

American Brass Quintet





**American Brass Quintet
2026-2027 Biography
Tiago Linck (Trumpet); Brandon Ridenour (Trumpet);
Eric Reed (Horn); Hillary Simms (Trombone);
John D. Rojak (Bass Trombone)**

The American Brass Quintet is internationally recognized as one of the premier chamber music ensembles of our time. “The most distinguished” of brass quintets (*American Record Guide*), the group has earned its stellar reputation through its celebrated performances, genre-defining commissioned works, and ongoing commitment to the education of generations of musicians. Since its founding in 1960, the American Brass Quintet has performed on five continents, made nearly 60 recordings, and premiered more than 150 contemporary works for brass.

The American Brass Quintet has premiered works by leading composers including Elliott Carter, Eric Ewazen, Jennifer Higdon, Anthony Plog, Huang Ruo, David Sampson, Gunther Schuller, William Schuman, Joan Tower, Charles Whittenberg, and John Zorn, among many others. These works have contributed significantly to both contemporary chamber music and the foundation of the modern brass quintet repertoire. The Quintet’s Emerging Composer Commissioning program, with grant assistance from the Jerome Foundation, produced brass quintets by rising stars Gordon Beeferman, Jay Greenberg, Trevor Gureckis, and Shafer Mahoney. Recent commissions include David Biedenbender’s *Sacred Geometry*, Ching-chu Hu’s *A Distant Hope*, premiered at Chamber Music Columbus, Jennifer Higdon’s *Book of Brass*, debuted at Bowling Green State University, and *Largo* by Tyshawn Sorey, premiered at The Juilliard School in 2025.

Highlights of the 2026-2027 season include a South American tour and performances at the University of Iowa and in Reno, NV; Akron, OH; La Jolla, CA; and San Antonio, TX. The previous season included performances at The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston; Chamber Music Society of Louisville; InConcert Sierra in Grass Valley, CA; Chamber Music Society of Logan in Utah, as well as concerts and educational work at Interlochen Arts Academy and Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

The group’s latest recordings include two digitally released EPs: Jennifer Higdon’s *Book of Brass* and David Biedenbender’s *Sacred Geometry*, both released in 2025. *Perspectives* (2017) is the latest of 12 full length albums with Summit Records and features music by Robert Paterson,

Jay Greenberg, Sebastian Currier, and Eric Ewazen. It garnered praise for bringing the “utmost cohesion, balance, and expressivity to each of the scores they perform with ear-catching intensity and finesse” (*Gramophone*).

Committed to the development of brass chamber music through higher education, the American Brass Quintet has served as Ensemble-in-Residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and at the Aspen Music Festival since 1970. President Emeritus Joseph Polisi has said of the group’s residency at Juilliard, “With intelligence, artistry, and imagination, the American Brass Quintet has exemplified the highest standards of chamber music for brass instruments during its remarkable existence.” In 2018, the group launched the ABQ Seminar @ Aspen, a four-week brass chamber music intensive at the Aspen Music Festival that offers the highest caliber of training for emerging brass quintets and musicians. Since 2000, the Quintet also has shared its expertise in chamber music coaching and performance through a program of short residencies that feature regularly in the group’s touring schedule. Offering young musicians an intense chamber music experience over several days, the Quintet’s residencies have been embraced by schools and communities throughout the United States and in a dozen foreign countries.

Among its numerous distinctions and citations, the American Brass Quintet is the 2013 recipient of the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for significant and lasting contributions to the field, the highest honor accorded by Chamber Music America.

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American Brass Quintet

Critical Acclaim



“Positively breathtaking.”

New York Times

“The high priests of brass.”

Newsweek

“The members of the American Brass Quintet breathe as one, provide effortless well-matched phrasing, and generally produce a superbly balanced, fine golden sound.”

Los Angeles Times

“Among North American brass ensembles none is more venerable than the American Brass Quintet.”

New York Times

“The ABQ brings forth a confident and exceptionally balanced performance, highlighting the artistry of five working as one.”

International Trombone Association Journal

“The ABQ’s sound is both immaculately blended and thrilling in terms of sonic punch.”

The Arts Desk

“The quintet’s clear sound and precise articulation let the music speak with big-time personality.”

Aspen Times

“There really isn’t a better source for contemporary classical brass music than the ABQ.”

Audophile Audition

“It is quite impossible to overpraise the playing of the American Brass Quintet...they have everything...brilliance, attack, perfect ensemble and intonation, and a tone quality of unrivaled purity, range and power...a concert of such high quality one could only single out a few of the outstanding moments...sombre beauty...feather-like delicacy...technical brilliance...wonderful sonorities. For one listener in a long and full career of over half a century this was concert was a unique experience.”

The Telegraph

“The American Brass Quintet filled the cathedral Tuesday evening with a range of color and sound that was astonishingly rich and varied..just as impressive was the variety of music involved, taking in its stride works from the fifteenth century to the present day...show players with the verve and power of this fine quintet.”

The Times (London)

“The program was clearly the result of careful preparation...the performance both from an individual and ensemble viewpoint was exemplary, and in addition a noble one in quantity and quality the group pays rewarding attention to dynamic gradation.”

Western Mail

August 20, 2025

American Brass Quintet Names New Member

By Susan Elliott

The American Brass Quintet (ABQ) has announced the departure of Kevin Cobb, one of its two trumpeters and in the group since 1998, and the arrival of Tiago Linck to succeed him. Linck, who is from Brazil and as such becomes the ABQ's first Latin American member, joins trumpeter Brandon Ridenour, who arrived in 2023, along with [Hillary Simms](#), who succeeded Michael Powell on trombone. Hornist Eric Reed has been with the group since 2014, and bass trombone John D. Rojak arrived in 1991.

ABQ, founded in 1960, has been in residence at the Juilliard School since 1987 and the Aspen Music Festival and School since 1970. Its many (other) claims to fame include performing on five continents, premiering 150 works for brass, many of them ABQ commissions, and making some 60 recordings.



The new lineup (l to r): Tiago Linck; Brandon Ridenour; Eric Reed; Hillary Simms; John D. Rojak

Linck, 38, is from the south of Brazil where he served as principal trumpet of the Porto Alegre Symphony Orchestra from 2009 to 2024 while touring internationally as a soloist. He also taught at the Porto Alegre Symphony Music School from 2014 to 2023; he has continued teaching at a number of key places, including the International Jazz Trumpet Festival.

An honors graduate of the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Nice, where he studied under Patrick Carceller and Pierre Dutot, Linck came to New York in 2023 to work with Met Opera Orchestra principal trumpet David Krauss and study at the Manhattan School of Music via scholarships from the Rochlis Family Foundation and the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation.

Since moving to the States, he has continued to pursue solo and chamber music work; next season he becomes third/utility trumpet of the New Jersey Symphony.

His predecessor in ABQ, Kevin Cobb, said the decision to step down had been "difficult," but that would be he be starting "the next chapter of my life [to] shift focus toward evolving personal priorities. It's been an extraordinary privilege to be part of ABQ." He welcomed his successor, saying he was "confident that he will match the remarkable musicianship of the group, bring his own fresh ideas, and continue its tradition of excellence."



The Chautauquan Daily

August 23, 2026

American Brass Quintet to conclude chamber series with diverse repertoire

By Rocco Priolett



For Eric Reed, American Brass Quintet's french horn player, beginning a concert by harkening back to early music has become akin to a ritual for the group.

"There's something about it — that we come out and we play something super cohesive and homogeneous and uplifting and beautiful — that I think defines us in a way," Reed said. "It, right off the bat, shows the audience that we are on the same page and we're playing in tune and really well together."

Despite opening with a mashup of two John Dowland pieces by the quintet's trumpet player Brandon Ridenour, the group offers an eclectic variety of works, ranging from the English Renaissance to American contemporaries.

"I think this program fits more into what you might consider a contemporary view of what brass is capable of. ... Variety is part of that — that we can, and we will, show a lot of different colors and different sounds and different characters," Reed said.

Their contemporary pieces — ranging from a commissioned piece from Juilliard friend Anthony Barfield and his spiritual wheel-of-life-inspired "Samsara," to a fast movement from Jennifer Higdon's "Book of Brass," which they felt proud to commission, to Osvaldo Lacerda's exploration into traditional Brazilian dances — each offer something distinct.

"The goal for us is to play music that is accessible and has a lot of variety," Reed said. "Even though not a lot of the music that we play is stuff that people will be



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familiar with, we want people to leave the concert being curious to find out about the composers that we played.”

At 4 p.m. today in Elizabeth S. Lenna Hall, American Brass Quintet will deliver the Chautauqua Chamber Music Guest Artist Series’ final performance of the season.

Reed grew up in a musical household. He began by singing in choirs and playing the xylophone during music class. In fifth grade, he picked up the french horn. After playing in marching band and orchestras, he decided to study the instrument in college.

What distinguishes brass from other instrument families is its inherent festive traits; he noted that most performers initially start because it is simply fun. Whether triumphantly backing a football game in a marching band or with a professional quintet in a concert hall setting, for Reed, this quality has not dissipated.

“There’s a social aspect to it. It’s not like a lot of string instruments — especially violin, I’d say, and pianists, you know? They start like [at] age 5 or something, and they start out by playing alone,” Reed said. “But this is a little different. We are all used to playing in small and large groups from the very, very beginning. And so, this is us celebrating that.”

