

The woodwind community in the USA was greatly saddened by the news of the passing of RONALD ROSEMAN this past February. Distinguished oboist, revered teacher, and expressively-talented composer, Roseman touched the lives of many, including the Soni Ventorum who knew him personally for many years. This connection was furthered considerably by the *Wind Quintet* of 1986, written under a National Endowment for the Arts Consortium Commissioning grant by the Aspen, Soni Ventorum, and Clarion Wind Quintets and subsequently recorded by Soni Ventorum. While Roseman's reputation was primarily as an oboist through his membership with the New York Woodwind Quintet, the Bach Aria Group, and the New York Philharmonic, as well as faculty positions at the Yale School of Music and the Juilliard School, his work as a composer was gaining further recognition at the time of his death. He started composing as a youth, eventually studying with Henry Cowell at the New School in New York, and later with Karol Rathaus and Elliott Carter at Queens College, and also with Ben Weber.

The composer writes: "The *Wind Quintet* is in four movements which lead right into each other without interruption. The piece begins with a short phrase in the flute marked 'questioning and tentative' (similar to the opening of the last movement of Beethoven's Op. 135 String Quartet). This is answered by a strong, almost brutal response from the rest of the quintet. The movement consists of the workout, juxtaposition, and conflict of these two elements, culminating in a long flute cadenza. The second movement, marked 'Andante cantabile', is a simple lyrical movement in A B A form, without any of the conflict in the first movement, in which the return of the A section is quite heavily ornamented. This is abruptly ended by a horn call that leads to a Scherzo, which in turn, is interrupted by another horn call that introduces the last movement, a chorale prelude on 'Ich habe genug' (the chorale used by Berg in his violin concerto). In performing this chorale with the Bach Aria Group, I was struck by the fact that despite the strange opening two bars, the chorale was really a work full of joy and peace, expressing in the music the sense of the text, the hope of the believer of soon being in heaven with God. Bach's chorale ends very consonantly and peacefully. I have tried in this movement to express the joy of the chorale and to have the piece end consonantly."



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THE SONI VENTORUM

Felix Skowronek: *piccolo, flute, alto flute*
 Rebecca Henderson: *oboe, English horn*
 William McColl: *E^b clarinet, B^b clarinet,
 bass clarinet*
 David Kappy: *horn*
 Arthur Grossman: *bassoon, crotales*

November 17, 2000 8:00 PM Brechemin Auditorium

PROGRAM

CD
 QUARTET FOR FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, (16:12)
 AND BASSOON (1928)..... HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS
Allegro non troppo (1887-1959)
Lento
Allegro molto vivace

"ETERNAL TRUTHS" FOR (17:55)
 WOODWIND QUARTET (1979) WILLIAM O. SMITH
 (b. 1926)

INTERMISSION

- 3] *QUARTET FOR FLUTE, OBOE,
CLARINET AND BASSOON* (1933) (10:32) JEAN FRANÇAIX
Allegro (1912-1997)
Andante
Allegro molto
Allegro vivo
- 4] *WIND QUINTET* (1986) (16:54) RONALD ROSEMAN
Poco Adagio – Romanza – Scherzo – Chorale Prelude (1933-2000)

Program Notes

The eminent 20th century Brazilian composer HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS wrote significant chamber works for wind instruments, of which the "Quatuor" for flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon is perhaps the most classically-structured and the least-derived from purely Brazilian themes. "I am a sentimentalist by nature", wrote Villa-Lobos, "and at times my music is downright sugary, but I never work by intuition. My processes of composition are determined by cool reasoning. Everything is calculated, constructed." The "Quatuor" presents Villa-Lobos the abstract musician, the classicist. Folk song and folk dance are banished, yet one suspects that intuition, not calculation, is dominant even in this work; perhaps Villa-Lobos the sentimentalist is enlisting the aid of Villa-Lobos the classicist, not vice versa.

The first movement displays a symmetrical, tightly knit three-part form. The building blocks are an abrupt staccato introduction, fragments of which are heard throughout the movement; the main theme, a floating legato line first heard in the oboe, and the second theme, an insistent eight-note figure which is also used to form the short middle section and the coda. The second movement, a nostalgic, bittersweet *lento*, featuring the oboe and the bassoon, is as economically constructed as the first, and also shows a three-part form with a short middle section. The third movement consists of two parts. The first is an energetic opening section in 5/4 time, built upon a stomping ostinato figure. Here, fragments from both preceding movements are ingeniously worked in; there are also some embryonic anticipations of the principal theme from the next sec-

tion. The second part is a fughetta which begins with the now fully formed syncopated statement in the clarinet, through a welter of ingenious staccato passages, to the tumbling coda.

[From notes by William McColl]

WILLIAM O. SMITH studied composition with Darius Milhaud and Rogers Sessions and joined the faculty of the University of Washington School of Music in 1966 where he was co-director of the Contemporary Group for many years until his recent retirement. He has written over 100 works for various combinations of instruments and voice, and has received such awards as the *Prix de Paris*, *Prix de Rome*, and two Guggenheims. In addition to his work as a composer, he is a legendary clarinetist in his own time both for his contributions to extended instrumental techniques as well as his jazz work with Dave Brubeck and others.

The music for "Eternal Truths" was composed for Soni Ventorum in the Spring of 1979 at a time when Smith's works incorporated definite "theater" aspects to one degree or another: here, the group recitation, together or in part, of selected aphorisms from Sheldon B. Kopp's *An Eschatological Laundry List: A Partial Register of the 927 (or was it 928?) Eternal Truths*. Each of the thirteen short movements takes one of the "Truths" as a point of reference. Each movement also presents the instruments in a new format and frequently in a highly virtuosic manner. In addition to the usual woodwind quartet combination of flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, the work employs additional forces such as piccolo and alto flutes, English horn, Eb and bass clarinet, and antique cymbals.

The French composer/pianist JEAN FRANÇAIX attained international prominence at the age of 20, appearing as soloist in his *Concertino for Piano and Orchestra* (1932). Since then, through the course of his prolific composing career, he was very generous in his contribution to the repertoire of the wind quintet and related ensembles formed from its instrumentation. His first essay, the *Wind Quartet* of 1933 (he apparently left the horn out on purpose) followed quickly on the success of the *Concertino*, and yet another example for these same instruments followed two years later as a *Quadruple Concerto for Wind Quartet and Orchestra*.

The early Quartet is a light work, transparent in the aesthetic sense, with no excess baggage encumbering flights of fancy: the action stops only for the relatively short lullaby of the second movement. The inherent bounce of the entire piece suggests choreographic treatment, and indeed, the work has been used as a dance score.

[From notes by Felix Skowronek]