

**South Bay Chamber Music Society**  
March 13 & 15, 2020

*Los Angeles Wind Quintet:*

Pam Vliek, flute  
Claire Brazeau, oboe  
Don Foster, clarinet  
Elliot Morreau, bassoon  
Martin Owen, horn

Program notes by Boglárka Kiss, D.M.A.



### The wind quintet

The standard wind quintet evolved from *Harmoniemusik*, which, in its widest sense, meant music for wind instruments. There had been a variety of wind ensembles present in European secular musical life from the 1700s on, including military bands, chamber wind groups, street bands, and the like. The core of *Harmonie* was a pair of horns, flanked by bassoons in the bass, and a pair of oboes or clarinets in the treble range. Flutes, English horns and basset-horns were occasionally added, or used as alternatives. The repertoire of wind ensembles varied widely and included arrangements and transcriptions of opera and ballet originals to original military and dance music to the occasional sonata-like compositions.

The wind quintet became standardized around 1800, with the following instrumentation: flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn. This particular combination was able to take advantage of the technical improvements that were being made to wind instruments, and allowed some of the principles of Haydn's writing for string quartet to be transferred to chamber music for wind instruments. Among the composers who wrote abundantly for the wind quintet in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century are Antonio Rosetti, Antoine Reicha, and Franz Danzi. However, most 19<sup>th</sup>-century composers paid little to no attention to this combination of instruments.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Paul Hindemith, Carl Nielsen and Arnold Schoenberg "rediscovered" the sonic and contrapuntal possibilities of writing for winds. Since then, the repertoire has grown considerably for the ensemble, helped along by the increase in wind playing in schools, which has also contributed to the writing of all kinds and levels of chamber music for wind quintets.

### **Overture to *Die Fledermaus***

Johann Strauss, Jr. (1825-1899)

Johann Strauss, Jr. began achieving success as an orchestra leader at the age of nineteen, and he quickly achieved such popularity as to emerge as something of a rival to his more established father. Aside from dance music, Strauss, Jr. wrote successful light operas and operettas. The arrangement for wind quintet of this overture features many of the famous polkas and waltzes heard throughout the operetta.

The following link provides a rendition of the work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mR8Pdn5svCg>

### **Autumn Music**

Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962)

Jennifer Higdon is one of America's most acclaimed and most frequently performed living composers. She is a major figure in contemporary Classical music. Higdon enjoys several hundred performances a year of her works, and she is Chair in Composition at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Higdon said the following of *Autumn Music*:

When I started thinking about writing a piece for woodwind quintet, my mind began to contemplate all of the wonderful chamber music that I have played as a flutist through the years. My mind kept going back to one of the greatest contributions to the woodwind quintet literature, Samuel Barber's "Summer Music." [...] It is with a humble heart that I pay homage to him and to the genre of woodwind quintet literature with this piece. Autumn comes to us in many guises: incredible explosions of color; air that suddenly snaps with crispness and clarity; a tinge of melancholy on the eve of change in all of our lives. This piece is a musical portrait of the essence and images of Autumn. The first part of the quintet represents the beginning of the season, with its explosions of color, sharp lines, and vivid imagery; always changing and always vibrant. The musical lines are sometimes present with each instrument carrying a different rhythm, reminiscent of the way leaves float down from a tree in a very unsynchronized manner. As the quintet moves into the last part of the work, there is more of an introspective and melancholy quality to the music; the music itself becomes more simplified, with a darker color to the sound. It is the passing of the season.

For a rendition of this work, please click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KA8zWzGuDjg>

### **Quintet for Winds**

Hedwige Chrétien (1859-1944)

Hedwige Chrétien was a French composer and professor at the Paris Conservatoire. Although she composed over 150 works and achieved fame in Europe and the U.S. during her lifetime, little is known about her.

Listen to this two-movement work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lo51GG8vqc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUMEPWK1kwQ>

### **Winter Music**

Adam Schoenberg (b. 1980)

Emmy Award-winning and Grammy® nominated Adam Schoenberg has twice been named among the top 10 most performed living composers by orchestras in the United States. His works have received performances and premieres at the Library of Congress, Kennedy Center, New York Philharmonic, The Cleveland Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, and Hollywood Bowl. Schoenberg has received commissions from several major American orchestras, and is also an accomplished and versatile film composer. He is currently a professor at Occidental College, where he runs the composition and film scoring programs.

