

19th century, in the days before broadcast media or recordings, it was quite common for composers to make two-piano arrangements of their symphonies in order to make the works more available and accessible. In more recent times however, with the standardization of ensemble instrumentations and specialization and stabilization of repertoire, arrangements from one medium to another have been frowned upon but have nonetheless maintained a presence. (As examples, violinists hardly give a thought to commandeering the Prokofiev Flute Sonata, Op. 94 for their nefarious ends, and flutists—not to mention cellists—have freely adapted the Franck Violin Sonata as a repertoire staple. Then of course there is the Schubert *Arpeggione* Sonata, which has been considered fair game by practically everyone!) The wind quintet has seen perhaps more than its share of transcriptions, partly because of the paucity of repertoire from the classical and romantic periods, and the Quintette Moraguès, a prize-winning French ensemble, has contributed mightily to making amends for this shortfall via its extensive series of transcriptions, among them MENDELSSOHN'S Quintet in E-flat Major, after the String Quartet, Op. 12. This work dates from 1829, and is in fact the second of two string quartets in the same key, the earlier example dating from 1823 but never published during Mendelssohn's lifetime. The role of the transcriber comes with certain responsibilities, the major of these being the selection of works which can even be considered reasonably idiomatic and suitable for transcription to a different medium, all without serious or any damage to the music itself, and answering the question, "does this sound as if it could originally have been written for the new medium?" Here, the Op. 12 E-flat Quartet was a wise choice on all counts: E-flat is a friendly key for wind instruments, and the sonorous and technical nature of the material itself falls well within the capabilities of the wind quintet. Overall, the work shows an influence of Beethoven, but Mendelssohn's deft hand is clearly recognizable (the trio of the *Canzonetta* recalls the bustling *Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream*), and the cyclical reappearance of first-movement themes in the last movement brings an admirable construction unity to this youthful composition.

JERRY KRACHT, well-known Northwest musical personality and this evening's Soni Ventorum guest artist, is Professor of Clarinet at Pacific Lutheran University, conductor of the PLU Symphony Orchestra, and Music Director of Tacoma's *Second City Chamber Music Series*.



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THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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1998
4-14

DAT 13,225
CASS 13,226

presents

THE SONI VENTORUM

Felix Skowronek, *flute*
Rebecca Henderson, *oboe*
William McColl, *clarinet & bass clarinet*
David Kappy, *horn*
Arthur Grossman, *bassoon*

with guest artist

Jerry Kracht, *clarinet*

April 14, 1998

8:00 PM

Meany Theater

PROGRAM

DAT
ID1 "SUMMER MUSIC" for.....11:57..... Samuel Barber
Woodwind Quintet, Op. 31 (1956) (1910-1981)

ID2 "MLÁDI" (Youth).....19:04.....Leoš Janáček
Suite for Wind Instruments (1924) (1854-1928)
Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Vivace
Allegro animato

INTERMISSION

Cass side A

153 QUINTET IN E-FLAT MAJOR (1829).....24:26.....Felix Mendelssohn
 (after the String Quartet; Op.12) (1809-1847)
 Adagio non troppo - Allegro non tardante arr. David Walter
 Canzonetta: Allegretto
 Andante espressivo
 Molto allegro e vivace

