

Louisville Chamber Music Society -- February 17, 2019

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC WIND QUINTET

Michael Hasel, flute
Andreas Wittmann, oboe
Walter Seyfarth, clarinet
Fergus McWilliam, horn
Marion Reinhard, bassoon

Program credits:

The Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet appears by arrangement with David Rowe Artists www.davidroweartists.com
The Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet (www.windquintet.com) records exclusively for BIS Records (www.bis.se)

The Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet (Philharmonisches Bläserquintett Berlin) was founded in 1988, during the era of Herbert von Karajan, the first permanently established wind quintet in the famous orchestra's rich tradition of chamber music.

With four original members since inception (Marion Reinhard succeeded founding bassoonist Henning Trog in 2009), they are living musical witnesses to the hugely productive and influential musical partnerships of the Berlin Philharmonic not only with Karajan, but also with its two most recent Musical Directors: Claudio Abbado and Sir Simon Rattle. Naturally, as members of the Berlin Philharmonic, they have also enjoyed important collaborations with every other major conductor of their times, whether Leonard Bernstein, Carlos Kleiber, Sir John Barbirolli, Günter Wand, Carlo Maria Giulini, Bernard Haitink, Riccardo Muti, James Levine or Daniel Barenboim, to name only a few.

The Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet has astonished audiences worldwide with their range of expression, their tonal spectrum and their conceptual unity. Indeed many listeners and critics agree that the ensemble has succeeded in virtually redefining the sound of the classic wind quintet. Their repertoire covers not only the entire spectrum of the wind quintet literature but also includes works for enlarged ensemble, i.e. the Sextets of Janáček and Reinicke or the Septets of Hindemith and Koechlin. In addition, collaboration with pianists such as Lars Vogt, Stephen Hough, Jon Nakamatsu and Lilya Zilberstein have intensified in recent years.

The ensemble's commitment to the wind quintet repertoire is passionate and in 1991 they found the perfect partner for their recording plans, the Swedish company BIS Records, already well known in its own right for its uncompromising standards. The results of this long and exclusive collaboration have received critical accolades worldwide - indeed many of these recordings are already widely held to be "definitive" or "reference" performances.

In addition to their concert appearances throughout Europe, North and South America, Israel, Australia and the Far East, the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet are also popular guests at international festivals such as the Berliner Festwochen, the Edinburgh Festival, the London Proms, the Quintette-Biennale Marseille, the Rheingau Festival and the Salzburg Festival. Their television productions and radio broadcasts are seen and heard throughout Europe, Asia and North America.

In recent years the members of the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet have intensified their teaching and coaching roles with youth; they give chamber music workshops and instrumental instruction in many countries, with a particular commitment, for example, to the youth orchestra program of Venezuela. 2019 will mark their final tour of North America, as several members of the ensemble will soon be retiring from the Orchestra. The Quintet will continue to give occasional performances in Europe.

2018-19 – *please discard any previous material*

Michael Hasel (flute) Michael Hasel was born in Hofheim near Frankfurt and began conducting, piano and organ studies, intending to graduate as a church musician. His first flute teachers were Herbert Grimm and Willy Schmidt and he went on to study piano and conducting with Prof. Francis Travis and flute with Aurèle Nicolet at the Freiburg Musikhochschule. He completed his conducting studies with Prof. Michael Gielen. Michael Hasel's first orchestral appointment as flutist was from 1982 to 1984 with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, after which he became a member of the Berlin Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan. For several years he performed as principal flute with the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra under conductors such as Daniel Barenboim, Pièrre Boulez and James Levine. In 1994 he was appointed Professor of Wind Ensemble and Chamber Music at the Heidelberg-Mannheim Musikhochschule. Both as conductor and soloist Michael Hasel has appeared in Europe, Japan and South America with renowned ensembles such as Ensemble Modern, the Junge Deutsche Philharmonie, the Gustav Mahler Chamber Orchester, Orchestra Simon Bolivar and the Berliner Philharmoniker.

