

Rec.
G2

The University of Washington School of Music presents
the 51st program of the 1991/92 season

Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet



Felix Skowronek, flute
Alex Klein, oboe
William McColl, clarinet
David Kappy, horn
Arthur Grossman, bassoon

DAT 11,906 CASS 11,907
QD 14.549

Brechemin Auditorium

3:00 PM, February 2, 1992

DAT
ID 2

"Kleine Kammermusik"
Op. 24, No. 2 (1922)

14'16"

PAUL HINDEMITH
(1895 - 1963)

~~Handwritten scribble~~

Playful, moderately fast
Waltz, very soft throughout
Placid and simple
Rapid,
Very lively

ID 3

Three Pieces
for Flute, Clarinet, & Bassoon (1925)

9'51"

WALTER PISTON
(1894 - 1976)

Allegro scherzando
Lento
Allegro

ID 4

Quintette en forme de Choros (1928)

10'20"

HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS
(1887 - 1959)

CASS SIDE A ↑
SIDE B ↓

Intermission

ID 5

Quintet in E minor; Op. 100, No. 4

29'15"

ANTON REICHA
(1770 - 1836)

Adagio - Allegro
Andante con variazioni
Minuetto: Allegro vivo
Finale: Allegro vivace

Program Notes

The decade of the 1920's saw the composition of several of the high points of the wind quintet literature, including the three works on the first half of today's program. (Two others worth mentioning are Carl Nielsen's Quintet Op. 43 and Arnold Schoenberg's monumental Quintet Op. 26 — this latter to appear on the Soni Ventorum's March 1st concert.) All are unique works bearing the stamp of highly individualistic composers. Of the three, Hindemith's "**Kleine Kammermusik, Nr. 2**" has been perhaps the most accessible and most frequently performed, showing no signs of wearing thin after 70 years of continuous use. Composed during the disastrous German multi-digit inflation crisis following World War I, the quintet nonetheless opens with an energetic and optimistic movement based on an insistent rhythmic motive (story has it that Hindemith composed it while riding a commuter train) and then passes into more contemplative material: a faded waltz and an introspective movement marked "placid and simple." A brief flurry of cadenzas, one per instrument, leads directly into the gigue-like finale, the concluding frenzy of which is brought back to 'reality' by the somber intoning of three closing E minor chords.

Walter Piston's prestigious career as a composer and Professor of Composition at Harvard University ranked him as one of the major American influences in the classical music field in this century. His work as a symphonist is notable, and his writings on theory and harmony continue to serve as texts throughout the country. His chamber music is less well known, but in this genre the **Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon** is both his earliest and most-performed example. Written during his time of study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, the work is a clear indication of the neo-classic style that would mark his subsequent works. The first and third of the pieces display vigorous activity reined by ostinato rhythmic figures and giving way to slower lyric sections, while the second has a nostalgic quality maintained by both closely and widely spaced sonorities.

The idiosyncratic Heitor Villa-Lobos, Brazil's gift to the world of 20th century music, continues to astound us both through the sheer immensity of his compositional output as well as the striking originality of his best efforts. He claimed to have invented the 'choros,' a structure suggested to him by the improvisations of itinerant musicians in their instrumental serenades on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. He retained their practice of the frequent change from major to minor keys and their rhythmic, sentimental quality, but he enlarged the form

and adapted it to include any typical melody of a popular character. The **Quintette en forme de Choros**, one of a number of wind chamber pieces by the composer, is a continuous work whose separate sections are strung together in a 'choros' with liberal extremes of dynamics and pitch in all the instrumental lines. The complexity of the score does not negate the popular character of the music: lengthy themes flowing together produce shifting textures in the slower material and hyper-kinetic energy in the faster sections. From the mysterious jungle-like beginning to the shrieking concluding chord, the **Quintette**, with its quasi-improvisations and sheer fascinating sound seldom fails to capture and hold the attention of the listener.

Anton Reicha's wind quintets created a sensation in Paris and throughout Europe in the second and third decades of the 19th century. He wrote no fewer than 24 such works during these years for a bold new chamber ensemble composed of one each of the principal woodwind instruments plus French horn. The quintets were premiered in the foyer of the Paris Opera, and these occasions bore a social and musical significance widely noted at the time. Reicha himself was highly regarded as a professor of composition and theory at the Paris Conservatoire, and his pupils included such names as Hector Berlioz, Adolphe Adam, Charles Gounod, and the young Cesar Franck. His stature was duly recognized by the French Academy, which elected him to membership a year before his death. Such recognition did not prove to be lasting, however, as it has only been in the last 25 years or so that he and his music have undergone a revival, with the wind quintets leading the way.

The **E minor Quintet, Op. 100, No. 4**, is one of the monuments of his contributions to this genre. In it one finds all the elements that show Reicha at his best: an abundance of melody and expanse of form (first movement); characteristic and idiomatic variations for each instrument (second movement); the wit and invention of his Scherzi as demonstrated here by a veritable kaleidoscope of modulations (third movement); and the breathless excitement and energy of his Finale movements, complete with fanfare flourish at the end. Running through the whole is the thread of virtuosic demand on instruments and performers alike; wind-writing unequalled in its day and still a source of wonder and challenge in ours.

— Felix Skowronek