trombone and the brass ensemble. They are complex scores (how far the timing of the trombone in the marching bands were limited to a few long notes and "um-pa um-pa "!!), that require a lot of teamwork and attention to detail, but in ' interpretation of Ben, his students, now successful professionals, and "Amsterdam Brass Band under the direction of Frank Van Koten, offer moments of pure enjoyment of music and tonal and expressive range of possibilities of the trombone and other brass instruments. Hector Berlioz called the trombone "the best among all the brass, no doubt," and it seems that Ben Van Dijk and his colleagues have worked to prove this aphorism of the French composer.

The last song on the CD is a wonderful gift from Ben to his listeners. On the liner notes we read that the composer of "**Cancion para Cas**" is "Abuelo Van Dijk," or "grandfather Van Dijk."

Ben has taken a Spanish lullaby, which he composed for and used to play for his grandson Cas, and arranged into a wonderful, poignant song for tenor trombone, accompanied by flamenco style guitar of Erik, uncle of the little Cas and younger son of Ben.

Even in this small masterpiece Ben shows his technical quality, the modern thinking of the trombone and recording techniques, but, above all, with respect for the professional achievements by Ben in his long and valuable career, I like to think that compose a piece for his niece, register it with his child and offer it to his friends is undoubtedly the highest and most noble point in the career of a musician.

Thank you, Ben!

Enrico Crippa, born in Milan (1972), is graduated in the Trombone Class of Mr. Corrado Colliard at the "Cantelli" Conservatory in Novara. Plays the trombone at the "Orchestra Filarmonica Lombarda", in Bergamo, and in many Italian Theaters. He serves as Professor on the "Civica Scuola di Musica" in Vimercate - Milan.