Despite the revolving personnel throughout the group’s history, for more than 65 years, American Brass Quintet has showcased the capabilities of brass music through a variety of accessible, often underrepresented repertoire of works both new and old. Since 1987, the quintet has served as the ensemble-in-residence at The Juilliard School. The group’s current lineup all serve as faculty members.

“It’s sort of like family in a way,” Reed said of their relationship performing onstage.

“We get to know each other’s idiosyncrasies quite quickly in this kind of setting.”

Without a conductor, the quintet is strengthened by an “autonomy of musical expression.” For Reed, large gestures and even eye contact are not required to dictate a concert’s musical journey. Instead, American Brass Quintet is united by each member’s individual nuances.

“... If you’re paying attention, you know what your colleagues’ ears do when they breathe; or, you know what they are going to do based on how they change their posture slightly, just move a little bit,” Reed said. “... We know what is going to come out. We know what’s going to happen when we all breathe together, when we move together.”

The concert will conclude with a commissioned piece by a friend of the group, David Biedenbender, titled “Sacred Geometry.” The distinct four-movement piece revolves around intrinsic designs found in both nature and architecture; one movement is even dedicated to the “bizarre” and “whimsical” work of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí.

Reed said the piece is a “tour de force” they are proud to present, often placed at the end due to its “powerful” nature. In the third movement, titled “Nautilus,” Reed highlighted a particularly moving, beautiful-sounding passage for him. Here, amid a chorale of low brass, a muted trumpet blends against it, sounding not too dissimilar to “backward-sounding music.”

“I think it does exemplify us as a group in a way, because there is that homogeneity of the chorale, but also this funky, almost like, ‘I-don’t-know-how-you’re-doing-that’ kind of sound at the same time, and somehow it works,” Reed said. “It’s super powerful. I love that moment.”

The Oberlin Review

March 3, 2026

The Second Coming of Midas: American Brass Quintet Turn All They Touch to Brass

By Sasha Kolb



Last week, as part of Oberlin's Artist Recital Series, the American Brass Quintet visited Oberlin. The American Brass Quintet, established in 1960, is one of the world's premier chamber music ensembles. Currently comprised of Tiago Linck and Brandon Ridenour on trumpet, Eric Reed on horn, Hillary Simms on trombone, and John D. Rojak on bass trombone, the American Brass Quintet has earned its stellar reputation through masterful performance, genre-defining commissioned works, and its commitment to the education of young musicians. They have been Ensemble-in-Residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and at the Aspen Music Festival since 1970. Here at Oberlin, they gave a series of career talks and masterclasses, all of which culminated in a spectacular performance in Finney Chapel Feb. 20.

Among others, double-degree first-year trombonist Caitlyn Dwyer, Conservatory second-year trombonist Amy Chou, and

Conservatory third-year French horn student Angelique Brewington performed in masterclasses taught by members of the quintet.

Dwyer played an etude for Simms and Rojak in her masterclass. As etudes are primarily designed to develop specific technical skills, the feedback Dwyer received was about breathing technique.

"After we did all the weird breathing exercises and stuff, I played it again," Dwyer said. "Sure enough, I did play the whole phrase, flutter-tongued without breathing in the middle, which is pretty big. I'm not a very huge person, so my air capacity isn't usually that big, but [Simms] helped a lot!" Beyond technique, the quintet's masterclasses put heavy emphasis on the emotions that musicians express through their art.

"[Simms] said that I should think about the story, not just the notes, so that I can tell the story, and the audience can feel the story," Chou explained.

Brewington received feedback in the same vein.

"[Eric Reed] is big on having a character for each section," Brewington said. "He asked me about the opening statement. I told him it was heroic. He had me play it again with that kind of emotion. I felt more connected to it; more emotion was put into it. I felt like I was able to have more fun with it, too. Later that day, I went to the practice rooms. I felt like I was able to make the whole piece more musical. Even my tone opened up."



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The American Brass Quintet also encouraged cross-discipline exploration through a chamber masterclass.

“It was interesting to watch — we got to watch a quintet coach a quintet,” Dwyer said.

Held in the Birenbaum Innovation and Performance Space, the American Brass Quintet’s career talks all seemed to drive a similar message for the students.

“They just have fun doing what they do, and if you have fun doing what you do, you never work a day in your life,” Brewington said. “My biggest takeaway from [the career talk] was really just enjoying what you do, having fun with it. They told us how they ended up in the position that they’re in right now, and they all had different paths. It was interesting to hear about how there isn’t one clear-cut road in this field.”

In a conservatory setting, it can be easy to forget the reason why one chooses their profession. But the American Brass Quintet affirmed why music is so many people’s passion.

“[Rojak] was like, ‘This isn’t our work,’” Dwyer said. “‘We do this so we don’t have to work.’”

The performance in Finney Chapel was the crown jewel of the American Brass Quintet’s visit. A program of contemporary works by Anthony Barfield, Philip Lasser, Jennifer Higdon, Osvaldo Lacerda, David Biedenbender, and a mashup of baroque-era poems arranged by Brandon Ridenour exhibited unparalleled cohesion, a variety of colors, and an impossibly round, rich tone.

“The sound in Finney was really, really beautiful. Especially [Simms], the tenor trombone player,” Dwyer said. “When she had those open solos, her sound carried through the hall.”

Brewington was similarly entranced.

“It was fantastic,” Brewington said. “All of their sounds blend so well together. You can tell they’re all enjoying what they’re doing. I was just in shock. That was probably one of my favorite performances I’ve attended so far, being here [at Oberlin].”

THE ASPEN TIMES

July 20, 2024

Aspen Music Festival and School: Expanding the bounds of classical music

By Harvey Steiman

...In their recital on Tuesday, the American Brass Quintet fielded arrangements (by members of the quintet) of music from the early 18th century and earlier and new works they have commissioned, including a world premiere and two from 2022.

To my ears, the winner was Jennifer Higdon's "Book of Brass," which bracketed two virtuosic and vivacious toccata-like movements around gentler, more legato fare. The writing took advantage of the quintet's precision of execution and sensitivity to dynamics and tone. Anthony Barfield's "Samsāra" traced a lovely if bittersweet arc in its eight minutes.

The premiere, "A Murder of Crows," described sets of animals in four colorful, restlessly fitful movements which included A Tower of Giraffes and a Shadow of Jaguars (that are chased off by a gang of otters).

All of the above outshone a set of pleasant court dances by William Brade, arranged by Raymond Mase (when he played trumpet in the quintet), and two brief madrigals by Carlo Gesualdo, arranged by Brandon Ridenour, currently playing trumpet.



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Sequenza 21/

October 19, 2023

Justin Dello Joio – *Oceans Apart* (CD Review)

By Christian Carey

Composer Justin Dello Joio enjoys a top flight slate of performers on *Oceans Apart*, his latest recording for Bridge. The title work is a piano concerto, performed live here by the Boston Symphony, conducted by Alan Gilbert, with Garrick Ohlsson as soloist. A short bit of applause is left on the tail end of the recording, otherwise one would never be the wiser. The quality of the rendition and recording are excellent.

Dello Joio conceived of *Oceans Apart* when watching surfers being challenged by massive waves. The concerto translates this image into a piece with a muscular orchestration trying to overwhelm the soloist. The scoring is vivid and varied, with imaginative use of harp, percussion, muted brass, and string effects to create the undulating feel of the surf. As the piece builds, it swells and indeed threatens to subsume the pianist. It is appreciated that Dello Joio has his own take on “water music:” no ersatz Debussy here.

Ohlsson is a marvelous interpreter, undertaking the role of vying against the orchestra instead of, as is traditional, being supported by it. That said, in places where the soloist is intended to blend in with certain cohorts of the ensemble, such as pitched percussion flurries, shimmering and well-coordinated passages result. His solo turns reveal formidable virtuosity. The final cadenza finds the pianist challenged over and over again by violent interruptions, which is succeeded by a supple denouement. Not to overstress the program, but I have to wonder if the surfer went underwater. *Oceans Apart* is one of Dello Joio’s best orchestral pieces to date, with a

versatile language and well-planned trajectory.

The other two works on the CD are for chamber forces. *Due per Due* is played by NY Philharmonic principal cellist Carter Brey and pianist Christopher O’Riley. The first movement, “*Elegie (To an old musician)*,” is dedicated to Dello Joio’s father, Norman Dello Joio. One can hear a clever co-opting of the elder composer’s use of pantonality and dissonant counterpoint. At the same time, Justin Dello Joio’s voice is an unmistakable part of the piece; it is far more intricately shaped and complexly hued than any piece by his father. The second movement is a *moto perpetuo*, but one that is far more developed and intricate than many pieces written in this style. Brey and O’Riley are an excellent pairing of performers. One could easily imagine them recording and touring a program of contemporary works.

Blue and Gold Music concludes the recording (the title takes the colors from Trinity School, a K-12 preparatory school that Dello Joio attended). The American Brass Quintet and organist Colin Fowler are ideal interpreters for the ebullient, fanfare-filled piece. It demonstrates how far Dello Joio can stylistically stretch while retaining his own distinctive approach. Copland-esque Americana with a twist is an ideal vehicle for the American Brass Quintet, and Fowler is a good addition to the proceedings.

