

CD-Kritik "Voyage"

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"`All these pieces are playful' explains Stefan Schäfer, principal double bassist of the Philharmonic State Orchestra of Hamburg. Indeed, the five works (or 15 numbers) on the disc, all for double basses, are bright, breezy, incessantly cheerful – and slight. `Hoobee', which launches Fancy Basses, sets out to evoke a Wild West film; to be honest, there's a slight feeling of `riding the range' about all these amiably jogging pieces. All are firmly rooted in tonic-dominant tonality and concentrate on two- or four-bar passages, with the odd minimalist mannerism thrown in (`Cave-man' in Zoppo Trump is a rather good instance). This may lack variety, but in short bursts it feels good-humoured and great fun. Occasionally (in Busy Bassists, for trio, for instance) something like invention peers through. `Joker', the last movement of Busy Bassists, has some splendid solos. The scope is limited, but the playing is unremittingly superb (think of the twelve Berlin Philharmonic cellists) and provides beguiling proof of the cantabile possibilities of the double bass – the heftiest of instruments. The beautifully clear, focused recording does the musicians proud.

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