

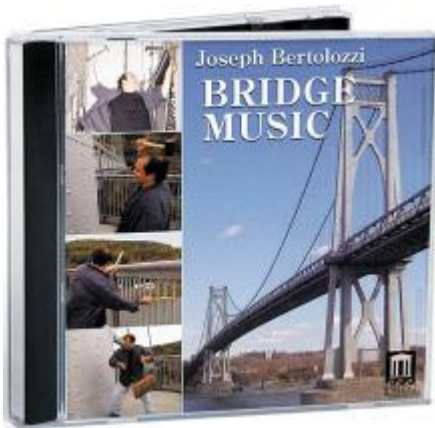


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Album review by Mia Clarke - Critic's Rating: 4 stars out of 5

Joseph Bertolozzi

Bridge Music (Delos)



Most budding classical musicians pick up a violin or tinker on the piano. Others may stray a bit further afield and opt for the less conventional harp or bassoon. Not Joseph Bertolozzi. He plays something not as easy to fit in a flight case: the Mid-Hudson Bridge.

Five years in the making, *Bridge Music* is a composition in ten movements using only the sounds of the bridge itself to create a unique sound-art installation. It seems like a great idea to experience live, but does this elaborate performance piece translate through dozens of microphones to record? The result is surprisingly diverse. Not only do Bertolozzi's alien rhythms produce a varied and delightful percussive fabric, at once tribal and industrial, but the range of melodic notes he entices from the huge structure, which is more than 3,000 feet long, is vast. It gives the album an absorbing sense of movement, as though you're caught within its imposing machinery.

Using architecture as an instrument isn't a new idea. After all, Talking Heads' David Byrne recently "played" New York's Battery Maritime Building; sound artist Bill Fontana placed a network of vibration sensors within London's Millennium Bridge, turning it into a vast stringed instrument; and Einstürzende Neubauten had a fondness for the sonic opportunities found in scrap metal. What sets *Bridge Music* apart is that Bertolozzi presents fixed compositions using no other tones than the bridge itself. The bridge's designer, Ralph Modjeski, was himself a skilled musician, so it's nice to think he would've appreciated these unconventional extensions of beauty produced by his architecture, despite the hustle and bustle of daily traffic speeding over the Hudson.