Andreas Wittmann (oboe), Andreas Wittmann, was born in Munich. He studied oboe at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich with Prof. Manfred Clement and later at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin with Hansjörg Schellenberger. In Munich he studied conducting with Prof. Hermann Michael and participated in conducting masterclasses with Sergiu Celibidache. Wittmann spent only one year as a scholarship student at the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy before being appointed to the Berlin Philharmonic itself in 1986. He is an internationally active soloist, chamber musician and teacher, whose career has also included performing as Principal Oboe with the Bayreuth Festival Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic. He taught at the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy for several years before becoming its General Manager in 2013. Wittmann is currently Permanent Guest Conductor of Brazil's Orquesta Sinfónica Salvador de Bahia. He regularly conducts the Sinfonie-Orchester Berlin, as well as the Sibelius-Orchester of Berlin.

Walter Seyfarth (Clarinet) is a native of Düsseldorf and was a first prize winner at the age of sixteen in the Deutscher Tonkünstlerverband competition. Following his studies at the Freiburg Musikhochschule with Peter Rieckhoff and with Karl Leister at the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy, he was appointed to the Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra. In 1985, he joined the Berlin Philharmonic as Solo Eb-Clarinetist. It was Seyfarth who was the driving force behind the founding of the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet in 1988. He is also a member of the larger ensemble "The Winds of the Berlin Philharmonic". Among his teaching and mentoring responsibilities are the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy, the Jeunesses Musicales World Orchestra and the Venezuelan Youth Orchestras Programme, El Sistema.

Fergus McWilliam (horn) was born on the shores of Scotland's Loch Ness and studied initially in Canada (John Simonelli, Frederick Rizner, and at the University of Toronto with Eugene Rittich), having made his début as a soloist with the Toronto Symphony under Seiji Ozawa at the age of fifteen. Further studies were undertaken in Amsterdam (Adriaan van Woudenberg) and Stockholm (Wilhelm Lanzky-Otto). From 1972 through 1979 McWilliam was a member of several Canadian orchestras and chamber music ensembles before joining the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. From 1982 to 1985 he was a member of the Bavarian Radio Symphony and in 1985 he was appointed to the Berlin Philharmonic under Herbert von Karajan. He is not only active internationally as a soloist and chamber musician but teaches at a number of internationally renowned music schools, including the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy. He has worked with the Venezuelan youth music programme El Sistema for a decade and now is a Board Director of Sistema Scotland. McWilliam served on Berliner Philharmoniker committees for 23 years and is the author of the acclaimed book "Blow Your OWN Horn".

Marion Reinhard (bassoon) was born in Nuremberg (Nürnberg) and from 1991 to 1995 studied at the Meistersinger Conservatory with Walter Urbach and Karsten Nagel. While still only a student, she began performing with the Nuremberg Philharmonic Orchestra as Contra Bassoonist. In 1995 she won a scholarship to study at the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra Academy with Stefan Schweigert and Daniele Damiano. Further studies with Georg Kluetsch in Weimar rounded out her musical training and in 1999 Marion Reinhard was appointed to the Berlin Philharmonic where she became a direct colleague of Henning Trog. From 1996 until her appointment to the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet, she was a founding member of the Orsolino Wind Quintet, an ensemble which was mentored by Michael Hasel. They won many international prizes, including the Munich A.R.D. Competition and also made numerous recordings.

Notes on the program

W.A. Mozart - K.V. 594, 608, 616

Recorded by the Berlin Philharmonic Wind Quintet: BIS CD 1132

As neither I (as the page-turning flautist of our ensemble) nor our audiences wished to deny ourselves further contact with Mozart's music, the use of transcriptions was an obvious step to take. Although, since we formed the ensemble in 1988, we have steadfastly refused to play arrangements (with the exception of a few display pieces and encores), we make an exception for Mozart, because his oeuvre includes certain works that cry out for a quintet arrangement if the transcription is carried out with due stylistic sensitivity. Moreover, as the mechanical organ and glass harmonica are not readily available for concert performances, I hope that my arrangements will make some of Mozart's masterpieces more easily accessible for a larger audience.

The starting point for my arrangements was the text of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe* (published by Bärenreiter), which has been carried over unaltered except for certain octave and chord doublings that had to be changed for technical reasons, especially in KV608, where chords of up to twelve notes occur. The instruments (except for the horn) are used in accordance with the customs and technical capabilities of Mozart's era. I have used the horn according to modern performance technique, not least in order to achieve a greater range of colour in the instrumentation, a point that Mozart evidently also considered important (see KV452). To have restricted myself to the valve-less horn would have resulted in very sparing use of the instrument, especially in KV594 and KV608 with their wide harmonic range.

