

**DAVID MORITZ MICHAEL (1751–1827) 80538-2**  
***PARTHIEN 6-9***  
**PACIFIC CLASSICAL WINDS**

**Play:** 1. to engage in recreational activity; to amuse or divert oneself; frolic; sport. 2. to perform on a musical instrument.

The woodwind *Parthien* of David Moritz Michael (1751–1827) convey delightfully both of these meanings. The works are technically challenging enough to interest both the capable amateur and the professional performer, and they contain enough humor and whimsy, even in their most serious moments, to engage the mind and heart of both performer and listener.

David Moritz Michael wrote fourteen *Parthien* for combinations of clarinets, horns, and bassoons (with the occasional flute or trumpet). Exact dates for these compositions have not been established. These works, well within the tradition of the *divertimento* or *serenade* of the eighteenth century, were performed in concerts in Bethlehem and Nazareth, Pennsylvania, and in informal serenades. Each consists of three to five movements with formal structures like those of the early classical symphonies, with movements generally longer than those of his two *Water Journey* suites, which were designed to be used during the Whitmonday holiday celebrations in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. While more serious in character than either of the suites, the *Parthien* retain the lighthearted exuberance, even playfulness, of eighteenth-century *divertimenti*—including, nevertheless, some passages very reminiscent of Haydn’s more serious writing.

Michael’s writing shows a mastery both of instrumental timbres and compositional technique. His phrases, while generally quite regular, have some intriguing twists. Most entertaining in this regard is the final Allegro of *Parthia 9*, where his motivic treatment lulls the listener into a false sense of regularity of phrasing—and then leaves you hanging with a measure to spare! He handles the instruments with confidence, using them in fairly traditional patterns and then easily varying the combinations and thematic treatment. All of the parts require technical facility and musicianship; none are simple “fillers.” Moreover, while few of his melodies or harmonic progressions are more than mildly surprising, all of these works show delightful variety and color. Even with the predominantly homophonic textures, there is a surprising amount of interplay among all of the instruments. Even in their most serious moments, these pieces are fun.

*Parthia 6* is written for pairs of clarinets, horns, and bassoons; *Parthien 7, 8, and 9* are each written for two clarinets, two horns, and a single bassoon. *Parthien 6, 7, and 8* survive in the collection of the Lititz, Pennsylvania, *Collegium Musicum*; *Parthien 7 and 8* are in the collection of the Philharmonic Society of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the successor of the Bethlehem *Collegium Musicum*; and *Parthia 9* is in the collection of the Salem, North Carolina, *Collegium Musicum*.

David Moritz Michael was born in Germany and became a member of the Moravian Church when he was thirty years old. He taught in the Moravian school at Niesky and came to America in 1795. His official church position was as a worker with the young men of the congregations in Nazareth and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and his contributions to the musical life of the settlements was great. He revitalized the Bethlehem *Collegium Musicum* and conducted, in 1811, an early American performance of Haydn's *Creation*. In addition to his wind ensemble works (the two *Water Journey* suites and fourteen *Parthien*), he wrote a number of anthems and arias for church services. He returned to Germany in 1815 and died in Neuwied, Germany, on February 26, 1827.

## THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

The Moravian Church traces its origins back to the followers of Jan Hus (1369–1415), a Czech priest and reformer who was executed as a heretic. Hus's followers organized a society called the "Unity of the Brethren" (*Unitas Fratrum*) in 1457, devoted to piety and congregational participation in worship, including hymn-singing. For about 200 years this group led a precarious life, mainly in Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. They made significant contributions in hymnody, theology, and education, but the Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years' War nearly destroyed the small church, forcing its remnants underground.

In 1722 some of the descendants of these "Bohemian Brethren" settled on the estate of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in Saxony, and under his protection they re-established their church. Almost from that day the Moravian Church, as it came to be known, was highly evangelical, sending out missionaries to places such as Greenland, the West Indies (in 1732, to minister to the slaves), Africa, and the British colonies, coming first to Georgia in 1735. The first permanent Moravian settlement in North America was established in Pennsylvania in 1741 and named Bethlehem. Other settlements were founded soon after, in Nazareth and Lititz, Pennsylvania, and Bethabara, Bethania, and Salem in North Carolina.

Always essential to the Moravians has been the emphasis on a "heart religion" of piety and joy; on the role of music in worship and in life; and on education for all. For some fifty to seventy years the American Moravian settlements were primarily closed communities, serving both as places where the Moravians could live the life they chose, and places from which many missionaries were sent out—to the Native Americans, whose languages the Moravians learned, in order to preach in the language of the people.

The Moravian Church has continued to spread, albeit slowly in comparison with other denominations. A reason for its relatively small size is that in evangelizing, the Moravians were not focusing on making more Moravians, but rather simply on winning people to Jesus Christ—they were then encouraged to become a member of whatever denomination they wished. The worldwide Moravian Unity today has nineteen provinces, with some 60,000 Moravians in the United States, some 100,000 in Central and South

America, and more than 350,000 in Africa, 30,000 in Europe, Great Britain, and Ireland, 40,000 in the Caribbean, and smaller groups in India, Labrador, and elsewhere.

