

ROGER GOEB

Quintet for Woodwinds Not 2

The New Art Wind Quintet

The revolutions in the arts during the first half of this century were produced by artists who felt the need to break down barriers, to uproot audience habits, to shock the audience into a truer participation. This, for most composers today, is no longer a goal. Our recent ancestors stated their case and made their point. Writing music of the most astringent tone possible to disturb and shock the audience has, as might be expected, run its course. Those aims and methods are now as old-fashioned as the avoidance of recognizable melody.

The really new in music is that which makes an effort to control the whole vast vocabulary of sounds we have inherited. Composers are again trying to attract the listener, making new kinds of “beauty” and establishing further areas of communication. Instead of being deliberately objectionable (and being somewhat cantankerous in the process) the arts today again must project, must be constructive, and must aim to prove that much of man’s energies and talents are being used to further the interests of man, rather than to destroy him.

The woodwind quintet is a very fruitful kind of instrumental choice for contemporary music. It has the possibility of projecting the sort of meaningfulness that one expects from a string quartet along with the remarkable variety of timbres inherent in the instruments as solo or in groups. The quintet was completely avoided, quite rightly, by Beethoven and the other composers of his century. The subtleties and general delicacy natural to these instruments had no place in their monumental style. Nor did the composers of the first half of the present century (Hindemith excepted) spend much effort on this instrumental combination. Certain French composers wrote for the group, but they apparently felt that the light and superficial was its special province. For a composer who is trying to make his music attractive, the woodwind quintet seems a good choice.

The Quintet #2 recorded here refers in its first movement to some of the stark and astringent facts of our time. Sharp and piercing moments appear and sometimes reappear, but in contrast to these are passages of pensiveness and melancholy. Purposefully, the movement comes to no conclusion; the oboe wanders in its melody-like line and then settles finally on an unresolved tone and stops. The second movement represents a smile: the comedy is delicate and intimate; toward the close of the movement it tends to be a little broad and square, but mostly the atmosphere is mild. It alludes to humor but it isn’t going to push the point of its joke.

Movement three starts in a brooding mood pierced by occasional flashes of color. It expands into heavier and more determined expressive areas, but returns occasionally to the original texture. The last movement opens with a loud and blaring horn call opposed immediately by a dark and ominous passage. Contrast, therefore, becomes the subject of the movement and numerous quick oppositions are carried out. As in the first movement, this one ends indecisively, except that here there is a sense of finality and completion brought about by reiteration of one of the earlier passages.

Technically the entire quintet is an exploration into sounds that are new and yet have a certain appeal. With differing sounds, naturally, some aspects of form are dictated by them. New relations in sound require new relations in time to accommodate them. The idea of a musical mosaic could be thought of as part of the result of this exploration.

—Notes by ROGER GOEB

Roger Goeb was born in Cherokee, Iowa in 1914 and was educated in the United States, principally under Otto Luening. After 15 years teaching in a number of universities throughout the country, he was appointed Executive Secretary of the American Composers Alliance and later became Secretary-Treasurer of Composers Recordings, Inc. As a composer, Goeb has been mainly interested in orchestral and chamber music, and these have been performed in Europe; South America and Japan as well as in this country. His Symphony #3 appears on the CRI label (CRI. 120) and his Symphony #4 is scheduled for the same label.

WILLIAM SYDEMAN

Seven Movements for Septet

Concerto da Camera

Max Pollikoff, violin

CRI Chamber Ensemble Paul C. Wolfe, conductor

The *Seven Movements for Septet*, written in 1958, is essentially a “divertimento” on quite a sophisticated level. The first movement uses tight canonic imitations of serially derived materials to produce a light and almost dance-like texture. The second and third movements are tiny and monothematic in mood and material: first mournful, then graceful. The center and apex of the work is the virtuoso fourth movement which, in one long grand sweep, proceeds from anger to near hysteria. The next two movements return to a delicate mood: slow, then fast. The final movement, a polyrhythmic grotesque waltz, recapitulates all the material of the work.

The *Concerto da Camera* consists of a group of variations based on a series of initially fragmentary ideas. These are presented in rapid succession, highly contrasting in mood and texture, and they comprise the “theme” proper. This ostensibly heterogeneous group of ideas becomes unified by a consistency of intervallic usage throughout and by the eventual contrapuntal combination of them. After the unfolding of the five variations, a final restatement of the theme appears, and by now both the material and the order of presentation seem inevitable. A brief coda, in which the elements melt together, concludes the work.

—Notes by WILLIAM SYDEMAN

William Sydeman, born in New York City in 1928, teaches composition at the Mannes College, from which he graduated in 1955. Graduate studies were completed at the Hartt College of Music. His principle teachers were Roger Sessions, Felix Salzer and Roy Travis; his orchestral works have been performed by the Symphony of the Air and the Orchestra of America, while his numerous chamber works have been frequently heard in new music programs in New York and in symposia throughout the country. Sydeman was the winner of a Pacifica Foundation competition. His works are published by Leeds Music, Inc.

MAX POLLIKOFF, American violinist, was born in Newark, New Jersey. With the help of scholarships from the MacDowell Club of New York City, he studied with Leopold Auer and was given further scholarships from that famous teacher. During his distinguished career as soloist and chamber music performer, Pollikoff became especially interested in contemporary music. This led him to annually accept the position of Co-Director at the Bennington Composers Conference and to found the notable New York concert series, “Music in Our Time”, which continues to be one of the major presentations of new music in the world.

Besides being a brilliant performer on the violin, piano and oboe, PAUL C. WOLFE is also an accomplished conductor. After numerous conducting appearances in New York City and elsewhere Mr. Wolfe was appointed conductor of the Florida West Coast Symphony, a post he now holds. He is also first violinist of the Silvermine String Quartet, and staff-member of the Bennington Composers Conference and Chamber Music Center.

The NEW ART WIND QUINTET was organized in the fall of 1947 with the specific desire to further the appreciation and understanding of woodwind chamber music in America. As a direct result of their activities since that time, the wind quintet has received increased recognition as a definitive chamber music medium. In addition to concertizing throughout the United States, the ensemble has been responsible for the discovery and performance of a vast amount of music for their combination, and has shown that the wind quintet is a vital part of our musical heritage.

(Original liner notes from CRI LP jacket)