

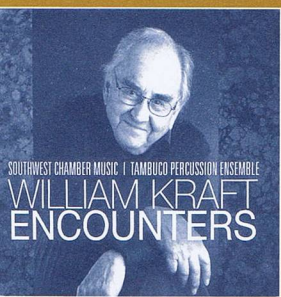
## Percussive Persuasion

**KRAFT:** Encounters (14). Southwest Chamber Music, Tambuco Percussion Ensemble. Cambria 1191.

by Jim Svejda

Composed over a period of four decades – and the list continues to grow – the Encounters of William Kraft represent, at very least, the single most important body of percussion music yet produced by an American composer. (I should say I use the qualification “American” only because I firmly believe in a conservative *under*-statement of any case.)

Beginning with *Encounters II* for Solo Tuba – which is actually the *first* one in the series and the only one to date that doesn’t involve a percussion instrument – these 14 works explore an astonishing range of moods, colors, instrumental textures, and compositional procedures, and do it with an imaginative courage and passion for discovery that never fail. From the wild



and crazy *Encounters IV* – subtitled, appropriately, “Duel for Trombone and Percussion” – to the ethereal *Encounters XV* for Guitar and Percussion – an incredibly refined homage to the music of Debussy and Ravel – the *Encounters* are as fun and entertaining as they are challenging and adult.

Given that many of the *Encounters* were written for the composer’s colleagues in the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the technical demands they make on the performer are often incredibly daunting. The performances by Southwest Chamber Music and the Tambuco Percussion Ensemble are all on the absolute cutting edge of instrumental virtuosity, while recorded sound is as flawless as it needs to be.

No one with the slightest interest in the music of our time can afford to be without this cornerstone of American chamber music.