

FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC

The Prairie Winds
Jonathan Keeble, flute
Johanna Cox, oboe
Susan Warner, clarinet
David Griffin, horn
Timothy McGovern, bassoon

January 14, 2001
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific
Stockton, California

Program

This program is underwritten by a grant from the Webster Foundation

Quintet in g minor, Op. 56, No. 2

Allegretto
Andante
Minuet and Trio
Allegro

Franz Danzi
(1763–1826)

Quintette Pour Instruments a Vent

Allegro con moto
Andante
Vivace

Paul Taffanel
(1844–1908)

Quintette, Op. 13

Adagio, Allegro molto
Vivace
Adagio
Lento, Allegro con brio

Jacques Hétu
(b. 1938)

Simple Gifts

from *Appalachian Spring*

Aaron Copland
(1900–1990)

–Intermission–

Scherzo

Eugène Bozza
(1905–1991)

La Cheminée du Roi René

Cortège
Aubade
Jongleurs
La Maousinglade
Joutes sur L'Arc
Chasse a Valabre
Madrigal-Nocturne

Darius Milhaud
(1892–1974)

Choros No. 2

Heitor Villa-Lobos
(1887–1959)

Carmen Suite

Introduction
Habanera
Seguedille
Le Toréadors

Georges Bizet
(1838–1875)
(transcr. by David Walter)

The Prairie Winds

North America's foremost wind quintet, The Prairie Winds, combines the artistry of five virtuoso musicians from the Chicago Symphony and the faculties of the University of Illinois, Oklahoma State University, and Wheaton Conservatory.

The group debuted in 1996 and has played throughout the U.S. They are the quintet in residence at the Britt Music Festival in Medford, Oregon.

In addition to performing, they teach young wind players the art of chamber music with a style that uses theatre improvisation, dance, and music composition. The Prairie Winds records on the Albany Records label.

Program Notes

Danzi–Quintet in g minor

Danzi was born in Mannheim, the site of the remarkable orchestra fostered by the Elector who wisely put his money into attracting the top musicians of Europe and with that the most innovative composers, including the young Mozart. Danzi married a prima donna that had lived with the Mozarts for five years, studying with Leopold. The Elector moved to Munich and Danzi took his place in the orchestra, then toured and took the post of Kapelmeister at the Stuttgart court where he began a long friendship with Carl Maria von Weber, whose operas Danzi was to promote.

Like Weber, he explored bold harmonies and the use of unusual instrumental registers such as the lowest range of the clarinet. He blended Classical and Romantic elements, achieving a balance of concertante and virtuoso writing. His Opus 56 illustrates the *gallant* character of Danzi's musical language. The work opens with an insistent little motif that permeates the movement and is used as a vehicle of delicacy rather than high drama. Flute and oboe are the main melodic instruments throughout but there are deft bassoon figures in the finale and horn and oboe solos begin the *Andante*.

Taffanel–Quintette Pour Instruments a Vent

Taffanel is considered the father of the modern French school of flute

playing. With Gaubert, he wrote a method for flute playing and was professor of flute at the Conservatoire. He was born in Bordeaux, where his father was a flute teacher and started his son at an early age. Paris became his musical home as a flautist in the Conservatoire concerts, and conductor of the Paris Opera. His pupils at the Conservatoire are a long "Who's Who" of early twentieth century French flautists. His greatest contribution to the world of woodwinds was the founding of the Societe des Instruments a Vent in Paris in 1879, and so he is responsible for the renaissance of woodwind chamber music. He contributed fine chamber music himself and prepared effective arrangements for flute and piano.

One would expect the flute to be given virtuoso passages, and it is, but the Quintette opens with a flourish from the clarinet and the *Andante* features a horn *cantabile*.

Hètu–Quintette, Op. 13

Jacques Hètu is a much-esteemed French Canadian composer, one of the three Canadian composers most often performed by Canadian orchestras, and it would be wished he were heard more often in the United States. He was born in Trois-Rivieres, Quebec; as a child there, he heard Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* and thereupon decided to become a musician. His studies included work with the noted Canadian composer Clemont Pepin at the Conservatoire de Musique in Montreal as well as with the avant-garde Lucas Foss at Tanglewood. Later studies took him to Paris where he was included in the extraordinary Olivier Messiaen's analysis class. Both Bartók and Hindemith influenced his development. His compositions, including four symphonies, five concertos, and extensive chamber music, have been heard over the French, Belgian, and Canadian Broadcasting networks. He has been a leader in fostering Canadian composers, serving on the board of the Canadian Music Centre in Montreal.

Hètu's style took classical forms, exploiting with conciseness both lyrical and serious moods. In 1978 he wrote, "The essential is not to try to find a

completely novel way of organizing sounds but rather to discover one's own way of perceiving music. To me true originality is more authentic than eccentric." Hètu's musical world includes the poetry, emotion, and cohesive lines of Schubert, Brahms, and Berg and the malleability of the sound of his contemporaries.

The *Quintette* is a light work, written with spontaneity, imagination, and elegance.