The concerto is one of my favorite works of 2023, and the entire recording is highly recommended.



The Boston Musical Intelligencer

April 16, 2023

Brass and Flags Unfurled in Concord

By Anne Davenport

Under the wistful gaze of Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American Brass Quintet initiated us last evening at the Concord Free Public Library to a thrilling new repertoire. A packed audience enjoyed a program boldly combining High Renaissance works with recent compositions, as Kevin Cobb (trumpet), Brandon Ridenour (trumpet), Eric Reed (horn), newest member Hillary Simms (trombone) and John Rojak (bass trombone) took turns introducing the featured works, then regaled us with brightness and surprise.

To whet our appetites, the musicians started with arrangements by Raymond Mase of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean *Fancies* by the little-known English composers William Simmes, John Ward and Giovanni Coperario (née John Cooper), nicely emphasizing the courtly decorum and honest good cheer that marked a new embrace of secular music in rising Protestant England. Having successfully created a venerable and slightly nostalgic atmosphere, they performed Anthony Barfield's recent *Samsāra* (2020), mesmerizing and sinuous in its evocation of births and rebirths, full of subtle shades of light and hope. Three arrangements of *Chansons* by the great Josquin des Prés followed suit, interpreted with a keen sense of ludic joy tinged with gratitude and featuring a lovely canon. Who could follow such a master of brilliance? Jennifer Higdon's *Book of Brass* (2022), commissioned by the

American Brass Quintet with the generous support of Dorothy and DuWayne Hansen, dazzled, enraptured, teased, provoked, convinced and left us gasping with admiration. Finesse, architecture, the unexpected and the un hoped-for – they were all there in a deceptively down-to-earth but towering piece.

The second half holding more bright gems, opened with jazzy and intricate Dance Movements (1980) by David Snow, nicely set against Ludwig Maurer's Romantic era pioneering efforts to create a repertoire for brass chamber works. Of Maurer's Ten pieces, we heard a graceful *Lied*, an emotional Andante espressivo, and an earthy concluding Allegro grazioso. Without denying the pleasure that Maurer's bodily rhythms brought to us, the chief impact of plunging briefly into the 19th century, to my mind, was to make the creativity of the ensuing work by Eric Ewazen, *Frost Fire* (1990), vividly audible. Dedicated to the American Brass Quintet and comprised of three movements – Bright and Fast, Gentle and Mysterious, Tense and Dramatic – Ewazen drew freedom from American jazz as well as solid roots into modernism from his teachers Milton Babbitt and Gunther Schiller, producing his very own dynamic sound palace of expressive beauty and power. On the eve of Patriot's Day, when Concord is festooned with flags unfurled in the April breeze, how sweet it was to discover that we are in the very thick of a new Golden Age for brass repertoire.



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THE ASPEN TIMES

July 24, 2021

Sleek playing from Bronfman, brass and string quartet

By Harvey Steiman

For music made for a big space like the music tent, you can't go wrong with brass music, which made the American Brass Quintet the perfect focus for Wednesday's recital. Bass trombone John D. Rojak half-joked that they had been "freed from the confines of Harris Hall," the 500-seat auditorium across the way from the tent that's ideal for most chamber music. Three of the brass quintet groups they had been mentoring for the past month joined them to unfurl Giovanni Gabrieli's intricate polyphony gloriously in the space with three 10-part pieces to conclude an ear-soothing concert.

The quintet opened with a lovely suite of Renaissance madrigals by Wilbye, Gesualdo and Monteverdi, edited by second trumpet Louis Hanzlik, the flugelhorn he and his trumpet partner Kevin Cobb played creating a round sound.

Two works that the quintet had commissioned celebrated a return to live performance. The first, a fantasia by Evan Williams on the "Lux Aeterna" Gregorian chant, struck a hymn-like tone. The other excerpted two movements steeped in jazz ballad harmonies from "Quarantine Quartet," a world premiere by Don York (who died of a stroke before completing it). A work of richness and beauty, it quotes Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" at the end—representing hope after the grief brought by the pandemic.



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Fall 2020

PERSPECTIVES

AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET: Kevin Cobb, Louis Hanzlik, Raymond Mase, trumpet; Eric Reed, David Wakefield, horn; Michael Powell, Justin Waller, trombone; John D. Rojak, JJ Cooper, bass trombone.

SUMMIT RECORDS DCD 692 (PO Box 26850, Tempe, AZ 85285-6850, USA; www.summitrecords.com; sales@summitrecords.com).

Robert Paterson: *Shine*. Jay Greenberg: *Quintet for Brass*. Sebastian Currier: *Cadence, Fugue, Fade*. Eric Ewazen: *Canticum Honoris Amicorum*.

Never disappointing audiences, the American Brass Quintet has again delivered an album of newly commissioned works by American composers, performed at an exceptional level. Robert Paterson's *Shine* powers through four movements depicting the qualities of four different metals—all inspired by Paterson's childhood spent watching his father cast bronze sculptures. Refined blending, unique sonorities, and interplay of texture—these compositional moments meld into a virtuosic work, providing the ABQ an opportunity to truly “shine” with their renowned ensemble skills.

“Challenging” is an understatement for Jay Greenberg's *Quintet for Brass*. A work demanding the highest level of ensemble collaboration, as well as uncompromising individual musical prowess, it is difficult to imagine another ensemble capable of executing Greenberg's work at the same level as the ABQ. Winner of ABQ's Emerging Composer Commissioning Program, Greenberg collaborated with the ABQ during revisions of his work, making the instrumental parts more idiomatic while still pushing the boundaries of technique.



Balance and blend, the hallmarks of a seasoned ensemble, are on full display in Sebastian Currier's *Cadence, Fugue, Fade*. Building sonic colors, juxtaposed to pointillistic phrases quickly passing between voices that lead to intricate counterpoint could give an experienced critical listener performance anxiety. The quick pivots from searingly high tessitura dissonances to tonally dark chordal passages will challenge anyone's ears, not to mention the performers' skill. However, the ABQ brings forth a confident and exceptionally balanced performance, highlighting the artistry of five working as one.

To conclude the album, ABQ enlisted past, present, and guest artists to perform Eric Ewazen's nonet, *Canticum Honoris Amicorum*, which translates to “a song honoring friends.” From the first measure, Ewazen's celebratory soundscape is clear. Grouping the trumpets and horns against the low brass lends an easy dialogue. Reveling in the camaraderie of brass playing amongst old and new friends puts a joyous end to this *tour de force* album of American brass quintet music.

—Greg Spirodopoulos
University of Massachusetts at Amherst



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THE ASPEN TIMES

July 20, 2019

A varied taste of American classical music at Aspen Music Fest

By Harvey Steiman

Wednesday's American Brass Quintet recital filled the Harris Hall stage for the final set with all 36 brass students in the group's seminar project playing pieces the quintet unearthed between 2001 and 2006 attributed to a Moravian brass band in Salem, North Carolina (enlisted in 1862 as the 26th NC Regimental Band). The rich sound of trumpets, horns, trombones, bass trombones and tubas made lively stuff of such tunes as "Ever of Thee," a sonorous arrangement of the chorale-like "Aux pieds

de la Madonne" from Herold's "Zampa," and a rousing "Grand Confederate Quickstep" to finish.

The meat of the program presented works written for the quintet between 2006 and 2016. Highlights were Joan Tower's undulating and brilliant "Copperwave," now a staple of the quintet's concerts, and Adam Schoenberg's emotionally resonant "Reflecting Light." Both were examples of how varied and complex brass music can be.



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The Berkshire Eagle

April 11, 2019

American Brass Quintet brings a new dimension to Close Encounters With Music

By Sharon Smullen

Nary a stringed instrument will be in sight Saturday when the American Brass Quintet makes its debut on the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center stage under the auspices of Close Encounters With Music. Founded in 1960, the distinguished ensemble with 60 recordings to its name is a departure from the usual string, piano or vocal artists hosted by CEWM founder and cellist Yehuda Hanani. While Close Encounters has on occasion featured marimba, Chinese pipa, harp and percussion, brass instruments have been notably absent.

"I thought this would be a very nice diversion from the conservative approach to chamber music presentation," Hanani said in an interview with the Eagle. "People know whatever we bring in is of the highest calibre, artistically and performance-wise."

The idea of a brass quintet is a new phenomenon, he added. While the sound could be heard in marching bands and on Sunday afternoons in the town gazebo, bringing it into the concert hall was unheard of until 50 years ago.

Just like a string quartet, "each instrument has its own character, but there is a certain element of unity — 'E Pluribus Unum' in music," Hanani said.

The varied program spans 500 years from the Renaissance to present day. It begins with an early 20th century piece by Russian composer Victor Ewald that Hanani describes as "very rich, in the style of German romanticism."

Philip Lasser's "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land" was a 2018 commission by The Juilliard School to celebrate the

ensemble's 30 years in residence there. Between movements, the musicians recite short poems by Langston Hughes and the composer.

Dan Coleman's "Daybreak" (also 2018) conjures up "that state of mind in the morning between sleep and wakefulness, hovering in consciousness," Hanani said.

The mood shifts to the early 16th century with "Three Fantasias in Church Modes" by Thomas Stoltzer, a work that Hanani describes as "like a madrigal for brass."