PROGRAM NOTES

by Felix Skowronek

SAMUEL BARBER, born in West Chester, PA, came from a musical family. His mother was an accomplished pianist, and his sister was Louise Homer, the famous opera contralto. The young Samuel began studying the piano and trying his hand at composition, and at age 14 entered the recently-founded Curtis Institute of Music in nearby Philadelphia. His studies included piano, composition, conducting, and voice, for which he developed a particular affinity. Nonetheless, it was composition that occupied his major efforts. The famed lexicographer and wit Nicolas Slonimsky commented on Barber's talent as follows: "At the time when most American composers exerted their ingenuity writing sophisticated music laced with unresolvable dissonances, Barber kept aloof from facile and fashionable modernism. He adopted an idiom, lyrical and romantic in nature, which had a distinct originality in its melodic and harmonic aspects." His early successes included the *Overture to the School for Scandal* (1933), the *Essay for Orchestra No. 1* (1938), and the immensely popular *Adagio for Strings*, arranged from his String Quartet of the same year. As Slonimsky wryly observed: "The 'Adagio' was destined to become one of the most popular of American works of serious music, and through some lurid aberration of circumstance, it also became a favorite selection at state funerals. It formed the background music at Roosevelt's commemorative service in 1945; the passionate serenity of its modal strains moved the family and friends of Princess Grace of Monaco to tears when it was played at her funeral on September 18, 1982." In conclusion, Slonimsky observes: "Barber excelled in new American music primarily as a melodist; perhaps the circumstance that he studied singing as a youth had contributed to his sensitive handling of vocally shaped patterns. Although the harmonic structures of his music remained fundamentally tonal, he made free use of chromatic techniques, verging on atonality and polytonality... His orchestration was opulent without being turgid; his treatment of solo instruments was unflinchingly congenial to their nature even though requiring a virtuoso technique." The "Summer

Music" for Woodwind Quintet was commissioned by Karl Haas and the Chamber Music Society of Detroit and received its premiere performance in that city on March 20, 1956. Barber himself noted that "it's supposed to be evocative of summer—summer meaning languid, not killing mosquitos."

There is an object lesson in the life of LEOS JANÁČEK, an inspiration as it were, to all of us out there who suffer the fate of being cast into the role of "late bloomers." Had he died at the age of 62, he would most likely have been remembered as a somewhat eccentric and irascible obscure choirmaster and organist, or as an ethnically-oriented minor composer with a good knowledge of folk music and a rather unusual approach to vocal and instrumental writing based on melodies derived from speech-inflection patterns of his native Czech tongue. Such indeed was Janáček's lot until the 1916 Prague presentation of his opera *Jenufa* (1903) produced the equivalent of a national sensation and accorded him almost immediately the recognition already granted Smetana and Dvorak before him. This success was confirmed by the Vienna premiere two years later, and during the ensuing final decade of his life (which he lived to the fullest it might be added), further vocal and stage works spread his reputation abroad: notably *The Diary of One Who Vanished* (1921), *The Cunning Little Vixen* (1924), the *Slavonic Mass* (1927), and his last opera, *The House of the Dead* (1928). During July 1924, in his seventieth year, he composed the "Youth" Sextet for Wind Instruments (wind quintet plus bass clarinet), inspired in part by his hearing in concert the famed Parisian *Société moderne des instruments à vent*. At the time as well, he was collecting material concerning his youth for his biographer, the musicologist Max Brod, and many reminiscences found their way into the work. As a young boy he had attended school at the Royal Clerical College in Brno, dressed in a blue uniform, and the third movement Scherzo was based on a sketch he had written earlier entitled "March of the Blue Boys." The opening melody of the first movement, stated hauntingly in the oboe, is said to be based on the speech-melody of the sigh, "Youth, golden youth." The slow movement material is moodily contemplative, and it is said that Janáček halted in its composition, overcome by his emotions. The final movement is boisterously optimistic, but a touch of cyclic nostalgia via the original "golden youth" theme gives one last look at the past before a joyful epilogue brings the work to its close.

Transcriptions, that is the rearranging of music written for one ensemble or medium to another, have been a fact of compositional life for some time, and in fact were a quite common and acceptable means of propagating new material in the classical era, and continue as such in the popular field today. (Indeed, the earliest instrumental music was rarely designated for specific instruments at all.) Bach borrowed freely from Vivaldi in transcriptions of keyboard concerti, and Mozart and Beethoven both made arrangements of their operatic or instrumental works in varying forms to bring them a wider audience. More recently, in the