

2005

## Beggars and angels (Works by Brett Dean)

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### Publication details

Hannan, MF 2005, 'Beggars and angels (Works by Brett Dean)', *Music Forum*, vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 78-79.  
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*Beggars & Angels*

(Music by Brett Dean)

Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (cond. Markus Stenz)

and Paul Dean (clarinet)

ABC Classics 476 160-6

Reviewed by Michael Hannan

This excellent recording demonstrates Brett Dean's mastery of orchestral writing technique. Two of the pieces (*Beggars and Angels* and *Ariel's Music*) are very long by Australian standards, potentially challenging the attention spans of the typical Australian orchestral audience. However Dean seems up to the task. His writing is full of contrasts, from the ethereal to the brooding and from the rhythmically energised to the flashy. His technique shows good invention, using simple motifs to generate his expansive structures. All three pieces employ similar motivic devices as if Dean is attempting to establish an individual sound by limiting his materials. However they also owe a little too much to the textural and melodic devices of Messiaen and Lutoslawski. In many ways the shorter and understated *Amphitheatre* is the most impressive of the three works because of the logic with which the material is derived from just two alternating chords.

Messiaen, Lutoslawsky

*Beggars & Angels*

rising minor third

Lots of dramatic events, fast and furious in places, extremes of dynamics and register textures built from different types of ostinati

rising major seventh

chaotic textures. Semitonal motive

angular melodic material in octaves and difference seemingly unrelated rhythmic textures superimposed on each other

second section more atmospheric, ambient ostinati, less dramatic

Angular melodic lines based on motivic ideas, but rhythmically simple lots of same note values, builds up into a big lush texture, dies away again

prolonged exploration of alternating notes (semitone) to end

*Amphitheatre*

two chords alternating (leading tones are a minor third) very Bernard Herrmann filmy

flashes of brass

washy textures

melodic material derived from the two chords

very low dark brooding textures (again Herrmann)

angular violin melodic material again plain rhythmically

chords become basis of faster more rhythmically defined section  
builds up to brass flourishes  
dies down to quieter sections with solo flute melody  
slower alternating chords return again angular melodic material coming out of this  
Fairly low key section based on harp even note patterns

#### Ariel's Music

very static ethereal texture to begin. using alternating notes (semitone apart) solo clarinet  
melody emerges out of this harp patterns  
chordal texture gradually gains momentum with clarinet solo becoming more prominent  
lots of downward glisses on clarinet.

Then more of fragmentary texture

Slow low dark brooding section .comes to end of section

second section starts like Lutoslawsky