The final piece, Eric Ewazen's "Frost Fire," was written for the ensemble's 30th anniversary in 1990, and, Hanani said, represents "the American sound which we love so much, a little bit of Bernstein, a little bit of Copland, those giants who give us our own voice here in this country."

In his 20 years with ABQ, trumpeter Kevin Cobb has traveled across the U.S. and internationally from Australia to Brazil. He last visited the Berkshires to attend Boston University Tanglewood Institute as a high school student.

"For a group like this to have survived for 60 years is pretty incredible," he observed. "It's a labor of love."

Players often stay for 40 years or more, he said, dedicated to the group's mission of bringing serious brass chamber music to audiences around the world.

ABQ plays venues of all sizes, once going from a 3,000-seat Michigan theater with an orchestra to 15 people in a Florida church. They still averaged 1,500 people over those two nights, Cobb joked.



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Regardless of audience size, he added, "we believe in the music and what we do, and hopefully that will reach people."

And, while brass music is sometimes associated with a big sound, "we play bold, but we're not a big band brass section," Cobb noted.

Unlike other ensembles that incorporate jazz or popular music, ABQ performs only classical repertoire, old and new.

Whether juggling mutes in the present or enduring long stretches of playing in the past, "we bring the same attention to detail to everything in front of us," Cobb said. "We are first and foremost considerate of what the music is trying to say."

To approximate the color and tone of period instruments in Renaissance works, trumpets are replaced by flugelhorns, creating a "richer, more mellow sound that blends more with our low brass colleagues," Cobb said.

Advancing 400 years to "a tiny sliver of wonderful Romantic music from St.

Petersburg in Russia" written by civil engineer and amateur cellist Victor Ewald, string chamber music aficionados will find the language familiar, he added.

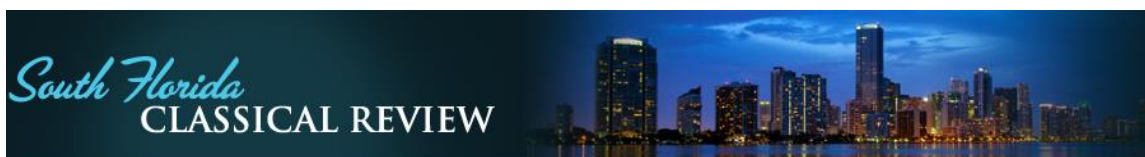
New music forms the cornerstone of ABQ's repertoire. Over its 60 years, ABQ has premiered some 150 new works that collectively form the basis of modern brass repertoire. Commissions have included distinguished composers such as William Bolcom, Elliott Carter, Gunther Schuller and Joan Tower, as well as new voices.

"People really look to us as torchbearers of modern brass chamber music," Cobb said.

But he promises there will be no aggressive tonality or dissonance in the Mahaiwe program.

"The mission — getting people to recognize the validity of serious brass chamber music — is still ahead of us," Cobb explained.

"Once people experience brass in this form, they really enjoy it. We want them to come away feeling enriched."



October 18, 2018

Seraphic Fire opens with a festive and reverent “Spanish Pilgrimage”

By Lawrence Budmen

Seraphic Fire’s “Parables of Passion” series was one of the high points of last season. After stellar performances of major passion settings by Bach, Arvo Pärt and David Lang, one might have thought that what would follow in 2018-19 would prove anticlimactic. But, in characteristic fashion, artistic director Patrick Quigley opened the choir’s 17th season Wednesday night with one of the most unique programs the group has ever presented.

“Spanish Pilgrimage” traced the music sung and heard by religious travelers along the ancient 100-kilometer route of the Camino de Santiago leading to the Shrine of St. James (at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain). Excerpts from early sacred chant by anonymous composers were interspersed with the work of 16th- and 17th-century composers of the Roman Catholic Church. Vocal lines in these scores were often doubled by the forerunners of modern brass instruments. Playing their modern counterparts, the superb American Brass Quintet joined the choir for a program of music that was both reverent and celebratory. The multitalented Scott Allen Jarrett was at the organ, providing accompaniment and interludes between the choral works. Finally, an outstanding world premiere provided both contrast and continuity on this immersive musical journey.

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral has never proved a more appropriate venue than for this concert. Quigley’s varied

logistics fielded double and triple choirs, both a cappella and with brass and organ accompaniment. Voices emerged from the aisles, the rear and the sides as well as the central stage. The ornate sanctuary’s clear and vibrant acoustic enhanced this polyphonic feast of sounds.

The spare plainchant “O lux et decus Hispaniae” (O light and grace of Spain) from the anonymous collection Codex Calixtinus was given deep resonance by the male voices. Three beautifully blended female voices in the center aisle near the sanctuary’s rear soared in the more developed lines of “O Virgo splendens” (O Virgin resplendent) from the *Libre de Vermell* series. *Duo Seraphim* by Francisco Guerrero was a noble anthem for triple choir, organ and brass, a song of joy in surround sound.

Quigley masterfully controlled the vocal components stationed around the room and never allowed the voluminous brass to overwhelm the singers. (He also asked the audience to refrain from applause until the program’s conclusion.) The festive *Cantate Dómino cánticum novum* introduced the work of Sebastian de Vivanco and the vibrant, mellow corporate blend that has often been Seraphic Fire’s musical signature came to the fore. *Parce mihi, Domine* (Spare me, Lord) by Cristóbal de Morales was a plea for forgiveness, sung by eight male voices with such intensity that it seemed to come from the depths of the soul. Almost from its inception, Seraphim Fire has premiered new works. *Veni* by



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Australian-Canadian composer Julian Revie is the latest and one of the finest of these commissions.

Presently composer in residence at St. Thomas Moore, Yale University's Catholic Chapel, Revie counts Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler and Philip Lasser among his teachers. Far from seeming out of place, his new work formed both a commentary and expansion on the Renaissance sounds surrounding it. The text from the more-than-thousand-year-old *O*

Antiphons collection references both the Old and New Testaments from the prophecies of Isaiah to the Second Coming in Revelations.

Opening in disoriented vocal tones, the brass provides stabilizing harmonics until the chorus coalesces into a forward moving melodic pattern and progresses into carol-like warmth of phrase and pulse. The score rises to an exuberant climax at the "O Key of David" section as the choir calls for prisoners to be freed before receding to softness. A frantic final segment with the brass turning dissonant concludes with quiet female voices like angels from afar in a prayer for salvation. Revie manages to pack a plethora of imaginative choral and instrumental writing into the work's 12-minute span. He is clearly a rising and significant choral composer.

Much of the program's final section was devoted to the music of the towering sacred composer Tomás Luís de Victoria. Victoria's music has been a mainstay of Seraphic Fire's repertoire with the choir performing his works every season since its inception. The full sound of double choir rang out in

thrilling fashion through the cathedral in Victoria's *Ave Regina caelorum* (Hail, Queen of Heaven). *Pange lingua more hispano* is a more complex creation that soars to heights in veneration of Jesus with a lilting and jubilant finale. It is remarkable that Victoria could have written music both so austere and massively rousing in the Renaissance age.

Along with Revie's new work, perhaps the evening's high point was Victoria's hymn to Spain *O lux et decus Hispaniae* (O light and grace of Spain) with the overlay of women's voices resplendent and the final extended Alleluia sung with heft and full throated abandon. *Regina caeli* (Queen of Heaven) is one of Victoria's most inspired songs of praise, and concluded the evening with a finely balanced display of the combined ensembles.

Special credit to Jarrett for his discreet but precise and enlivening organ accompaniment throughout the concert. It was especially gratifying to see the fine countertenor Reginald Mobley, who has been absent for several seasons, once again in the choir.

The American Brass Quintet opened the program with the first movement of *Colchester Fantasy* by Eric Ewazen, a jazz-infused vehicle that provides a blazing showcase for the combination of two trumpets, two trombones and horn.

This program will be taken on tour to Goshen, Indiana, Overland Park, Kansas, and La Jolla, California in February. In the meanwhile there are four remaining South Florida performances of this most special Seraphic Fire celebration.

the Record

February 22, 2019

SERAPHIC FIRE BRINGS A CLASSICAL SPANISH FLAIR TO THE PAS

By Olivia Smucker

After a strong musical performance on Tuesday night, it should come as no surprise to learn that Seraphic Fire, the most recent performer in Goshen College's Performing Arts Series (PAS), already has two Grammy Award nominations to its name.

The 14-person vocal and instrumental ensemble from Miami, Florida took the Sauder Concert Hall stage alongside the American Brass Quartet for an evening of classical music from both historic and living composers.

In the first act, the combination of vocal and brass led the audience on a musical journey down the Camino de Santiago, a Spanish pilgrimage trail that crosses Spain and ends at the shrine of Saint James the Great in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.

Selections from 14th-century Spanish composers, such as Sebastián de Vivanco, Antonio de Cabezón and Tomás Luis de Victoria, comprised much of the second act, which was dedicated to the classical Spanish style.

There were also anonymous works from the 14th century such as "Libre de Vermell," a manuscript of devotions, and "Codex Calixtinus," a 12th-century manuscript devoted to the Book of Saint James.

Conducted by Patrick Dupré Quigley, the group's founder and artistic director, the Seraphic Fire ensemble consists of four soprano, three alto, three tenor and three bass voices. The group also includes an organ player for their more traditional repertoire.