Mozart's three surviving works for mechanical organ all come from the last year of his life. They were written in response to a commission from Count Josef von Deym's Müllersche Kunstgalerie in Vienna. This art gallery contained a curious mixture of exhibits: plaster replicas of ancient statues, wax reliefs, paintings, copper engravings and mechanical musical instruments. In March 1791 the Count mounted a memorial exhibition for Field Marshal Baron Gideon von Laudon, an Austrian national hero, at which funeral music was to be played hourly. For this purpose Mozart wrote KV594 (the last entry in his catalogue of works for December 1790) and KV608 (dated 3rd March 1791). KV616, dated 4th May 1791, was intended for performance elsewhere in the collection; furthermore, we can conclude from Mozart's letters and fragments that he wrote additional pieces for mechanical organ, works which have regrettably not survived.

Clockwork organ or organ cylinder are terms referring to a flute-playing musical clock, in other words a mechanical organ that is coupled to a clock mechanism in order to reproduce music at a given point in time. These flute-playing musical clocks, for which such composers as Joseph Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven also composed a number of pieces, were then very popular instruments in high society art galleries and other curiosity chambers. They existed in a wide range of types and with differing ranges, as can well be seen from Mozart's scores. For the four-part texture of KV616, for example, a high-pitched instrument with small pipes was sufficient, whilst KV608 requires chords of up to twelve notes and a considerably larger range.

Mozart's music for organ cylinder were soon arranged for other instruments in order to make them accessible to a wider audience. The adaptations range from piano transcriptions to versions for orchestra. Several arrangements exist for wind quintet; the older ones (Meyer, Pillney) often take considerable liberties with the text, whilst the newer ones (Schottstädt, Schäfer) reproduce Mozart's music with much greater precision. In particular KV608, an outstanding piece with fine contrapuntal passages, a fugue and a double fugue (a late flowering of Mozart's preoccupation with the music of Bach), rapidly became well-known. Beethoven made a copy of it for study purposes (he also possessed a copy of KV594). Schubert's F minor Fantasy for piano four hands clearly shows its influence, and the Adagio from Franz Lachner's Wind Octet has obvious links with the Andante from Mozart's piece.

Finally, we can only marvel at the way Mozart's inspiration attained such elevated heights when tackling a task of which, as we know from his letters, he was not especially fond. As W. Hildesheimer points out in his biography of Mozart: Music of significance for a musical box, an almost tragic-comical combination, at any rate a triumph of the spirit over the material.

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Pavel Haas – Quintet op.10

Pavel Haas was born in Czechoslovakia in 1899 and died in Auschwitz in 1944 after a two year incarceration at Terezin or Theresienstadt concentration camp. At Terezin, Haas joined a number of other doomed composers, musicians, playwrights, actors and other artists, many of whom were eventually transferred to Auschwitz.

Haas style resembles both his teachers' (Janáček and Stravinsky) and is informed by a strong and colourful palette of Moravian folk songs and synagogue music along with the more modern European compositional technique of polyrhythms.

His wind quintet was composed in 1929 and published in 1934, but very few copies survived the war. The first movement, *Preludio*, is a lovely soulful melody. The second, *Preghiera*, is a dark and haunting prayer. The third, *Ballo Eccentrico*, leads the players through an increasingly frenzied folk dance. The final movement, *Epilogo*, is a powerful chorale bringing the work to a broad and expansive close.

The work is of high quality and ought to be considered among a seminal group of woodwind works written in Europe beginning in the 1920s -- including works by Paul Hindemith, Arnold Schoenberg, Carl Nielsen and Leoš Janáček.

Henri Tomasi (1901-1971): Cinq Danses Profanes et Sacrées (1948) (Five Sacred and Profane Dances)

Henri Tomasi (b. Marseille, 17th August 1901; d. Paris, 13th January 1971) received his first composition prize, the Prix Halphen, in 1925 for a work for wind quintet, the *Variations sur un theme corse*. Overall we can observe a predilection for wind instruments in his instrumental oeuvre; among his solo concertos are pieces for flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, bassoon, horn, trumpet and trombone. As well as the *Cinq Danses*, he composed a further wind quintet in 1952.

