



LYR 6018

The Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet – The Lyrichord Years Vol. 1

Music for the Musical Clock Transcribed for winds

5 pieces by Beethoven
13 movements by Haydn
3 pieces by Mozart

Arranged for The Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet

Felix Skowronek, Flute, James Caldwell, Oboe, William McColl, Clarinet
Robert Bonnevie, Horn, Arthur Grossman, Bassoon

The Musical Clock

The attempt to perform music by mechanical means has not been confined to the synthesizers and electronic music of the last century. The end of the 18th Century witnessed an activity of considerable proportions in this field, even if less sophisticated in the methods available. Of the numerous types of instruments to appear, the most popular were the mechanical organs known as Flute-Clocks (Flötenuhren Spieluhren). Though the titles implied the use of a timepiece in connection with the machine, this rather amounted to a generic term for what in

effect was a small mechanical organ. With or without an attached clock, it housed a set of pipes and small bellows, actuated by a rotating pinned cylinder, and powered by a weight or spring-driven clockworks. Whether of the small 4-foot register variety used by Haydn, or of the larger 8-foot register instruments associated with Mozart and Beethoven, all had a distinct flute-like quality of sound.

There is evidence of an earlier Berlin, “mechanical organ school” which produced works by Quantz, C.P.E. Bach, and other lesser-known composers.

Beethoven (*Tracks 1 thru 5*)

Beethoven’s “Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ”, were commissioned by Count Josef Deym, owner of a Viennese wax museum in the late 18th Century. Deym had also commissioned the three lovely Fantasies (K. 594, K. 608, K. 616) from Mozart in 1791.

According to Georg Schünemann in the forward to his edition of the five pieces for piano (“Stücke für die Spieluhr”, Schott, 1940), the pieces could be dated as early as 1792. Georg Kinsky in his “Thematisch-Bibliographisches Verzeichnis...” of Beethoven’s works gives evidence supporting 1799 as the year of their composition.

The pieces appeared in two sets: Nos. 1-3 (*Adagio assai*, *Scherzo*, *Allegro*), and Nos. 4-5 (*Allegro non piu molto*, *Menuett*). The manuscript of the former is in the Grasnick Collection of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek of Berlin, while the latter, of the Artaria Collection, was counted among the war-losses of the same library. Since Schünemann’s edition represented the only form in which these last were ever printed, it is supposed that they remain the only preservation of the two, though not necessarily exact copies, since slight alterations of the original had been necessary in the other pieces to accommodate them to a 2-hand piano edition.

The *Adagio assai* as well as the *Scherzo* and *Allegro* of the first set had appeared in a number of forms and transcriptions after 1900. In his edition of the *Adagio assai* for nine winds (“Adagio in F-dur für die Spieluhr”, Breitkopf u. Hartel, Wiesbaden, 1957), Willy Hess mentions a 1902 version transcribed for wind quintet and points out that this instrumentation came closer to the original sound possibilities than did the various prior arrangements for piano or solo instrument with piano accompaniment.

In considering a transcription of the whole set of pieces, it was felt that the wind quintet would be an especially suitable vehicle, due to the disposition of the pieces themselves. The *Scherzo* and the *Allegro* were originally written on two treble staves each, the *Allegro non piu molto* and *Menuett* each on alto and tenor clef staves. The *Adagio assai* was the fullest in conception of the lot, written on a four-line system of three treble clefs and one bass clef. While this occasionally used chords of up to twelve notes, the general texture of the piece was well within the capabilities and collective sonority of the five instruments of the wind quintet.

The arrangement of the two lost pieces of the Artaria Collection represents the most radical treatment of the set. Various doublings and added chordal notes were incorporated into the quintet version of *Menuett*. Since the *Allegro non piu molto* seemed to indicate a fuller treatment, its arrangement involved an expansion in range and voicing. The order of the pieces for this recording was arbitrarily selected as conforming most closely to the conventional order of a classic-era chamber work. Save in the transposition from C Major to Eb Major of the *Allegro non piu molto*, the quintet version of these pieces involves no changes from Beethoven’s melodies and harmonies.

Haydn (*Tracks 6 thru 9*)

Joseph Haydn's interest in mechanical organs was a result of his association with Pater Primitivus Niemecz, chaplain and court librarian of the Esterhazy family. Niemecz possessed an astounding mechanical genius manifested in the manufacture of numerous mechanical musical instruments. Among these were three Flute-Clocks dating from the years 1772, 1792, and 1793 containing in total 30 original short pieces of Haydn.

The pieces in this recording belong to the latter instrument, and include two further examples found later in manuscript form. Since the 1793 organ was somewhat larger than its two predecessors (measuring 34 x 74 x 36 cm) and contained more pipes (29), its pieces are the fullest sounding of the entire series. The 1792 instrument had an ornate clock mounted on its cover, whereas the 1793 instrument, although containing the necessary fittings, survived without such an attachment. Haydn presented the instrument as a gift to his patron Prince Nicholas Esterhazy, prior to departing for his second London journey.