Marcia Yost, director of the arts outreach and engagement at Goshen College, said that besides being on the 2018-2019 PAS roster, Seraphic Fire was invited to sing on the Sauder stage because of the good rapport that the college already holds with the ensemble and its musicians.

"We already know [Seraphic Fire] because they recorded some of their earlier work in Sauder," said Yost. "A number of the group members also sing with Conspirare, who performed here in the fall."

Conspirare, also a predominant SATB vocal ensemble, performed their original concert "Considering Matthew Shepard" on Sept. 14, 2018 as the kick-off event to this year's PAS. Yost also said that it's not uncommon for Seraphic Fire to team up with other musical groups or ensembles for their tours. In this case, that partner group was the American Brass Quintet.

The addition of this all-male group ended up presenting audience members with an additional special piece: the performance of Philip Lasser's "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land." The composition is written in five distinct movements, starting with "City Hero" and ending with "Epilogue."

Lasser, an American composer with roots in the French musical tradition, said that "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land" seeks to highlight the "glory of the everyday."

Each movement celebrates an aspect of the human spirit, like "uncrushable work ethic" and "our common quest for joy." The piece



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itself was commissioned and premiered by the Juilliard School in celebration of the American Brass Quintet's 30th anniversary. Along with "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land," the two groups joined together for two contemporary works, "I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes" and "Hymnodic Delays."

The first is an arrangement by American composer Jake Runestad, featuring scripture from Psalm 121 as the lyrics. The second, a piece in three movements by American avant-garde composer Ingram Marshall, is a mournful call for God to ease our suffering.

This concert was a part of the 45 total concerts that Seraphic Fire will perform this

year over eight subscription programs. Both ensembles are passionate about the educational outreach that they offer to schools and the community.

Seraphic Fire has four programs that are meant for musicians in elementary to graduate school and have thousands of participants annually. The American Brass Quintet offers a series of mini-residencies while they tour, giving young classical musicians the opportunity to develop in an "intense chamber music experience" over a period of several days.

THE ASPEN TIMES

July 21, 2018

Contemporary pieces charm at Aspen Music Festival

By Harvey Steiman

Thursday's annual appearance by the American Brass Quintet opened with a lively and charming set of Elizabethan dances by Holborne. It closed with a roof-rattling set of polychoral pieces in which the four ensembles in the quintet's new brass quintet program joined forces with the ABQ. The thrilling finale, Gabrieli's "Canzon XVI à 12," took the notion of sonorous brass to its quintessential level with 26 players involved.

The two brand-new works on the program, "Daybreak" by Dan Coleman and "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land" by Philip Lasser, fashioned amiable music around programmatic ideas. Lasser used fragments of Langston Hughes poems as a jumping-off point toward noble music, and "Still," by David Sampson (from 2013) proved an incident-filled meditation on meditation.

"Blue Strategem," the spikiest music on the program, called upon the players to juggle as many as five mutes, none for much longer than a few measures. It made for comical visuals as composer John Zorn's spasmodic dissonances sped past. (One audience member wondered aloud what Zorn had against the members of the quintet.) I found the musical interplay over the piece's eight minutes stimulating.



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October 17, 2017

The American Brass Quintet Blows the Roof Off Bing

By David Bratman

Stanford Live's theme for the 2017–18 season is “The American Sound.” The American Brass Quintet, visiting Bing Concert Hall on Sunday, October 15, made a special contribution to that theme with a set of brief marches and dances from the Revolutionary and early Federal period in the late 18th century. The dances were by Alexander Reinagle, a Philadelphia resident probably best remembered today by beginning piano students. The pleasant tunes and plain block harmonies, with occasional ornamentation, of all these pieces translated well to brass arrangement. Of course, it doesn't take a reach back over 200 years for a brass quintet to sound American. As trumpeter Kevin Cobb explained to the audience, the modern brass quintet is a post-World War II American development. In its nearly 60 years of existence, the ABQ has commissioned and otherwise acquired a vast repertoire of new works, mostly by American composers. The Quintet brought three of them to Bing, two written within the past couple of years and the third dating from 1987.

The Brass Quintet No. 2 “American” by Kenneth Fuchs is a single movement in an extroverted modernist style, with some lyric passages but dominated by crisp, declamatory jagged chords and extensive use of mutes, which made their only appearance in the concert here. These were used to give this work a variety of colors, from distant hunting calls to duck-like quacks to the classic “wah-wah” effect.

The other two contemporary works were more neo-Romantic, generally lyric and melodic in style, occasionally quieter and thoughtful in character, and presenting the brass with broad, open sound. Eric Ewazen's *Colchester Fantasy*, written in 1987 while he was teaching in that English town, has four movements named for local pubs, but eschews any distinctive Englishness of style. Ewazen was inspired by the meanings of the pub names — thus “The Dragoon” is the harshest and most military movement and “The Marquis of Granby” is a formal chorale — and while maintaining a consistent tone color, creates variety with much accentuation and changes in dynamics.

The third new piece was written earlier this year by Steven Franklin, a then 21-year-old recent graduate of the Curtis Institute, whom the Quintet members had met a couple years earlier when giving a master class there. His *Three Romances* is openly inspired by, though not intended to copy, Romantic music from Robert Schumann — who wrote a work with the same title — to Richard Strauss. The result, even in its lighter moments, is restrained music of dreamy melancholy, constructed largely by intertwining multiple melodic lines that move in and out of the general mix. The harmonic and melodic style has a distinct cinematic flavor.

A brass ensemble concert should not be complete without some juicy and crunchy 16th-century music. The ABQ provided two sets of these: one of English partsongs and



instrumental consort pieces and the other of continental canons. The partsongs, mostly by Thomas Morley, were exact transcriptions of the original vocal lines, but arranged with imagination: One two-part song was played by the two trumpets, immediately followed by a three-part song given to the other members of the quintet, two trombones and a horn. The canons, which included works by Palestrina and Josquin, built up great masses of overlaid sound. They were preceded by a brief lecture by hornist Eric Reed explaining what

a canon is, with musical examples given by the other players.

This was my first experience of brass chamber music at Bing. It's a small enough auditorium for a vivid and close-up sound from these powerful instruments, only occasionally in the Franklin piece getting harsh enough to overwhelm the sonics and causing the quality of the sound to break up. But Bing is also large enough to provide a solid and prominent reverberation that gave the quintet's sound a welcome fullness to match its immediacy.

THE ASPEN TIMES

August 15, 2018

American Brass Quintet launches new brass chamber music program at Aspen Music Festival and School

By Andrew Travers

Suddenly Aspen is a hotbed for elite young brass musicians and a breeding ground for the next generation of brass players in both the jazz and classical fields.

Along with the relaunched JAS Academy running its intensive program for big band players this month, earlier this summer the Aspen Music Festival and School hosted the inaugural American Brass Quintet Seminar @Aspen.

The four-week program hosted four brass groups to study with members of the iconic American Brass Quintet, which has been on faculty and in residence at the Aspen Music Fest since 1970. It was founded in 1960 and has rotated members since then while holding its place as the premier brass quintet in the nation.

"Over the years, ABQ has looked for something like a seminar — we've wanted to start something," said John Rojak, bass trombone player in the American Brass Quintet since 1991.

So the group was pleasantly surprised last year when the administration at the Aspen Music Fest suggested they launch a specialized chamber music program aimed specifically at brass quintets.

"I said, 'What? We've been talking about doing this here for 15 years!'" Rojak recalled. "Having it fall in our laps was just incredible."

Applications poured in. Rojak and his bandmates selected four groups for the inaugural summer program: Avery Brass Quintet, The Brass Project, Bulldog Brass Society, and Wayward Brass Quintet.

The ABQ members provided coaching, open rehearsals, workshops, private lessons and classes on topics like how to speak to an

audience and how to market yourself at the outset of a professional career. They also integrated them with the other brass students at the festival and the larger student body, encouraging them to attend concerts in the Benedict Music Tent. The groups played regularly at six venues throughout Aspen and Basalt, including gigs at the Pitkin County Library and Paepcke Auditorium. And, of course, the young students bonded.

"We didn't realize how these groups would get along and spur each other on to excellence," Rojak said. "It was an ideal musician's experience in that the groups played music, each group collaborated, they all had interaction with us and hung out and had some stories and laughs."

At the American Brass Quintet's annual recital at Harris Concert Hall last month, they brought all four groups onstage, totaling 26 players for Giovanni Gabrieli's "Canzon XVI à 12."

"It was a blowout," Rojak said.

With the imprimatur of the American Brass Quintet, and personal instructions from its members, the Seminar @Aspen became the premier brass chamber music program in the U.S. as soon as it was announced. After seeing it through its inaugural season, Rojak thinks it lived up to the hype.

"We were hoping it would be good," he said, "but I think it exceeded expectations."



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February 19, 2018

THE AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET at Paul Recital Hall At The Juilliard School

By Joanna Barouch



In most music schools, faculty recitals are a standard part of student life. Attendance, while not mandatory, is expected because it is assumed the student will learn something from the performance. Sometimes it isn't exactly what the professor may have intended, such as a piano recital given by a professor at a music school (not in New York City) many years ago. As he played a particularly complex piece, the professor had a major memory lapse, stopped playing, stood up, and walked off the stage never to return. In this case, his students most likely learned what not to do.

A faculty recital at The Juilliard School is a different matter entirely.

