



LYR 6024

## The Soni Ventorum Wind Quintet – The Lyrichord Years Vol. 3

### Joseph Goodman

Quintet for Wind Instruments (1954)

### Walter Piston

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

### Ernst Krenek

Pentagram for Winds (1957)

### Heitor Villa-Lobos

Quintette en forme de Choros (1928)

**JOSEPH GOODMAN**, a native New Yorker born in 1918, studied composition with Paul Hindemith, Walter Piston, and later in Italy with Gian Francesco Malipiero. He is a faculty member of both Union Theological Seminary and Queens College in New York. His compositions include numerous anthems and motets for chorus; some organ works, a concerto for organ and orchestra; and various chamber works, including a Flute Sonata and a Trio for flute, violin, and piano. Many of these have been performed in Europe, South America, and the United States.

The Quintet for Wind Instruments was completed in 1954. It is a formidable work of challenging proportions, and received its first performance in 1962 at Queens College on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the school. Soni Ventorum was the performing ensemble, and the work has been associated with this group ever since. Another collaboration between Goodman and Soni Ventorum took a place when his Concertante for Wind Quintet and Orchestra, dedicated to the group commissioned by Dr. Thor Johnson and the Peninsula Festival Orchestra, received its premiere in 1965.

Each of the three movements of the Quintet is based on a tonal center; however, tonality as such is used only in a broad sense. The relationship of the tonal centers, when taken as a motive (B – C – B Flat) provides a unifying element throughout the entire work, appearing in one form or another in every movement. The first is constructed in sonata form with implications of traditional key relationships, while the other two involve rhythmic considerations of differing character. The second movement's 8/8 time is grouped in 3 – 3 – 2 and 3 – 2 – 3 patterns, while the mid-section is firmly marked in a binary tempo. In the last movement the theme and variations are based on a concept of shrinking measure lengths, 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 – 1. As the variations unfold, and as the accompanying note values become shorter, this produces an effect of sustained melody and rhythm fused into an almost continuous shifting line. Alexander Broude Inc has published the work.

**WALTER PISTON** (1894 -1976) This American composer studied composition with Nadia Boulanger.

Of the trio combinations possible from the instrumentation of the wind quintet, the most popular has been the so-called "trio d'anches" (oboe, clarinet, bassoon). However, the use of the flute in place of the oboe results in an expression of range and agility as well as a different yet compatible timbre – characteristics noted in Walter Piston's "Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet, and Bassoon". The first and third of these are marked with vigorous activity reined by ostinato rhythmic figures and giving way to slower lyric sections. The second piece has a nostalgic quality maintained by both closely and widely spaced sonorities. In the relatively small but growing repertoire of this combination, Piston's *Trio* is at once one of the earliest of this type as well as one of his own first works (Paris, 1925) and has enjoyed a steady popularity since its composition.

**ERNST KRENEK** (1900 - 1991) grew up in Vienna and his development as a composer passed through a number of stylistic periods: post-romanticism, experimentation, neo-classicism, and atonality combined with elements of jazz. Around 1933 he found in the dodecaphonic system that which he had been seeking, in his own words, "a very high degree of logical coherence and intelligible significance.") Though living in Los Angeles area since 1947, he has traveled frequently to Europe to conduct performances of his works. From time to time he has also served as a guest professor or composer-in-residence at a number of U.S. schools, most recently at Brandeis University, Dartmouth College, and the Peabody Institute.

Krenek's Quintet dates originally from 1951 and was written at the request of the Cologne Wind Ensemble. Rewritten and expanded in 1957, the work was given the title "Pentagram". From the original only an introduction and the last movement are conserved, three new movements being added. The second calls for English horn and bass clarinet, with an alternative form provided for the standard quintet instrumentation.

The “Pentagram” is a thoroughly listenable work even on the first hearing. Neat and dry in construction, wit and humor prevails throughout its four short movements. As a composition, its deft and straightforward handling of 12-tone material could serve as a textbook introduction to this demanding technique of expression. Basically classical in its application it utilizes a primary row and its retrograde, as well as the inversions of both. While each series is generally presented in an accepted manner (i.e. each tone following the other in sequence), variations in the normal order do occur, and a number of technical complexities come to light in subsequent development of the material.

**HEITOR VILLA-LOBOS (1887–1959)** The musical form we know today, as the “Choros” is an invention of Villa-Lobos, 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” (1928) is only one of many works by the composer for wind ensemble. It is freer in its form than the others, and, perhaps offers more variety in texture and rich melody than the others. It 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. There is nothing of great complexity in the score to deny the popular character of the music. Lengthy themes, flowing together, produce shifting textures in the slower sections and become excited and more energetic in the faster sections. From the mysterious jungle-like beginning to the shrill chord that closes the work, the “Quintette” with its quasi-improvisations and sheer fascinating sound, seldom fails to capture and hold the attention of the listener. Though originally scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, English horn, and bassoon, it suggested immediately the substitution of the French horn for the English horn to conform to the standard instrumentation of the wind quintet. Max Eschig provides a French horn part in which the original notes have been retained except for their transposition to a lower, more comfortable register of the French horn. Villa-Lobos approved of the idea of such a substitution and even suggested he would like the clarinet to play in the extended duet with the oboe near the beginning of the work, but he did nothing himself about making an arrangement. This recording presents that duet with the French horn and oboe, a most exciting challenge for any horn player (and beautifully met on this recording by Mr. Bonnevie). The question of personal taste and preference will remain regarding any such “tampering” with an original score, but this work will certainly be heard most frequently in the version recorded here. Already the “Quintette en forme de Choros” has assumed a permanent position in the wind quintet repertoire where it is finding a more frequent performance and a wider audience.

