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SONI VENTORUM WIND QUINTET
Felix Skowronek, flute
Alex Klein, oboe
William McColl, clarinet
David Kappy, horn
Arthur Grossman, bassoon
with special Guest Artist
Holly Herrmann, piano
and guest performers
Ashley Carter, flute
Debbie Smith, clarinet
Anthony Miller, horn
Jason Schilling, bassoon

8:00 PM
May 31, 1995
Brechemin Auditorium
Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach, the second of the surviving sons of Johann Sebastian Bach, was born on March 8, 1714 at Weimar and died on December 14, 1788 in Hamburg. He is remembered today as one of the last and greatest masters of virtuoso playing and improvisation on the clavichord. As a composer, he occupies a key position in the development of the early classical forms of keyboard and instrumental music, exactly midway between the Baroque, which culminated in J. S. Bach, and the Viennese classical school, represented by Ludwig van Beethoven. C. P. E. Bach wrote the VI Sonate a II corni, II flauti, II clarinetti e fagotto about 1755 while director of the five main churches of the Hanseatic town of Hamburg. The musical character of these works, generally in one movement and with considerable doubling of the instrumental parts, makes it quite clear that they were intended for performance in the open air.

Beethoven’s Sextet for two clarinets, horns, and bassoons was finished in Vienna in 1796, although the first two movements may have been completed earlier. Years later, Beethoven wrote to his publisher: “By the next postcoach, you will receive a sextet for wind instruments...It is one of my earlier things, and moreover was written in a single night. There is really no more to add, except that it was written by an author who has produced at least a few better works....” It seems very unlikely that the Sextet was in fact composed in one night, because fairly extensive sketches of the third and fourth movements have come to light among manuscripts which included preliminary sketches for “Ab Perfido” and the simple Piano Sonata Op. 49, No. 2. [Interestingly, both the Sextet and the string Quintet have caught the attention of arrangers who have devised wind-quintet versions of both]: Beethoven’s subsequent disparagement of the work seems to have been unjustified, considering how favorably the often severely critical “Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung” reported the first performance in Vienna in 1805. The notice states that of all the works played at the concert, “the most especially pleasing was the beautiful Sextet in E flat of Beethoven, a composition distinguished by fine melodies, a natural harmonic flow and a wealth of new and surprising ideas.”

Rimsky-Korsakov’s deeply sonorous and oft-times boisterous Quintet for winds and piano is described by the composer as follows from his autobiography “My Musical Life”:

“In 1876, the Russian Musical Society announced a prize contest for a work in chamber-music. The desire to write something for this contest seized me...I took it into my head to write for the same contest a quintet for the piano and wind-instruments...I composed the quintet in three movements. The First Movement was in the classic style of Beethoven; the second (Andante) contained a fairly good fugato for the wind-instruments, with a free voice accompaniment in the piano. Movement Three (Allegretto vivace), in rondo form, contained an interesting passage; an approach to the first subject after the middle part. The French horn, flute and the clarinet, by turns, play virtuoso cadenzas, according to the character of each instrument, and each is interrupted by the bassoon entering by octave leaps; after the piano’s cadenza the first subject finally enters in similar leaps of the bassoon”.