One of the world's top music schools, Juilliard's faculty is drawn from the ranks of the crème de la crème of the best musicians anywhere. The American Brass Quintet (ABQ) has been the Ensemble -in- Residence at the Juilliard School since 1987. This award winning, internationally known

ensemble is dedicated to the development of brass chamber music through higher education, and they've presented the world premieres of over 150 contemporary works which form the basis of the modern brass quintet repertoire.

Their February 14, 2018 concert, in a beautiful wooden box of a small concert hall at Juilliard, was a smartly designed journey through time and place. With works from the English Renaissance, 19th century Russia, the Italian Renaissance, and the 20th and 21st centuries, the performers took the audience on a delightful musical exploration of this rarely heard genre, the brass quintet. The ABQ members are Kevin Cobb and Louis Hanzlik, Trumpets; Eric Reed, French horn; Michael Powell, Trombone, and John D. Rojack, Bass Trombone.

The concert opened with works by four English Renaissance composers, composed for the courts of Queen Elizabeth I and to some extent King James I (all edited by Louis Hanzlik). While competence on a musical instrument, particularly the lute, was prized by the Queen, not everyone could be as accomplished as she. Everyone, however, could sing, so vocal and choral music were always readily available. The first five pieces on the program were originally for voices but here arranged for brass quintet. The use of flugelhorn by the trumpet players added a unique, tenor-ish sound to the music and also provided moments of surprising dissonance. Tricky



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rhythms are standard fare in music of this period, but the Quintet ably dispatched them and made them dance. The Quintet's articulation of each and every note was pinpoint and sure. This is difficult enough for one brass player. Five performers demonstrating this kind of perfection simultaneously is rather extraordinary.

A short suite of music from 19th century Russia followed. The two composers, while not Russian by birth, wrote music for brass quintet heavily influenced by soulful string writing in a Russian idiom. The pieces were fairly standard works, nothing very exciting, but played with panache and very clean playing on the part of the French horn. This notoriously difficult instrument was here lyrical, clear, and emotional in the hymn-like "Morgengruss."

Perhaps the most exciting moment of the entire concert was the world premiere of Juilliard faculty member Philip Lasser's "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land." This piece was a fascinating mixture of spoken poetry and music. Dr. Lasser was on hand to speak briefly to the audience prior to the performance of his work. Commissioned by Juilliard in honor of the 30th anniversary of the ABQ's residency, Dr. Lasser had this to say about his remarkable composition: "Common Heroes, Uncommon Land" speaks of the glory of the everyday. Based on five short poems by various poets, each movement explores a particular facet of the American experience."

Each member of the Quintet recited a poem, followed immediately by the musical depiction. Using mixed meters, muted instruments at times, bright chords, as well as quietly expressive moments, the piece was played with joy and commitment by the ABQ. It was well received by the enormously appreciative audience. If they had encored the entire piece, the audience wouldn't have minded in the least!

Joan Tower's "Copperwave" followed intermission. A thorny, agitated work in contrast to the sunny "Common Heroes," Ms. Tower's work demonstrated the range of what the brass instruments could do. The Quintet handily managed the extremes of

dynamics as well as the urgency in the conga-like rhythms. Ms. Tower has said "The title of this piece is "Copperwave." What this means is that copper (in brass) creates a weighty (and heavy) motion that travels in waves (and circles) throughout the piece." This is a perfect description of what the audience heard. The piece was commissioned by the ABQ for Juilliard's Centennial Celebration.

The final works on the program brought the audience full circle back to the Renaissance, this time in Italy where it all began. Carlo Gesualdo, Prince of Venosa and Count of Conza, composed highly complex, anguished, and deeply emotional music during the late Renaissance period. It's been said that his music mirrored his unstable mind. Discovering his young wife with her lover, he killed them in the heat of passion and then displayed their bodies outside his castle walls for all to see. He was never prosecuted for the crime, but he punished himself by spending the remainder of his life attempting in various ways to come to terms with what he had done. His music most definitely reflects these efforts. The choppiness in his melodic writing, the sudden shifts in tonality, and the general musical disorganization of the three madrigals, (which were originally written for voice but are commonly performed by instrumental groups), gave the Quintet a moment to probe the musical thoughts of a severely disturbed individual. Their attention to all of the intertwining melodies and contrapuntal lines was mesmerizing. When the last, purely tonal chord was played, however, there was nothing but sheer relief for the ear. Gesualdo was a wild ride for all, for the duration of his life and after.

Giovanni Gabrieli was the foremost exponent of 16th century ensemble music, chiefly for the Basilica di San Marco in Venice. His magnificent brass quintet music was specifically tailored to the acoustic requirements of the Basilica, which had (and still has) a series of domes and arches for a ceiling. The walls and domes were (and are) covered in gold mosaics, which enabled

a powerfully bright instrumental sound. Gabrieli was the organist of San Marco and utilized antiphonal brass groupings (and vocal groups at other times) to augment the sound of the organ. The congregation in the middle of all this would have heard the worship service and music in what we would call "surround sound." It must have been an overwhelming, deeply spiritual experience. The musical journey through time and place concluded with the Two Sacred Motets of Giovanni Gabrieli. The American Brass

Quintet was joined by six outstanding student musicians. The 11 players separated themselves into two groups to play this splendid music. Although they did not play in different parts of the hall, the antiphonality meant for both pieces could still be perceived. This was rich, stylish, full-out glorious playing by all concerned. A truly wondrous way to end a truly successful, brilliant faculty recital. Bravi tutti!

New York
CLASSICAL REVIEW

May 28, 2018

**Spiritual journeys and operatic thrills
mark Thea Musgrave's 90th birthday**

By David Wright

The shortest piece on Sunday's program by the New York Virtuoso Singers and other artists in honor of composer Thea Musgrave's 90th birthday was a volatile, two-minute item for unaccompanied oboe titled *Whirlwind*.

On the other hand, that title might have served for the entire evening of choral works and opera scenes by the Scottish composer, during which an unrelenting storm of imagination and passion seemed to whirl through the resonant nave of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

Whirlwind was having its world premiere, as was *La Vida es Sueño*, a dramatic monologue for baritone and piano. Two other works composed during the present decade—the brief oboe piece *Dawn* and the substantial choral work *The Voices of Our Ancestors*—received their first U.S. performances.

All this evidence of Musgrave's continuing vigor and inspiration was confirmed by the tall, smiling presence of the composer herself on Sunday, the actual day of her landmark birthday.

In a quotation featured prominently in the printed program, Musgrave described herself as a woman and a composer, "but rarely at the same time."

One doesn't like to contradict a master artist talking about herself, but to this listener the whole evening was a celebration of at-the-same-timeness—a mode of expression combining exquisite detail with volcanic emotional force in a way that was inescapably, irresistibly feminine.

One felt it most, of course, in the strong female protagonists—"Three Heroines from Three Continents," as the program had it—in the excerpted scenes from Musgrave's operas *Simón Bolívar*; *Harriet, the Woman Called Moses*; and *Mary Queen of Scots*. (Scots might dispute whether they are on a continent, but the title will serve.)

But one also sensed a woman's hand in the selection of twelve texts from all over the ancient world for *The Voices of Our Ancestors*, addressing "the question of our existence," as the composer put it, with "not only poems about the eternal existential questions, but also poems addressing intimate human feelings of love, despair, loss, and enjoyment."

In Musgrave's 2014 choral setting with organ, brass quintet and vocal soloists, these macro- and micro-views of life, death, and the universe came together seamlessly in a kind of long zoom shot, beginning with a dark, seething vision of creation and narrowing down to a totally human drinking song in the penultimate movement.

As the piece began, sustained deep bass and flickering high phrases from organist James Adams and the American Brass Quintet wove a primeval atmosphere around narrator Tadeusz von Moltke's cool recitation of the Vedic creation hymn. To this was added the disembodied sound of singers in the choir loft intoning a poem about Time of Sanskrit origin.

Vocal solos marked turning points in the work, beginning with bass Elijah Blaisdell's impressive address to the invisible, unknowable God. Sarah Griffiths' bell-like

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soprano harmonized with itself in the resonant space, adding a note of sensuality to a Persian hymn to creation. By the eighth movement, the performance had warmed to match Sishel Claverie's dark alto and trumpet-like top tones in Dido's Lament from Vergil's *Aeneid*. In an easy, full-throated tenor, Chad Kranak mingled remembered ecstasy and present desolation in an Arabic poem comparing lost love to a devastated city.

Closing the work on an Egyptian poem beginning "Enjoy thyself more than thou hast ever done before," seemed to invite a merry, hedonistic finale, but the drooping phrases of Musgrave's setting sent a *memento mori* instead: Enjoy it now, because the grave awaits.

Conductor Harold Rosenbaum led this cosmic journey with an assurance and care for detail that was reflected in the chorus's ripe phrasing and the subtle colorations of the American Brass Quintet.

In the two contrasting oboe pieces, the meditative *Dawn* and the jumpy *Whirlwind*, Nicholas Daniel's fine dynamic control and fleet technique provided the palate-cleansing sorbet between two rich choral courses.

From the dazzling forte blast of its opening to the yelps, yips, mutters and shouts in the middle to cantering rhythms near the end, *Rorate Coeli*, a setting of poems on Christ's nativity and resurrection by the Renaissance-era Scottish poet William Dunbar, provided a virtual textbook of sonic effects for a capella chorus. The ensemble's exuberant performance, however, was anything but academic.

