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Upcoming Concerts

Pacific Northwest Jazz Band Festival; February 28, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Pacific Northwest Concert Band Festival; February 29, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Soni Ventorum; March 1, 3:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium
Studio Jazz Ensemble; March 2, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
Electro-Acoustic Music Festival; March 3, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater

The School of Music
presents the 68th program of the 1991-92 season.

S67
1992
3-1



School
of
Music

University
of
Washington

The Soni Ventorum

Felix Skowronek, flute
William McColl, clarinet

Alex Klein, oboe
David Kappy, horn

Arthur Grossman, bassoon

Works By

Vranicky

Danzi

Schoenberg

Sunday, March 1, 1992
3:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

DAT^H 11,936

Cassette # 11,937

CD 14,699

Program

DAT
ID2

9¹/₂ 9.49
Six Hunters' Marches ANTONIN VRANICKY (1761 - 1820)
arr. Skowronek

ID3

17 23
Quintet in E-flat Major FRANZ DANZI
Op. 67, No. 3 (ca. 1825) (1763 - 1826)

Larghetto - Allegro moderato
Andante moderato
Minuetto: Allegro
Allegretto

CASS SIDE A
SIDE B

Intermission

ID4

40 55
Wind Quintet, Op. 26 (1924) ARNOLD SCHOENBERG
(1874 - 1951)

Schwungvoll
Anmutig und heiter; scherzando
Etwas langsam
Rondo

Program Notes

This afternoon's concert presents something of a controlled experiment, for audience and performers alike, in an attempt to arrive at and appreciate the highly complex by proceeding progressively through the relatively simple. The medium chosen for this journey is the key of E flat Major, traditionally a "favorite" classical key for winds, and whether by design or happenstance, the "key" of that towering monument concluding the program, Schoenberg's *Wind Quintet, Op. 26*. We hope that from the ingenuous *Vranicky Marches* (all transposed into E-flat for this occasion), through the mellow and easy-listening early Romantic harmonies of Danzi, this E-flat pitch center will provide a subliminal anchor for the heavy seas of the Schoenberg, a work arguably classified either as a hyper-late-Romantic essay or a protean precursor of today's avant-garde.

Antonin Vranicky was one of a veritable legion of 19th-century Czech musicians making a name for themselves in Vienna and elsewhere in Europe, usually under their Germanized names; in this case Anton Wranitzky. Born in Moravia of a musical family, Vranicky began early violin and composition studies and later moved to Vienna where he studied with Haydn, Mozart, and Albrechtsberger. In 1794 he secured the position of conductor-composer to the Lobkowitz family, first in Bohemia and later at the Court Opera House in Vienna. Among his duties was the composition of various works for the orchestra and the wind band drawn from it, including the original versions of the *Hunters' Marches* arranged for today's program.

Franz Danzi, an exact contemporary of Vranicky, enjoyed a similar but later divergent career influenced by the changing political scene in Europe in the early 19th century. Danzi likewise was born into a musical family, joining his father as a cellist in the famed Mannheim Orchestra, later rejoining it in Munich to where it had moved, as an assistant conductor. His marriage to an accomplished soprano brought him close to the opera world, and it is here, especially in the establishment of German-language opera that history has given him recognition. As conductor of the opera in Stuttgart and later Karlsruhe, where he died, Danzi was an avid promoter of the works of Mozart and Carl Maria von Weber, to whom he served as mentor and surrogate parent during the younger composer's Stuttgart sojourn. Danzi's own compositional output was substantial, including operas, symphonies, concerti, choral works, and much chamber music. Among Danzi's duties in Stuttgart was the supervision of wind-instrument instruction at the state orphanage, and this knowledge, coupled with his awareness of the creation of the "wind quintet," a new chamber ensemble consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon, originating in Paris at the turn of the century, might have led him to write his own set of nine works for the nascent medium.

Arnold Schoenberg's impact on modern music is a subject of great depth and continuing discussion and can be dealt with elsewhere by those interested in the saga. Suffice it to say that his formulation and application of the so-called "12-note" or "12-tone" technique of composition changed the face of music and was something of a mixed blessing. This new set of rigid "rules" governing a series of notes and their order provided a futuristic toolbox for the craft of composition, but led to