## MORAVIAN MUSIC

The eighteenth and nineteenth-century Moravians considered music a necessity of life, not a cultural veneer. Many Moravian clergy and lay people were trained in music by the same composers who influenced Mozart and Haydn; thus they came to the New World fully conversant with the tastes and practices of European classicism. In Moravian life there is no distinction between what we now call “sacred” and “secular,” nor between what part of life is musical and what is not: While in the early days little emphasis was given to music as a distinct profession—many of the composers were also teachers and pastors—music was an essential part of everyone’s education.

Instruments came to America with the first Moravians; by 1742 Bethlehem had flutes, violins, violas da braccio, violas da gamba, and horns. These instruments were played not by “professionals” but by accomplished amateurs, who enjoyed orchestral and chamber music as well as accompanying vocal solos and anthems for worship. Of the music by Moravian composers, by far the greater portion is what today is called “sacred”—anthems and solos for liturgical use.

While there are a number of instrumental pieces by Moravian composers, the far greater portion of the instrumental works in Moravian collections were not written by Moravians. The sheer volume of instrumental music in the collections, however, gives the lie to any thought that the Moravians disliked such music. The Moravians’ interest in instrumental music is demonstrated by their continuation of the German tradition of the *Collegium musicum*. The Bethlehem *Collegium Musicum* was formed in 1744, for the twofold purpose of the edification of the players and the improvement of the community’s church music. However, this group finally began to thrive after the arrival from Germany in 1761 of Jeremias Dencke and Immanuel Nitschmann. By the time these two men left Europe, orchestrally accompanied church music was being used extensively, and was gaining in popularity among the Moravian congregations there. It is likely that these two men brought this greater emphasis with them to America.

When the Moravians adopted wind instruments, it was for a specific purpose—to perform on a number of outdoor occasions. Wind music in the Moravian tradition has consisted of two basic types: the trombone choir, which Harry Hall (see bibliography) refers to as “the ecclesiastical ensemble,” and “secular” ensembles—chamber groups and bands. Trombone (or brass) choirs were often used, especially outdoors, to announce special services and events; to welcome visitors; and to accompany singing at outdoor services such as the Easter Dawn service and at funerals. These traditions continue today in many Moravian congregations.

“Secular” groups—chamber ensembles and concert bands—developed from the *Collegia musica* along a stream parallel to that of the brass choirs. While the latter focus their

attention primarily on chorales, the community bands and chamber ensembles mostly play chamber music, marches, dances, and arrangements of popular music of various sorts. These groups provide not only entertainment for players and audience alike but also enable the instrumentalists to improve through working with more challenging music. By the 1780s the Bethlehem *Collegium Musicum* was playing the music of the best composers of the day—Bach’s sons, Johann Hasse, Stamitz, Haydn, and many others now less well-known. Other *Collegia musica* were founded—in Lititz around 1765, Nazareth around 1780, and Salem around 1786—the latter continuing until about 1835.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century and first quarter of the nineteenth, there was an increase in interest in woodwind chamber music in the *Collegia musica*, evidenced by a wide variety of pieces of early Classical and Classical-era music, ranging from duets and trios to eight- and ten-part works. Among the various combinations of woodwinds, the favorite seems to have been a basic combination of clarinets, horns, and bassoons, with an occasional flute or oboe. This music became very popular as both indoor and alfresco entertainment from approximately 1800 to 1830.

The increasing demand for music by these groups stimulated the American Moravians to a veritable frenzy of copying and transcribing from European masterworks as well as composing their own works. The Salem *Collegium Musicum* collection consists of some 500 compositions, of which about 150 are in manuscript form. Moravian contributions to this collection include works by David Moritz Michael and Johann Christian Bechler (1784–1857), both of whom were quite able composers of church anthems as well as lighthearted woodwind ensembles.

## PRESERVATION AND REDISCOVERY

From the mid-nineteenth century, the Moravian settlements were not as isolated as they had been in earlier years, and as more music became more readily available, Moravian-written music was used less and less. How then did it survive at all?

Moravians keep records of almost incredible depth and breadth. As music was played less often, it was not thrown out, but rather stored in boxes, crates, cabinets, attics, basements, and so on. In the 1930s and 1940s some of this music was uncovered, and as research began it became apparent that this was a treasure trove. The first Early American Moravian Music Festival was held in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1950, conducted by Dr. Thor Johnson (who went on to conduct at the first eleven Moravian Music Festivals). Other festivals and seminars followed, and in 1956 the Moravian Music Foundation, an independent 501 (c) (3) nonprofit institution, was chartered for the purpose of preserving the music, preparing modern editions for publication and performance, and generally making it available to performers, churches, researchers, and scholars worldwide, as well as to encourage contemporary composition. Of the roughly 10,000 pieces in MMF holdings, some 400 have been edited and performed in recent years.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MORAVIAN MUSICAL HERITAGE

The Moravian musical heritage is an important piece of musical and cultural history for several reasons:

First, because of its craftsmanship, musicality, and sincere portrayal of spiritual values. As it is written for capable amateurs, it avoids virtuosic display, but is far from being simplistic or condescending.