Musgrave did not make an opera from Calderón's classic 1635 play *La Vida es Sueño* (Life is a Dream), but in 2016 she did set its famous second-act soliloquy, from which the play's title is taken, for baritone and piano. While the spiritual message was not unlike that of *The Voices of our*

Ancestors, this monologue added operatic force and heft. The premiere performance by the powerful, oaken-voiced baritone José Adán Pérez lacked nothing in drama, while pianist Michael Fennelly contributed a dreamlike setting of swirling scales with hints of guitar embellishments and dance rhythms.

Fennelly's Lisztian technique was put to a further test in the opera scenes, with Musgrave's famously active, colorful, layered orchestrations reduced to a keyboard and ten fingers. If those orchestrations were the only Musgrave essential missing from this birthday party, Fennelly filled the gap admirably, his fleet fingers suggesting the orchestral riches of the opera house.

With Fennelly and Rosenbaum's chorus in strong support, a cast of splendid soloists brought Musgrave's powerful dramatic visions to life. Soprano Jenny Sandelin was all lyrical passion as Simón Bolívar's mistress Manuela, vowing to sacrifice her reputation to join him at his deathbed, then revealed unsuspected dramatic resources as Mary Queen of Scots fiercely claiming royal power in the evening's brilliant finale.

In between, soprano Christine Lyons and mezzo-soprano Karmesha Peake argued forcefully about justice as the young Harriet Tubman and her mother Rit; Peake then went on to lament, with rich mezzo tone and strong stage presence, the loss of her character's husband, jailed for helping fellow slaves escape.

Baritone Pérez returned in the *Mary* scene as a splendidly arrogant King James, with bass Steven Moore stepping out of the chorus to confront him as Mary's supporter Lord Gordon before soprano Sandelin's upstretched arms and high notes brought the opera's Act II to a thrilling close.

To top off the concert, Rosenbaum led the chorus in his own amusingly contrapuntal arrangement of "Happy Birthday to You."

October 16, 2017

Elevating chamber music for brass

Venerable ensemble traces the trajectory of music for brass instruments
from the distant past to the present to the future

By Matthew Andrews

Near the beginning of the American Brass Quintet's concert in downtown Portland's Winningstad Theater last week, trumpeter Kevin Cobb stood up and talked a bit about the group's history, starting with their founding date: 1960. "If you're looking on stage to see who's the original member" — cue laughter— "there are no original members."

The founding members "tried to bring brass music to places that would normally have, say, the Juilliard Quartet," he said. Their goal was to "elevate brass chamber music." One of the great commissioning brass quintets of our time, they are also dedicated to the "promotion of brass chamber music through education" (like Akropolis Reed Quintet last year, ABQ also put on educational outreach programs the week they were here). Part of this pedagogical endeavor means reaching back through time and drawing together the roots of brass chamber music, developing a long view of the genre and situating modern pieces in a living historical contexts. Their Portland concert, presented by Chamber Music Northwest and Portland5, managed to represent both ends of this spectrum (and a bit of the in-between for good measure).

To open, the group leapt immediately into a bunch of 500-year-old Elizabethan and Jacobean Consort Music — fun and spirited and beautiful—and perfectly brief. Brass instruments, like strings and choirs (and unlike, say, reed quintets and percussion ensembles), are by nature delightfully homogenous, meaning they can blend all manner of complex counterpoint into a

well-integrated acoustic gestalt. ABQ played short pieces by William Brade (1560-1630), John Dowland (1563-1626), John Wilbye (1574-1638), and a few by Thomas Morley (1557-1602). The counterpoint blended perfectly, separate lines shining through whenever I paid precise attention, everything blurring into a tasty musical porridge whenever I let my ears take in the larger soundscape.

Other moments, like the Dowland pavane, gave ABQ a chance to show off their balanced chorale sound, another strength of brass ensembles. At times the trumpets (if not the players) sounded like they were still warming up: brass instruments are insanely taxing and far more physically demanding than anyone who's never had their lips on a mouthpiece can possibly imagine. By the time the Brade canzon's joyously rapid hemiolas came along everyone was ripping through the tricky rhythms and rapid fire hunting calls like it was no big deal. Later, horn player Eric Reed invited us to "jump in the American Brass Quintet time machine" and travel back 500 years for five canons, the nature of which Reed easily explained: "you all know what that is: it's a round, like row row row your boat." ABQ showed off their educator chops with demonstrations of the various canonic types: first at the unison, then at the 5th below...but then "things are about to get a lot more complicated" with a prolotion (or mensuration) canon by "the master," Josquin des Prez. The three voices sounded in turn: "Mike on the tenor trombone will play his part, and John will

play the same thing a little faster, and Louis on the flugelhorn will play the same thing a little faster yet. And all at the same time it sounds like this.”

At that level of complexity, only the most sophisticated ear is likely to detect the implicit order underneath the explicit beauty, which is kind of the point. The canons themselves were only a little more interesting than the demonstration, but that’s sort of the nature of canons, isn’t it? In any case, this yummy porridge didn’t last too terribly long. If I want to hear an evening of nothing but Old Music sung in churches and played on sackbuts I’ll go listen to Portland Baroque Orchestra, Cappella Romana, or Oregon Renaissance Band (all very fine groups by the way).

ABQ moved into Romantic territory with music from Ludwig Maurer (1789-1878) and Antoine Simon (1850-1916). Both composers had a background in chamber music, and traveled from their native Germany (Maurer) and France (Simon) to compose for Russian players eager to play chamber music; their sensitive brass writing was a precursor for what was to come. The harmony was safe, in a 19th-century kind of way, more Johann than Richard Strauss, harmony maybe a little Berlioz, and certainly a bit of Wagner—but it’s the grandly cheeky marching band side of Wagner.

Contemporary Metal

ABQ has commissioned works by Robert Beaser, Gunther Schuller, Elliott Carter, “and some names on the program you may not recognize, but hopefully you’ll go home and listen to,” Cobb. All too many classical concerts either go all new or all old—or, more commonly, have a token contemporary piece sandwiched between the Classical concerto and Romantic symphony. ABQ’s concert acknowledged and honored musical history without getting mired in it and ignoring today’s music. Thanks in no small part to ABQ, 21st century composers are writing music for brass too.

Trumpeter Louis Hanzlik described Anders Hillborg’s *Brass Quintet* as “a bit unique for ABQ,” in the sense that it was neither edited—“curated, you might say”—by a member of ABQ nor commissioned by them, but by Stockholm Chamber Brass in 1998. “We elect to play it whenever we can—there’s nothing like it. It’s as close to rock and roll as we get, because of the driving

quick rhythm and intense sounds Hillborg asks us to make.” There are descending minor third hockets all throughout, and a moment where the group sounds like it’s “melting into the floor” Most striking was a technique where the players are asked to “play as though you’re playing notes backwards.” Hanzlik joked: “Those familiar with tapes—young people often aren’t—will recognize the effect.”

The minor thirds turned out to be more bluesy than Stravinskian, though there were moments that reminded me of his *Octet*. Hectic overlapping flurries of wild chromaticism reminded me of Joan Tower’s *Amazon* and the aleatoric cadenza from Christopher Rouse’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Trombone Concerto*. I noted the quintet’s careful eye contact in the complicated interlocking parts. Cobb and Hanzlik delivered their close-second rapid-fire double-tongue passages super in tune, as such things must be if they’re going to sound right. Oh, and that goddamn tape effect. Trombonist Michael Powell especially nailed it: they all sounded really cool but he truly sounded like a reversed tape sample. I’ve heard trombonists make a lot of cool sounds (my favorite: squabbling chickens), but this one was new to me.

There were other neat tape effects too, echo and slapback and delay and all the usual stuff familiar to anyone who’s spent time with Pierre Schaeffer or This Heat (or side four of the Beatles’ *White Album*). And underneath all the flashy effects, a driving vital force more akin to punk than Pauline Oliveros. That’s one of the many benefits of hearing the music of living composers alongside the immortal ones. Hillborg sounds like he grew up listening to the same music I did, not just Wagner and Tchaikovsky but also Radiohead and Yes and Björk and Imogen Heap.

“It falls to me to introduce the newest piece written for the ABQ, written just this year,” Powell said about Steven Franklin’s *Three Romances*. “We’re still discovering things about it. It’s the newest piece of old music you’ll ever hear.” Powell promised us snippets of “Brahms and the Russian Romantics” as well as echoes of Robert Schumann’s *Three Romances for Oboe and Piano*.

The yearning, conflicted melody Franklin envelops in almost-jazzy late Romantic harmony reminded me immediately of the bittersweet, melancholy sentimentality John

Williams has perfected in scores like *JFK*, *Seven Years in Tibet*, *Catch Me If You Can*. No wonder—Williams has built his career on reflecting most of the same composers Franklin did. Like Williams' music, it doesn't sound legitimately old, nor does it really attempt to. It's not a period piece, after all—it's a modern piece precisely in the very personal and idiomatic way it handles the music of the past (see also: Morten

Lauridsen's madrigals, Reich's *Proverb*, Stravinsky's *Pulcinella*, pretty much the entirety of Arvo Pärt's hallowed career). And it was smart to put Maurer and Simon on the program with Franklin's anachronistic music: the comparison established yet another connection between past and present.