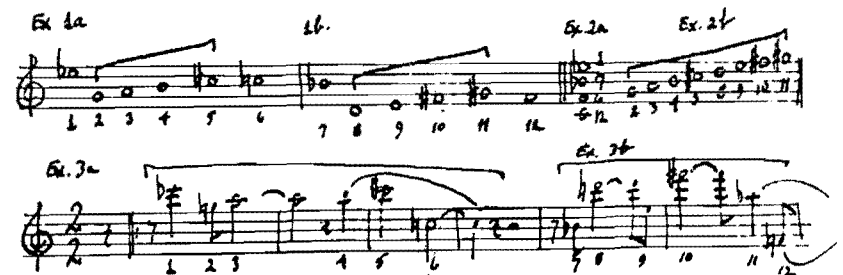
an ever-increasing gap between the works created by it and the ability of audiences to comprehend them. That such a development was inevitable is still being debated today. The advancement of chromaticism had reached such a point by 1914 that something had to happen: either a dramatic "breakthrough" into a new technical dimension, or a reversion to earlier and simpler concepts. Schoenberg's "12-note" technique was the "logical" step of progress: since chromaticism was obliterating the function of tonality anyway, why not do away with it altogether and put all 12 notes of the scale on an equal footing? With his *Wind Quintet, Opus 26* Schoenberg put this new technique together systematically and completely in a large-scale fashion for the first time. The intellectual importance of the work was immediately recognized, and since its composition it has been heavily analyzed, atomized, dissected and subjected to all manner of study—but only infrequently performed. Wind-players have looked at it with a mixture of reverence and revulsion, and the work has retained its reputation as an impregnable fortress to be invested only at great physical and mental cost—an undertaking surely reserved only for the worthy few of great courage and pure heart.

Naturally, upon our *Soni Ventorum* arrival at the UW in 1968, we felt ourselves to be just such an ensemble and set out to face the Schoenberg. This we did, and with a gratifying measure of success. We first performed the work locally in February 1969 at the HUB Auditorium on campus, and the following month presented it in concert at the Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City. It was an auspicious occasion, with many notables in the audience, including some of the city's best-known wind players, members of the Moscow State Symphony from the USSR, and members of the Danzi Quintet of Holland who were in town and who themselves had toured extensively with the Schoenberg and who were to record it. In addition, we received a telegraphic "blessing" from Felix Greissle, Schoenberg's son-in-law, who had conducted (sic) the Quintet, Op. 26 at its world premiere in Vienna. We even received a great press review—Donal Henahan wrote in the *New York Times*:

"To an astonishing degree, the five chamber music experts solved the problems of balancing the score and made increasingly more sense of it as they went along . . . one rarely hears woodwind quintet precision, ensemble and intonation to match what the Soni Ventorum produced in the Schoenberg."

Heady stuff indeed! We performed the Quintet a couple of times locally afterwards and took it on a short tour in Canada the following season; a total of 8 concerts in all. Now, exactly 23 years after that New York concert we're about to revisit the work, the aged among us wiser and more mature, infused with the vitality of younger blood as we assemble our collective resources for the Herculean task. A number of anecdotes remain in our minds from that first set of performances years ago: the audible groan from the Edmonton audience when I suggested that people make themselves comfortable since the work took 40 minutes to perform; the post-concert reception at which a woman accosted us proclaiming that every time she heard the piccolo she wanted to scream. Our favorite, however, came from the New York concert where an intense, bespectacled young man sitting in the front row was following our performance. At the conclusion of the 3rd movement he inadvertently uttered sotto voce in a thick but clear New York accent, "My Gawd—it's bee-yoo-tee-ful." We hope you'll agree.

BRIEF GUIDE TO THE SCHOENBERG WIND QUINTET, OP. 26



Schoenberg's *Wind Quintet, Op. 26*, for all its complexities and life-time listening demands, is not devoid of recognizable and accessible elements even on first hearing. Indeed, these elements become "signposts" along the course of the work on repeated hearing, with gradually more landscape filled in over time. For example, "familiar" or quasi-tonal cadences and sonorities are often heard, especially at phrase, section or movement ends.

Basic to the entire composition is the "12-tone row" shown as Ex. 1 above. Schoenberg deftly arranged its two halves to be as nearly symmetrical as possible. (Ex. 1a and 1b.) The bracketed four notes in each half, when put together, form a scale of sorts (Ex. 2b), while the end notes of each half are often arranged as a chord in fourths (Ex. 2a), a sonority reminiscent of his *Chamber Symphony, Op. 9* (1913), his last work with a printed key-signature. In accordance with his early principles of the "12-note" technique, the basic row can be inverted, run backwards, with this inverted in turn, giving four different sequences of note order. Interval displacements are found throughout, giving the overall texture an angular quality even when legato.

Example 3 above shows the first statement of the basic row by the flute at the beginning of the work. This "melody," especially the first half (Ex. 3a) is quite noticeable throughout the work and is perhaps at its most effective in a poignantly reminiscent direct quote just before the end of the Rondo (some 40 minutes after its first appearance) — a symbolic suggestion from *Pierrot Lunaire* perhaps? ("O Alter Duft aus Märchenzeit").

Schoenberg cast his *Wind Quintet, Op. 26* into clearly classical forms: sonata, scherzo (an Expressionist Viennese waltz), 3-part song form, and rondo. Each of the four movements begins with the straight-up basic series of the row, sometimes all in one instrument, sometimes divided between two or more. The row always begins with Note 1 (E-flat), and in a master stroke, the entire work telescopes into itself at the end, with the entire ensemble meeting with a snap on a unison final E-flat.

— Felix Skowronek