

alvin singleton

from the press

Only once in a while these days does a composer I haven't encountered before and who's over 30 years old really knock my socks off. Alvin Singleton did that this month, and how—his 20-minute *Shadows* (1987) grabs you by the collar with its first ostinato of string harmonics and quiet timpani strokes, adds a layer of Messiaen-style modal harmony in the winds that lifts you right off the ground, starts spinning you in circles of intensifying orchestration, ratchets up the pace a couple of times until you're in the middle of a swirling, screaming tutti that's at once plateau and climax, then gently puts you down and soothes you with harp and strings until the dizziness has passed. The overall effect is something like riding the Scrambler at a parking-lot carnival, but in a rarefied atmosphere free of cigarette smoke and fried-dough grease; Singleton's uncluttered synthesis of minimalism, Messiaen, and modern jazz is revelatory and refreshing.

– American Record Guide

Singleton's musical style is at turns spare, serene, violent, haunting, sometimes wrenching, always elegant.

– Atlanta Journal Constitution

The last decade hasn't produced any symphonic-scale music more moving than this.

– Village Voice

There's a point where the listener feels enveloped by sound, like standing on a pier at twilight, hearing gentle waves lap the shore and, at a distance, the plaintive moan of foghorns.

[*Mookestueck* is] a gorgeous sound world.

– Atlanta Journal Constitution

PraiseMaker is the finest work I've heard from Singleton- linear and engaging with some of the best dense and expansive chords that linger in the memory...At Times one was reminded a bit of Hector Berlioz, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Morton Feldman, yet the ultimate effect is unmistakably Singleton's own. I'd like to hear *PraiseMaker* again.

– The Washington Post

[Alvin Singleton] is no minimalist, yet he wastes no notes on empty rhetoric; this music speaks, even with grand pauses, an expansive idiom.

– Los Angeles Times

The sound [of *Shadows*] is fresh, original and entirely Singleton's own.

– Boston Globe

The only classical work commissioned by the Cultural Olympiad, [*Umoja—Each One of Us Counts*] proved itself worthy of the true fanfare.

– Atlanta Journal Constitution

On Truth, a choral ballet based upon the life of Sojourner Truth:

Composer Alvin Singleton's score was edgy and eclectic, using everything from propulsive percussive instrumentation to a cappella choral utterances to convey Baumfree's momentous mystical journey.

– [Minneapolis] Star Tribune

Because of his rich stew of influences—from Mahler to Monk, Bird to Bernstein, James Baldwin to Bach, Santana to Prince—his compositions are not stuffy or obscure or pedantic or bland.

– The Philadelphia Inquirer

“After Fallen Crumbs” is...a study in dramatic effects.

– ClassicsToday.com

Alvin Singleton's “After Choice,” one of two commissioned premieres on the program, was an engaging work for string orchestra in which mysterious yet playful plucked lines are juxtaposed with fitful, spiraling yet oddly calm legato lines.

– The New York Times