### **Soni Ventorum (personnel in 1965)**

**Felix Skowronek**, (d. 2006) *flute, Felix Skowronek was a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia (1956) and a founding member of Soni Ventorum. He was solo flute with the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1956-57, 1959-60), the Casals Festival Orchestra and the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico (1960-1966). He was principal flute with the St. Louis Symphony (1966-1967) and Principal flute, of the Seattle Opera's series of Wagner's The Ring of the Nibelung (1979-1982). An authority on the use of foreign and domestic hardwood species for flute and woodwind instrument manufactures, Skowronek documented the tonal qualities of numerous hardwood species carved into wood flutes and wood flute head joints. His research, performances and lectures throughout the 80's and 90's contributed significantly to the return of*

*the wood flute and the option of using a wood head joint to create specific tonal effects relevant to the specific genre of music to be performed.*

**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. He was a soloist winner in the Philadelphia Orchestra Youth Auditions, principal oboist in the Washington National Symphony (1965-1966/1968-1971), principal oboist in the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia (1967). Caldwell began teaching at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 1971 where he taught generations of oboe players for the next thirty-five years. Caldwell was recognized as an authority on early music, founding the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute and was also an avid player of the viola da gamba.

**William McColl**, clarinet, William McColl began playing clarinet at the age of 12. He graduated from the Akademie für Darstellende Kunst in Vienna and was a founding member; Soni Ventorum He was solo clarinet with the Philharmonia Hungarica (1959), and a featured performer of the Casals Festival Orchestra. He was Professor of clarinet at the University of Washington (1968-2006). A specialist in early clarinets and basset horns, he has appeared in numerous international tours, recordings and concert appearances with the Amadeus Winds, the San Francisco Philharmonia, the Boston Handel and Haydn Society the New World Basset Horn Trio, and others and has recorded for the world's top record labels.

**Robert Bonnevie**, (d. 2012) French horn, is the third Quintet member from Curtis Institute (1960). He was Principal horn, in the New Orleans Symphony (1960-1963), the Santa Fe Opera Orchestra (1962), Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, Casals Festival Orchestra (all 1963-1967) the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (1967-1978/1980-2000), and the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Bonnevie also taught at Louisiana State University, the University of Puget Sound, Seattle Pacific University and Indiana University.

**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. Grossman moved to Seattle to join the faculty of the School of Music of the University of Washington. Grossman has toured worldwide with Soni Ventorum and as a soloist, and has made more than thirty recordings. He has also served as principal bassoon in the Israel Philharmonic. In January 1988 he became Associate Dean for Arts of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Washington, a position in which he served for ten years.

*(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 traces its origins back to the 7<sup>th</sup> Army Wind Quintet (1957), which complemented the famed 7<sup>th</sup> Army symphony Orchestra during its most brilliant period. Both organizations existed as “cultural liaisons” with the European civilian public, and the quintet, consisting of the solo wind players of the orchestra, presented concerts in the German cultural centers to the great public and critical acclaim.

When, in 1960, Pablo Casals founded the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, he invited members of this group to be the woodwind faculty. A new ensemble was formed and began

concertizing as the **SONI VENTORUM** Wind Quintet; in addition, they became members of the Casals Festival Orchestra. Prior to coming to Puerto Rico, they had occupied the first chairs of the Cincinnati and Indianapolis Symphonies, the Marlboro Festival Orchestra, the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, the Philharmonia Hungarica of Vienna, and the New Orleans Philharmonic. With the exception of William McColl, who pursued his studies at the State Academy of Music in Vienna, the members of the group are all graduates of the famed Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia.

Since the highly successful autumn tour and New York debut of SONI VENTORUM in 1963, the group has come to be considered synonymous with the finest in woodwind chamber music. The group has appeared as soloists with the Festival Casals of San Juan in 1964 and 1965 as well as fulfilling a similar role of the Peninsula Music Festival (Wisconsin) of the same years. This Lyrichord issue joins their previous recording activities (Lyrichord LL 143, Stereo LLST 7143, Music for The Musical Clock by Beethoven and Haydn), which have received great critical praise for unprecedented purity of the intonation, beauty of tone, and sensitivity of interpretation.

—*Felix Skowronek*

- 01 Moderato (Quintet for Wind Instruments 1954 - J. Goodman) 7:20
- 02 Allegretto gioviale (Quintet for Wind Instruments 1954 - J. Goodman) 4:40
- 03 Tema con variazioni-molto adagio (Quintet for Wind Instruments 1954 - J. Goodman) 13:11
- 04 Allegro scherzando (Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon 1925 - W. Piston) 2:26
- 05 Lento (Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon 1925 - W. Piston) 3:59
- 06 Allegro (Three Pieces for Flute, Clarinet and Bassoon 1925 - W. Piston) 3:27
- 07 Presto (Pentagram For Winds 1957 - E. Krenek) 2:07
- 08 Andante (Pentagram For Winds 1957 - E. Krenek) 2:10
- 09 Allegretto (Pentagram For Winds 1957 - E. Krenek) 1:22
- 10 Moderato Allegro (Pentagram For Winds 1957 - E. Krenek) 2:19
- 11 Quintette en Fore de Choros (1928 - Villa-Lobos) 10:14

Running Time 53:10

*Tracks 1 thru 10 originally released as LLST 7158*

*Track 11 originally released on 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.*

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