It would be difficult to discuss these works without referring to Ernst Fritz Schmid's article "Joseph Haydn und die Flötenuhr (*Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, Viertes Heft, 14. Jahrgang, January 1932). This account contains an examination of each piece, as well as descriptions of Niemecz's three instruments. Schmid's earlier companion work (*Werke für das Laufwerk/Flötenuhr*)/Verlag Adolf Nagel, Hannover, 1931), is a transfer of the original music into a 2-hand piano version. Unlike Schünemann's edition of the Beethoven pieces, no alterations were made in the piano version. Ornamentations were minutely examined and presented, especially Haydn's unique usage of the "arpeggiated acciacatura", a natural technical feat for the mechanical organ, and a challenge to present-day wind instruments.

The present transcription for wind quintet is based on Schmid's piano edition. Aside from changes of key and various repeats in certain pieces, the quintet version employs melodic doublings and chordal strengthenings, as well as occasional extensions of range without changing the original melodies or harmonic intentions.

Though all of the pieces for the instrument are original, some are reworkings of more famous versions. No. 25 (Marche) is an arrangement of a lost march of Haydn for 2 clarinets, 2 horns, and 2 bassoons, and for a time was mistakenly identified as a work of Beethoven. No. 28 is an arrangement of the Finale of the String Quartet, op. 71, #2. No. 29 is better known as the Minuet of the "Clock" Symphony, though in this case it is possible that the mechanical organ version came first. No. 30 represents another treatment of the Rondo-Finale of the "Lark" Quartet, op. 64, #5, while No. 32 is a free arrangement of the Finale of the 10th "London" Symphony.

Mozart (*Tracks 10 thru 12*)

The "Fantasies" bearing Köchel numbers 594, 608, and 616 were commissioned for by Count Josef Deym in 1790 for use on his collection of musical clock-organs which were housed in his wax museum in Vienna, and operated by means of a revolving barrel-and-pin cylinder, powered by clockworks.

But of the major contributions, those of Mozart are the longest and most elaborate in structure. His first commission was for the Adagio (K.594) to be played at the unveiling of a wax effigy of a field marshal who had recently passed away. The composer's view of the situation was not enthusiastic. While attending the coronation of Leopold II in Frankfurt, Mozart wrote to

his wife in a letter dated October 3rd, 1790: “I planned so definitely so to write the Adagio right away for the clockmaker so that my dear wife might have some ducats in hand, and I did it – however as this is a very hateful job for me, I was so unhappy not having completed it – I keep writing everyday – but I always stop because it tires me – indeed, if it were not for such an important reason I should like to drop it altogether – but now I hope to force it after all, bit by bit – well if it were for a big clock and the thing should sound like an organ I should like it, but the work is for small pipes which sound rather high and childish to me...”

However reluctant the composer may have been in their creation, Mozart produced “mechanical” masterworks of great charm – works which would be generally unknown if it were not for the various transcriptions that have been made of them. Not only does the music surpass the expressive and tonal resources of the instruments are rare in our time and inaccessible to most audiences. Mozart made an arrangement for two pianos, and other re-workings have appeared from time to time for solo piano. Organists have especially adopted the pieces as their own and, of course, this recording presents a very effective transcription for wind quintet. The arrangement used here is a modification of one by Wolfgang Sebastian Meyer, published in 1958 by Edition Sikorski of Hamburg. The quintet felt the need for various re-voicings and minor changes in chordal distributions that might lend more accord with the published scores of the original compositions.

Soni Ventorum (personnel in 1964)

Felix Skowronek, (d. 2006) *flute, Felix Skowronek was a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia (1956). He was solo flute with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1956-57, 1959-60) At the time of this recording he had been with the Casals Festival Orchestra since 1961.*

James Caldwell, (d. 2006) *oboe, graduated from Curtis Institute in 1961. He was first oboe at Robin Hood Dell, Philadelphia, during their 1959 and 1960 seasons. A soloist winner in the Philadelphia Orchestra Youth Auditions, at the time of this recording he had appeared as a soloist with the Chicago Little Symphony since 1961.*

William McColl, *clarinet, graduated from the Akademie für Darstellende Kunst in Vienna. He was solo clarinet with the Philharmonia Hungarica in 1959, and at the time of this recording had been a member of the Casals Festival Orchestra since 1960.*

Robert Bonnevie, (d. 2012) *French horn, is the third Quintet member from Curtis Institute (1960). He was solo horn with the New Orleans Symphony from 1960 to 1963. At the time of this recording, he was also a participating artist of the Marlboro Festival.*

Arthur Grossman, *bassoon, a 1955 graduate of the Curtis Institute. He was solo bassoon with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra from 1958 to 1960 and with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1960 to 1961. At the time of this recording, he had performed with the Marlboro Festival and a member of the Casals Festival Orchestra starting in 1962.*

(The following history of the group draws primarily on the original album release notes. A complete, annotated timeline of the Soni Ventorum’s history and personnel can be found at <http://www.soniventorum.com>)

The Soni Ventorum wind quintet was founded in Germany in 1957 as the 7th Army Wind Quintet, and served as an adjunct to the famed 7th Army Symphony Orchestra. Both organizations existed as “cultural liaisons” with the European civilian public, and the quintet, consisting of solo wind players of the orchestra, presented concerts in the German cultural centers to great public acceptance and critical acclaim.

