

The Wozniaks are to be cited for providing an intriguing collection of truly unexpected proportion. A seemingly unlikely duo has shaped a CD of nuanced sensitivity and virtuosity in an arena previously unexplored.

—Joel Elias  
California State University—Sacramento  
California State University—Fresno

**IT'S ALIVE!!**

ILAN MORGANSTERN, BASS TROMBONE; David Gilliland, piano; University of Redlands Wind Ensemble; Eddie R. Smith, conductor.

(www.itsalivecd.com; www.cdbaby.com/cd/ilanmorgansterndavidgill)

Robert Denham: *Sizz!*; *The Kraken's One Day is as Another*; *Withering Grass*; *Concerto For Bass Trombone and Band*; *Mazing*; *Sarabande*.



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Sit up and take notice, bass trombonists; we've got a new pair of champions to celebrate. In the tradition of Daniel Schnyder with Dave Taylor and Eric Ewazen with . . . well . . . pretty much everybody, composer Robert Denham and San Antonio Symphony bass trombonist Ilan Morganstern have teamed up to give us a major infusion of new repertoire. Three of the six works on their new recording were written specifically for Morganstern, two composed originally for tuba but perfectly suitable for bass trombone, and the final track, the lovely *Sarabande*, originally for tenor trombone and piano.

The opening track is titled *Sizz!* and subtitled ". . . n' Hot!" Hot it is, with virtuosic leaps around the instrument, some of the tempi marked as fast as possible, and an air of intensity that will make it a popular opener or encore for recitals. Morganstern's playing is rhythmically driving, technically flawless, and unfailingly dynamic and exciting. Pianist David Gilliland is a perfect partner, negotiating all the mood shifts perfectly with him. *Sizz!*'s companion piece is the unaccompanied *Mazing*, which exhibits the same brand of virtuosity and quickly changing character.

*Withering Grass*, also with piano, sets a different mood entirely: mostly introverted and calm, with a brief outburst of agitated emotion in the middle. According to the program notes online, the title comes from Isaiah 40: 6-8 "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever," and the piece was composed in memory of a friend who had recently passed away after a long life of 98



years. This is a work of unusual character for the bass trombone, and a welcome addition to the repertoire.

The Concerto for Bass Trombone and Band (which doubles as a tuba concerto) was recorded with the University of Redlands Wind Ensemble, conducted by Eddie Smith. The ensemble sounds excellent—rhythmically precise, dynamic, and full of character, well in tune most of the time—and once again Morganstern is in great form. The first movement, subtitled “Four-inch Heels,” is certainly attractive, with driving Latin-inspired rhythms, but it is perhaps the least distinctive track on the recording, reminiscent of many wind band pieces in the repertoire. Things change quickly in the second movement, “And Once Gone . . .,” a hauntingly introspective departure from the bravura character of the outer movements. The final movement, “Don’t Anger the Sacred Temple Gibbon,” is a fantasy inspired by King Louie, the orangutan from the Disney version of *The Jungle Book*. This is evocative, playful music that should be performed often.

The highlight (lowlight?) of the recording is *The Kraken’s One Day is as Another*. Originally for tuba and piano, it evokes the mythical Kraken, an enormous sea creature that lies in wait for years at a time on the bed of the ocean, rising only occasionally to wreak havoc. The piece naturally starts in the sub-basement register, and Morganstern navigates the opening passages with incredibly consistent sound and pitch center. As the Kraken gets more agitated and the music gets faster, higher, and wilder, he and Gilliland give in completely to the moment, with a tremendous range of dynamics and tone colors.

This is a must-have recording for any bass trombonist, especially those looking for exciting new repertoire to perform. Kudos to everybody involved.

—Gabriel Langur  
Boston University



**THE VIRTUOSO OPHICLEIDE**

PATRICK WIBART, OPHICLEIDE; Adrian Ramon, cornet; Lucie Sansen, piano; Corentin Morvan, Oscar Abella Martin, ophicleide; Jean-Yves Guéry, voice.

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For more information, contact the Bienen School of Music at [mulcahy@music.northwestern.edu](mailto:mulcahy@music.northwestern.edu) or visit [music.northwestern.edu](http://music.northwestern.edu)

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