Second, this music represents the finest body of music written or performed in America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During the eighty years from about 1760 to 1840, American Moravians wrote hundreds of anthems, duets, solo sacred songs, and instrumental pieces, and collected hundreds of others—both printed and hand-copied. Visitors to the Moravian communities were consistently high in their praise of Moravian musical activities.

Third, the Moravians performed the best of European music, often prior to performances of the same works in the larger American cities. The question of “firsts” is difficult to establish in any historical discipline, but there is no doubt that the Moravians were aficionados of the finest in contemporary music from Europe and America.

## THE MORAVIAN MUSIC FOUNDATION

The Moravian Music Foundation was founded and chartered in North Carolina in 1956 to preserve, study, edit, and publish the music retained in the Archives of the Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces. Since its establishment, the Foundation has acquired many additional items, including the Irving Lowens Collection of early American tunebooks; the band books of the 26th North Carolina Regimental Band (from the Civil War); and a reference library of more than 6,000 volumes, specializing in Protestant church music and American music history.

The Moravian Music Foundation is responsible for many first modern-day performances of music from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Foundation serves as a resource for scholars, performers, and students worldwide as well as for church musicians. More than 40 orchestral works from the Foundation’s holdings have been edited and placed in the Fleisher Collection of the Philadelphia Free Library.

The collections of the Moravian Music Foundation contain some 10,000 manuscripts and early imprints of vocal and instrumental music, sacred and secular, from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. Not all of this was written by Moravian composers, but it is all music that the Moravians used and enjoyed. Included in the collections are works by Haydn and Mozart, J. C. Bach, Carl Friedrich Abel, Johann Stamitz, and a host of less well-known composers. A number of these are the only known original copies in the

world. The Moravian collections, then, provide a cross-section of classical musical culture, placing the masters in their proper historical perspective. —*Nola Reed Knouse*

Dr. Nola Reed Knouse is director of The Moravian Music Foundation, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

### **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Hall, Harry H. *The Moravian Wind Ensemble: Distinctive Chapter in America's Music*, Ph.D. dissertation, George Peabody College for Teachers, 1967.

Knouse, Nola Reed and C. Daniel Crews. *Moravian Music: An Introduction*, Winston-Salem, NC: Moravian Music Foundation, 1996.

### **SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY**

*By A Spring (Suiten Bey Einer Quelle Zu Blasen)*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80531-2.

*Ich bin in meinem Geiste*. Barbara Wallace, soprano. New World 80467-2.

*Parthia 1*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80490-2.

*Parthia 2*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80490-2.

*Parthia 3*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80531-2.

*Parthia 4*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80531-2.

*Parthia 5*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80531-2.

*The Water Journey (Die Wasserfahrt)*. Pacific Classical Winds. New World 80490-2.

**Pacific Classical Winds** was a not-for-profit corporation established for the performance of chamber music on period instruments. Classical period wind instruments differ significantly from their modern descendants: The early clarinets and bassoons have fewer keys, and the classical (“natural”) horn has no valves. While these instruments do not possess the evenness of tone or the volume associated with modern orchestral wind instruments, they are capable of greater nuance and a more intimate sound, qualities much exploited by the better composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The overall pitch common in the Classical era was rather lower than modern pitch; Pacific Classical Winds uses A=430 cycles, as opposed to the A=440 (and higher) in use today. Historically, instruments have gradually crept up in pitch, becoming more and more tightly wound (literally so, in the case of the strings) in order to meet demands for louder and more brilliant sounds occasioned by ever-larger performing venues. The scale itself has changed over the centuries, and where there was once an interesting variety, performers on modern instruments have for the most part settled on the consistent, if bland, equal temperament. One of the many pleasures of playing period instruments has to do with the musical rewards that accompany the exploration of the more textured and harmonious older scales.

### **The Instruments**

**Clarinets**

Charles Zukovsky: P. Levin (after H. Grenser, c. 1800)

Gary Bovyer: P. Levin (after H. Grenser, c. 1800)

**Natural Horns**

Rebecca O'Donovan: R. Seraphinoff (after Halarí, c. early 1800s)

James Patterson: Courtois Neveu Aine, c. 1820

**Bassoons**

Michael O'Donovan: P. de Koningh (after H. Grenser, c. 1810)

Rose Corrigan: P. Levin (after Bühner & Keller, c. 1810) (*Parthia 6*)

**Contrabass**

Edward Meares: John Juzek, Prague, c. 1930

Pacific Classical Winds  
P. O. Box 4687  
No. Hollywood, CA 91617

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[www.moravianmusic.org](http://www.moravianmusic.org)

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Francis Goelet (1926-1998), Chairman

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