Schoenberg said the following about *Winter Music*:

Barber's *Summer Music* proved to be the main source of inspiration, as I have always considered his woodwind quintet to be one of the best ever written for the medium. He was a true-American composer who, along with Ives, Gershwin, Copland, and Bernstein, helped define the sound of American classical music. I have always felt connected to these composers, so I wanted to write a quintet that feels American in spirit. The theme that [was] proposed to me was our universe, images of galaxies, planets, and stars. With this in mind, I thought about what it would be like to be on another planet. This led me to think about my New England roots, and how I am now living in Los Angeles and experiencing my first winter. Combining all of these thoughts, images, and experiences into one artistic idea, I have come up with *Winter Music*: A companion piece to the first part of Barber's *Summer Music*, and my idea of life on a single planet in one of the 170 billion galaxies located millions of light-years away from earth. That is, a fantasy world somehow paralleling and reflecting my first winter in Los Angeles: magically-warm, fairy-tale like, whimsical, light, airy, and full of love.

Listen to this work here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8z6LrJGzaMI>

### **Appalachian Spring**

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

For many, *Appalachian Spring* has come to represent the sound of Appalachia with its underlying story of a newlywed pioneer family "building a house with joy and love and prayer." Interestingly, neither the Appalachia theme nor this ballet story appeared in the piece until much later in its creation. Commissioned of Copland in 1942 by the famous American dancer and choreographer, Martha Graham, the ballet music that Copland originally conceived of was first titled "Ballet for Martha." Although a basic outline of the ballet's story existed from the start, most of the details that we know today were hammered out in the several months prior to its premiere. Copland did achieve both requests in the commission however, namely to write music that is danceable and one that is "American" sounding.

Here's the famous "Variations on Simple Gifts" from the ballet:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KXgl19rpJ4>

### **Three Pieces for Mechanical Organ**

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

In 1799 Beethoven composed three pieces for Mechanical Organ WoO 33 for Duke Josef Deym, who ran a *Kunstkabinett* (an exhibition space for rare and unusual objects) in Vienna. When these works resurfaced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, musicians were unsure which instruments they may have been intended for. One theory is that they were written for a mechanical organ or clock, called a *Spieluhr*.

Whatever their original instrumentation, the main theme of the Adagio is closely related to the Violin Romance Op. 50 which was written at approximately the same time, and is in G Major. The motif in the eighth bar can also be found unchanged in the *Egmont* Overture. The Scherzo and Allegro are in contrast to the Adagio, very similar to the music box pieces by Haydn. As the original literature for wind quintet from this period is not very extensive, this arrangement represents a welcome addition to the repertoire.

You may listen to the work here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THHnB8\\_23Ws](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THHnB8_23Ws)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8NQUpf7A0I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuEgOPe-Xbo>

### **Summertime**

George Gershwin (1898-1937)

“Summertime” is an aria composed by George Gershwin for the 1935 opera *Porgy and Bess*. The song soon became a jazz standard, and has since been recorded in just about every style of music.

Follow this link for a performance of this piece: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFK\\_4lMCH5k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFK_4lMCH5k)

### **Summer Music**

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Written in 1956, *Summer Music* is emblematic of Samuel Barber’s writing with its transparent lines and textures. The opening sounds of the horn and bassoon evoke the torpor of summertime, which is followed by a pair of wind blasts from the flute and clarinet that decay, as a lament rises in the oboe. This is followed by a series of summertime episodes that are as provocative as they are beautiful.

Click the link for a performance of the work here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6mFePpMDKM>

### **A Midsummer Night’s Dream**

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Mendelssohn was probably the greatest child prodigy since [Mozart](#). He began taking piano lessons from his mother when he was 6 and made his first public concert appearance at the age of 9. As a child he was also a prolific composer, with five short operas and 11 symphonies to his credit by his early teens.

In 1842, King Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia commissioned Mendelssohn to write the complete incidental music for Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The new work was an immediate success. Its overture, wedding march, and other movements quickly became audience favorites.

Listen to a performance of the Intermezzo here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ppT8m2sJpM>



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