Copland–Simple Gifts

Copland was born in New York of Russian-Jewish immigrant parents but he does not credit them for his musical career. Of that he says, "Music is a discovery I made all by myself." His first teacher in New York was very conservative and this made the "forbidden fruit" of modern music more enticing. He was the first American to study with Nadia Boulanger in Paris, to whom Americans afterwards flocked. His first work was influenced by jazz and then by highly dissonant works for sophisticated listeners. The depression changed his orientation—it seemed futile to write for an elite; he sought a different relation with the music loving public and turned to American folklore. The results include ballet music for *Billy the Kid*, *Rodeo*, and *Appalachian Spring*, worked out with the remarkable choreographer, Martha Graham. He accomplished the difficult feat of writing simple yet highly professional music with a musical texture that was clear and transparent.

Appalachian Spring concerns the courtship and wedding of a couple in rural Pennsylvania in the early nineteenth century. Copland himself arranged the music as a suite. The ballet begins slowly with the arrival of neighbors and the revivalist preacher and proceeds with the farmer and bride-to-be enacting their emotions, joyful and apprehensive. As the celebration continues, dance music speeds to a

presto. The daily activity for the bride and husband are enacted to the Shaker theme, "Tis the gift to be simple, 'Tis the gift to be free..." The music of *Simple Gifts* develops through five variations with a variety of contrasting textures, using canon, and often introducing fresh lines of counterpoint.

Bozza-Scherzo

Bozza was born in Nice and moved to Paris to study at the Conservatoire, where he won the Priz de Rome in 1934. After a time of conducting the Opera Comique, he became director of the Conservatoire in Valenciennes. He has written an opera, ballets, a symphony, and violin and cello concertos. He explored the woodwinds with *Luciolles* for six clarinets and *Suite Française* for quintette, *Three Pieces* for five trombones, and other music for unusual combinations of instruments.

The *Scherzo* is a rapid perpetual motion chase for the flute fleeing from the bassoon and other competition within the quintette. It is a "dazzling encore piece" composed in 1940.

Milhaud-La Cheminée du Roi René

Darius Milhaud was a member of the Group de Six, innovative composers in the heyday of new French music. *La Cheminée du Roi René* is made up of six numbers from the longer score for the film *Cavalcade d'Amour*, a tripartite work written in collaboration with the composers Desormiere and Honegger. Because the film had a low budget, Milhaud was limited to five instruments. The assignment was close to his heart; King René, ruler of Milhaud's native city of Aix-en-Provence in the 15th century, devoted himself to the well being of his subjects and the cultivation of the arts. The movements suggest activities at the court—*Cortège*, a procession; *Aubade*, a morning serenade; *Jongleurs*, jugglers; *Joutes sur l'Arc*, jousts on the Arc; *Chasse a Valabre*; hunting at Valabre—during that peaceful and pleasant time and place. To warm oneself at the chimney (fireplace) of Roi René is to bask in the sun and the music invites us to do that. Milhaud wrote the work during his wartime exile in the United States, and there is more than a hint of nostalgia to be heard in the music.

Villa-Lobos-Choros No. 2

The "choros" were instrumental street bands performing popular music in Rio de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos' home city. His timeliness and his greatness came from the use he made of his experiences playing with these bands, as well as from his extended travels collecting Afro-Indian and Portuguese folk music of Brazil. He was encouraged by two European musicians, Darius Milhaud, who was attached to the French Legation at Rio de Janeiro from 1915 to 1918, and the pianist Artur Rubinstein, who visited Rio in 1918 and who gained the support of rich patrons enabling Villa-Lobos to go to Paris in 1925. But when Villa-Lobos arrived it was not to study with anyone; his remark to an interrogator was, "You will study me." His stay included visits home and to Africa where he continued his absorption of Amerindian, African, and Portuguese traditions.

Villa-Lobos used the title "choros" for a sequence of 16 works, composed between 1920 and 1948 mainly in Paris. They were for various instrumental groups from the solo guitar to a complete orchestra with two pianos. They all incorporate South American rhythms and popular melodic characteristics. The choros include moments of lyricism as well as the excitement of strange rhythmic figures and exotic scoring and at times barbaric intensity. His choros for wind quintette of 1928 is a serenade with refrain and is strongly Brazilian in coloring.

Bizet-Carmen Suite

In 1875, Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, rehabilitated French musical drama, which had lost its prestige since the days of Rameau, Gluck, and Berlioz. Bizet was only thirty-seven years old when the opera opened at the *Opera Comique*, and was an instant success with the public, if not with the critics. Today it is the most frequently performed opera in the whole lyric repertoire. It has been said that to evoke the characters of *Carmen*, with their vitality and passionate intensity, is to evoke the music. Yet all is set with spareness of means, a fundamental French characteristic. Bizet was an authentic forerunner of the folklore composers who elevated the quintessence of popular music to a

universal level.

Several *Carmen* suites exist; when the suite is assigned to strings the fascination of the gypsy fiddlers is given ample sweep. But the melodies and rhythms are well carried by a woodwind ensemble. The introduction generally corresponds to the *Prelude* of the opera, in four parts, opening with the animated theme of the bull fight, then a slightly quieter passage. The chorus of the *Toréador* song is followed by *Carmen's* tragic "fate theme." The *Habanera* is a gypsy Spanish rhythm and the rhythm is used by *Carmen* to declare her freedom in love and life. The *Sequedille*, another Spanish idiom, was *Carmen's* seductive song and dance, using a broken plate as castanets, to charm Don José on his visit to the gypsy inn after his release from prison.

—Notes by Catherine Roche



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