

time issues, this is a talented group of creative musicians who have recorded some engaging music that will surely please many who hear it.



KENNY WERNER

NO BEGINNING NO END – Half Note Records, Inc. www.nobeginningnoend.com. *Death Is Not the Answer; Loved Ones; The God of Time; Astral Journey; We Three; Visitation: Waves of Unborn; Cry Out; Coda.*

PERSONNEL: Kenny Werner, piano; Joe Lovano, saxophone; Sean Statser, vibraphone, Kae Reed, marimba; with woodwinds, voices, and strings; Fred Harris, Jr. Conductor.

By Bob Gish

Effortless mastery and confidence-building meditations are associated with Kenny Werner, along with an exemplary career in music, a lifetime's testimony to practicing what one preaches. For Wer-

ner, in a special context, there are no wrong notes, no wrong turns...when music truly calls and a willing musician answers. So too with this award winning compilation of compositions, a virtual suite, commissioned, as it were, by Werner's friend and peer, Joe Lovano, in 2006.

Lovano's request came in the form of a phone call and an idea for Werner to compose something, if time could be found in Werner's busy schedule of projects and performing, for the 80th birthday of a benefactor of the MIT music program. The composition would eventually be played in 2007 by the MIT Wind Ensemble, capped by a performance by Lovano and Judi Silvano. Next to the joys, and yes, sadness, of experiencing that landmark live performance this CD adds to the eternal continuum of music imagined, manifested, soul absorbed, and healing. Tragedy as well as joy pervades this project and the eight selections or movements to the piece. As the turns and at times terrible twists of life, fate, and another shocking phone call would announce it; Werner's daughter was killed in a car accident.

Such events can either end – or, paradoxically, begin a person's, a parent's will to care, to continue to have heart, to affirm, to, Phoenix like, rise from the ashes. Werner chose life, love, music and a musical affirmation to the presence and promise of his daughter's life. In a special sense she lives on in *No Beginning, No End*.

Lovano and Silvano, along with conductor

Fred Harris, contribute to the collaborative feeling, to the feeling of time past, present, and to come, of the variations on a theme which birth, life, and death dramatize. Moreover, we find testimony here to spiritual resilience and resourcefulness.

Far too often the elegiac can become maudlin, more personal and irrelevant than universal. And, often, as with all great elegies, the creative spirit soars, the sacred becomes manifest, otherness becomes oneness. So it is here. And so it is here, when experiencing the absolutely ethereal and reverential sounds of the human voice, and the extensions of that voice in Lovano's saxophone, in other reeds and woodwinds, in violins and the assembly of orchestral instruments that the true transcendence and soulfulness of music is heard – a transcendence incorporating all typologies of sound.

Werner's poetic spirit is also present in the titular poem, "No Beginning, No End," found in the liner notes. Words and music, especially the rhythms and figures of poetry, and companion, sister muses, and Werner's prose poem is as elegant and inspired as the poems of his music. "Time, changes, / These are the tools of improvisation. / 'Voices sing our son, which has, / No beginning, no end."

Kenny Werner once again, but with special profundity in this particular instance, makes the Platonic ideal real for all of us. The process was hardly effortless. It is, however, by any measure masterful. ■