Both Tomasi's mother and his father, a simple postal clerk but also a great music-lover and amateur flautist, came from La Casinca on Corsica. Tomasi received tuition in music theory from an early age; he won first prize in this subject at the age of ten, followed by a first prize for piano playing when he was thirteen. The First World War initially prevented Tomasi from undertaking proper studies in Paris, and he had to earn a living in Marseille as a pianist in hotels, restaurants, brothels and cinemas. In 1921 a scholarship enabled him to commence studies at the Paris Conservatoire, where his teachers included Gaubert (the star pupil of Paul Taffanel), d'Indy, Caussade and Vidal. In 1927 he won second prize in the Prix de Rome with his cantata *Coriolan*, and was awarded a first prize for conducting.

This prize marked the beginning of Tomasi's career as a conductor; he later became chief conductor of the French National Orchestra and of the Monte Carlo Opera as well as being in great demand as a guest conductor all over Europe. In 1957, however, health considerations – including deafness in one ear—put an end to his conducting career, and he devoted himself entirely to composition.

His production includes numerous operas and ballets, solo concertos, orchestral works, chamber music, and a few sacred works. His music betrays various influences, not only from West European art music—Gregorian chants, neo-classicism and dodecaphony—but also from the folk music of Corsica and Provence, as well as exotic sonorities from Cambodia, Laos, Tahiti and the Sahara. “Although I have not shied away from the most modern modes of expression, I remain at heart a melodist. I cannot stand systems and secretarianism. I compose for the public at large. Music that does not come from the heart is not music.”

The title of the *Cinq Danses Profanes et Sacrées* alludes to the dances for chromatic harp and strings written in 1904 by Claude Debussy with the title *Danse sacrée et Danse profane*. Tomasi expands this contrasted pair by adding a pastoral dance, a wedding dance and a war dance. The movements are very concise and sharply characterized, and they demonstrate many of the above-mentioned influences. The ensemble is required to produce an enormous palette of tone colors, and each instrument is given virtuosic passages that are a pleasure to play. The War Dance, with its frenetic bassoon solo, is a perfect ending.

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Claude Paul Taffanel (1844-1908): Quintet in G-minor for Winds (1878)

Paul Taffanel (b. Bordeaux, 16th September 1844; d. Paris, 22nd November 1908) is regarded as the founder of the modern French flute school. The *Méthode complète de flute* that he wrote in collaboration with his pupil Philippe Gaubert remains to this day one of the major tutors for every flautist.

Taffanel received his musical education from his father and appeared as a flautist from an early age. During his studies at the Paris Conservatoire he was engaged first at the Opéra-Comique (1862-64) and later at the Grand Opéra where – as also in the Conservatoire orchestra – he was the solo flautist. In 1879, to promote wind playing, he founded the Société des Instruments à Vent for which he commissioned many new compositions (such as Charles Gounod's *Petite Symphonie*). In 1893 Taffanel became the conductor of the Paris Opera, and at the same time he was appointed professor of flute at the Paris Conservatoire.

In Taffanel's catalogue of works, as one might expect, we find principally positions for flute and piano, written for use at his own and his pupils' concerts. His one and only *Wind Quintet* (1878) is a typical example of his late-Romantic style of composition: themes that are melodically and rhythmically concise, plus the opportunity for every player to display virtuosity as well as *cantabile* qualities, have made it one of the best-loved works in the Romantic quintet repertoire.

The first movement is in classical sonata form: a gloomy, mysterious first theme is contrasted with a swinging, waltz-like second idea. After both themes have been worked out in a large-scale, dramatic development section, followed by the recapitulation and coda, the movement vanishes with an arabesque from the flute.

The second movement grows entirely from a songful horn theme, and offers all of the instruments the chance to display *cantabile* playing.

The finale is a tarantella that places the utmost demands on the musicians – and – with only brief interruptions from a chorale-like theme – chases towards the witty, unexpected conclusion. Barely ten years after Taffanel wrote this piece, Paul Dukas copied this ending exactly (intentionally or not?) in his brilliant orchestral scherzo *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, based on Goethe.

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We are fortunate that Bruce Heim, Professor of Horn at the School of Music and long-time friend of members of the Quintet, will be giving the pre-concert presentation at 2 PM in Room 130.