Upon discharge, the members separated; subsequently they occupied the first chairs of the Cincinnati Symphony, the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony, the New Orleans Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Hungarica of Vienna, and the Marlboro Festival Orchestra. With the exception of William McColl, who pursued his studies at the State Academy for Music in Vienna, the members of the group were all graduated from the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

When, in 1960, Pablo Casals founded the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, he provided for the re-grouping of the ensemble as the wind instrument faculty of the school and as members of the Festival Casals Orchestra.

Since the highly successful tour and New York debut in 1963, Soni Ventorum came to be considered synonymous with the finest in woodwind chamber music. The group appeared as soloists with the Festival Casals of San Juan in 1964 as well as fulfilling a similar role at the Peninsula Music Festival (Wisconsin) that same year. Tracks One thru Nine of this album (originally released as LLST 7143 “The Musical Clock”, 1964) was the group’s *Lyrichord* recording debut, and received great critical praise for unprecedented purity of intonation, beauty of tone, and sensitivity of interpretation. The Mozart works on the album were released a short time later in 1964 as part of “Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet plays Mozart and Villa-Lobos”

Reflections in 2012

It is a rare thing these days to find some members of a musical ensemble of Soni Ventorum’s longevity and stature – a group that enjoyed a performing career that spanned over half a century – still very much with us, and able to consider the breadth of their extraordinary group’s performing and recording years, with the perspective of the present day. Of the digital reissues of the group’s five *Lyrichord* albums, founding member William McColl recently wrote:

“These were our first commercial recordings as a quintet. We were proud to have been chosen to join the select (but in those days very numerous!) group of paid musicians who could call themselves recording artists. Our origins and personalities were very diverse yet our tastes coincided. Our ruling inspiration was the phrasing style of Casals: Play frankly, he would say. To please him one struggled to communicate nuances, even in the most frantic presto. A contrasting (but not contradictory) influence in those Puerto Rico years was Juan José Castro, the great Argentinean conductor, who could take an adagio very slowly indeed and still maintain the line and flow of the phrase. He could fall off the bottom of the metronome, Leuba once said, and land on his feet. But above all, this re-release now provide an opportunity to hear once again the important, now-silenced voices of Bonnevie, Caldwell and Skowronek.

His other surviving Soni Ventorum colleague from these early recordings Arthur Grossman wrote:

When Soni Ventorum began functioning under that name, in Puerto Rico, we felt somewhat isolated from the mainstream of musical activity. It was an ideal place to work as a group and to solidify our style, and to be able to prepare assiduously for any performance. However, it was only as we began to record and the recordings began to be reviewed and noticed, especially in the New York press, that we felt that our isolation was minimized and that we were indeed part of the mainstream of chamber music.

Tracks, “Music for the Musical Clock”

01. Allegro in G (Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ- Beethoven - Arr. Skowronek) 1:48
02. Menuett (Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ- Beethoven - Arr. Skowronek) 3:08
03. Adagio (Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ- Beethoven - Arr. Skowronek) 6:35
04. Scherzo (Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ- Beethoven - Arr. Skowronek) 1:46
05. Allegro (Five Pieces for Mechanical Organ- Beethoven - Arr. Skowronek) 3:02
06. #19 Allegretto, #20 Andante, #21 Vivace (Haydn - Arr. Skowronek) 4:54
07. #22 Menuett, #23, Allegro ma non Troppo, #24 Fugue (Haydn - Arr. Skowronek) 5:00
08. #25 Marche, #26 Andante, #27 Allegretto, #28 Allegro (Haydn - Arr. Skowronek) 7:36
09. #29 Menuett, #30 Presto #31 Allegretto #32 Allegro (Haydn - Arr. Skowronek) 6:41
10. Adagio and Allegro -Fantasy in F Minor KV 594 (Mozart) 8:51
11. Fantasy in F Minor KV 608 (Mozart) 10:36
12. Andante in F Major KV 616 For Small Mechanical Organ (Mozart) 5:53

Total Running Time: 1 hour 5 minutes 48 seconds

Tracks 1 thru 9 - formerly released as LLST 7143

Tracks 10 thru 12 formerly released as LLST 7168

Special thanks to Arthur Grossman and William McColl for their invaluable assistance in helping to bring these wonderful recordings back for new audiences to enjoy.

Reissue produced and remastered by Nick Fritsch



LYRICHORD CLASSICAL

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station

New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291

email: Info@lyrichord.com

Web: lyrichord.com

© and (P) Lyrichord Discs Inc. These texts (including images) are published under copyright by Lyrichord Discs Inc. All rights are reserved.
The texts, and the music associated, with them, may only be republished, duplicated or sold, with written permission from Lyrichord Discs Inc.