Bass trombonist John Rojak introduced the last piece, Joan Tower's *Copperwave*. "We were playing her *Fifth Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman* and we looked at each other and said 'we need to get a brass quintet from Joan Tower.'" It turned out she was busy—"and expensive." But, Rojak continued, "some years later Juilliard celebrated their hundredth anniversary by commissioning new works for their ensembles-in-residence. We were an ensemble-in-residence. They asked us if we had anyone in mind." The crowd laughed on cue.

Rojak described Tower in her first meeting with ABQ as "adorably nervous," doing a damn fine impression of the composer's distinctive Northeastern drawl: "I've never done that before." She wanted to know everything, especially about their ranges, their highest and lowest possible notes. "We lied just a little bit." Tower also took advantage of ABQ's "music store full of mutes." Rojak wrapped up joking a little more about Portland: "it's so nice! I need to be here when it rains for months on end" and "I'm soooooo jacked up on coffee right now."

Right away a characteristically jazzy-octatonic Tower motive, a quick brassy flat-five figure that immediately starts expanding and evolving. Tower's music has been called angular, but I prefer to think of it as highly contoured. The composer has spoken of her love for Beethoven and Stravinsky, and their influence is indeed audibly pervasive, but I also hear a narrative approach to motivic development that

seems to owe more to Béla Bartók and especially César Franck.

ABQ sounded like they were playing music that was written just for them, and they sounded like they'd been playing it together for the last ten years. Everyone was super locked in on all the sculpted swells, the precise stops and starts, and the long melodies shared across several instruments—all hallmarks of Tower's style. Powell riproared away at this stomping "Powerhouse" type riff that kept coming back (alas, never for long enough!) and Reed's horn playing soared to new heights of excellence, super high (and super difficult) notes way up in the upper register delivered with a firm, triumphant, delicious integrity. The whole thing closed on another Tower trademark, the dissonant quartal chord she lifted from Schoenberg, beautifully tuned and articulated by the quintet. It ain't easy to tune a chord like that (just listen to it! Dear lord) and it would be a great chance to crash and burn on landing. ABQ not only played it right, they sold it with a conviction normally reserved for more traditional tonal cadences.

That American Brass Quintet can still be getting to know a piece like Franklin's, when they're already playing it this well, speaks to not only their fundamental professionalism but a long view of their relationship with their repertoire. They expect to play this music for years, decades even. They probably expect to hand it down to the next generation of ABQ. The same goes for the Hillborg piece and their Tower commission. Having put their roots as far down as possible into the history of brass music, they're nourishing the tradition with contemporary sources while growing their way into the future.

Chamber Music Northwest has a few more concerts coming up before they roll out their winter festival in January. In two weeks, Philip Glass and Kronos Quartet will be at the Schnitz to perform Glass' *Dracula* score live to film; at the end of October, CMNW Protégé Project Artists Andrew Hsu and Angelo Xiang Yu will be playing a ton of Brahms in downtown Portland and Hillsboro. The Florestan Trio is playing a free show in November, and in December Christian Tetzlaff will close out the year playing all of J.S. Bach's solo violin music.

July 2017

SAMPSON *Serenade*¹. *Sonata Forty*². *Strata*³. *Dectet*⁴ • ¹Raymond Mase (flugelhorn); ²Scott Brubaker (hn); ²Ron Levy (pn); ⁴Jana Brožková (ob); ⁴Voytěch Nýdl (cl); ⁴Ondřej Roskovec (bn); ⁴Ondřej Vrabec (hn); ⁴Richard Ormrod (pn); ⁴Leoš Čepický, ⁴Jan Schuhmeister (vns); ⁴Jiří Žigmund (va); ⁴Aleš Kaspřík (vc); ⁴Radomil Žalud (dble bass); ³American Brass Qnt; ¹Paul Polivnick, cond; ¹Czech PO • ALBANY 780 (71:38)

Impressions of the music of David Sampson previously have been uniformly positive, and this disc confirms Sampson's status as a major composer of today. His experience in brass performance stands him in good stead here, on this brass-dominated disc.

The flugelhorn's haunting sound, perhaps forever linked to the sound of a brass band, is the protagonist for the *Serenade*, backed by string orchestra. In this 1997 piece, Sampson intended to portray himself and his family—himself, his wife and two sons—by concentrating on personalities. I love Sampson's statement in the booklet that the flugelhorn "is to the brass family ... what the viola is to the string family" (there are less flugelhorn jokes though: at least I don't know any). Good to have someone batting on its side, and Raymond Mase is an incredibly gifted exponent. Long lines are given with a legato that would rival any string player, while the string orchestra accompaniment is given with great intensity by the Czech Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra. Mase is in superb form, his articulation and agility as splendid as his lyricism. The programmatic element to the piece gives the work its compelling trajectory; of particular interest is the sense of controlled urgency towards the end. The work seems to end on something of a question mark, almost as if inviting in the assertive opening piano gesture of *Sonata Forty* of 1992 for horn and piano. Performed by horn player Scott Brubaker (who commissioned it in tandem with the International Horn Society), the title of the work comes from Sampson's own fortieth birthday. This was an unsettling period for the composer, and a decidedly transitional one, a fact reflected in the four movement titles: "Crisis"; "Shadows"; "Sentiments"; "Resolve". The work's direction is therefore one from doubt through to resolution. The first movement's harmonic language is such that it encapsulates restlessness, while "Shadows" is incredibly active as well as elusive. All credit to both performers here, particularly Brubaker whose agility seems to recall that of Dennis Brain's performances of Britten's *Serenade* (the Hymn, "Queen and huntress, chaste and fair" movement specifically). The legato line created by Brubaker in the slow third movement is beautifully shaded, while Sampson's imagination takes the listener on a self-questioning voyage. Pianist Ron Levy copes with the tricky demands of the finale ("Resolve") superbly, his touch spiky in response to the musical surface's angularity.

The American Brass Quintet had positively shone in their contributions to Sampson's *Notes from Faraway Places* disc (on the Summit label and reviewed enthusiastically by myself in *Fanfare* 40:6). They shine again here in *Strata* (1999). The musical language from the off seems more complex, as textures shift like interacting plateaux. The choice of having the trumpeters play flugelhorns at the outset of the first movement helps to dampen the sound, creating a more mysterious texture. Sampson himself identifies the influence of



LaMonte Young in this piece, as a result of working with Young's ensemble. A protracted section played with all instruments muted is remarkably effective and wonderfully realized here. The central slow panel is a Pärt-like processional (the link to that composer is explicit and reflected in Sampson's compositional practice); really it is a dirge. The unmuted trumpet opening of the finale reveals simply superb playing from Kevin Cobb; instruments seem to layer themselves onto this line with impeccable naturalness before giving in to a sense of unstoppable exuberance. The performance is stunning not only in its accuracy, but in its sheer vitality.

The *Dectet* of 1998 is a four movement score for oboe, clarinet, horn, bassoon, two violins, viola, cello, double-bass and piano (to save you deciphering the title). Unusually, there is no programme; this piece stands purely as instrumental music. The ominous first movement, with its foreboding bass pedal and its repeated staccato gestures and jerky, angular musical figures, does seem to tend (deliberately?) towards the filmic. Entitled "In Memory of Alan Balter," the poignant passacaglia that comprises the second movement was actually composed at the time of Balter's death without the composer knowing of the event; the dedication came along later. Yet there could be no more fitting tribute: an air of sadness enshrouds the music while the sense of inevitable onward movement seems to mirror the omnipresent nature of Death itself. The performance here tracks the music's sense of gradual growth to its climax perfectly, as well as evoking the sense of post-climax solace that Sampson so powerfully evokes. No doubting the homage to Shostakovich waltzes in the third movement, either, with Voytěch Nýdl's active clarinet a particular delight, while it is Leoš Čepický's delicious violin solo at the opening of the finale that invokes, for this listener at least, Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. Textures later in this movement become remarkably involved and complicated; sudden quiet chords act as plateau of relief.

All these excellent recordings date from the 2000/1 mark so it is good they have seen the light of day. David Sampson is a prolific and talented composer, his output vital and life-enhancing. If you haven't tried his music yet, this is as good a place as any to start. **Colin Clarke**



January 13, 2017

American Brass Quintet Releases Album of Commissioned Works



The distinguished American Brass Quintet releases their new recording, *Perspectives*, today on Summit Records. This album of commissions, written for the Quintet by Sebastian Currier, Eric Ewazen, Robert Paterson and Jay Greenberg, was produced and engineered by Grammy Award-winning producers Judith Sherman and Adam Abeshouse.

With *Perspectives*, the American Brass Quintet continues its tradition of championing new works by distinguished American composers. The four compositions showcase the vast array of styles for brass chamber music today, interpreted with the Quintet's consummate style. With the recent introduction of two new members and in collaboration with emeritus members, *Perspectives* truly represents the past, present and future of the American Brass Quintet.

A "modern day master" and often the "highlight of the program" (New York Times), Robert Paterson's music is praised for its elegance, wit, structural integrity and sense of color. In the composer's own words, "My father is a sculptor who worked with bronze, so as a child, I was always watching him cast bronze sculptures by pouring crucibles of molten metal into giant molds. In many ways, this is probably what caused me to have an affinity for brass instruments... *Shine* is in four movements and explores colorful aspects of four different types of metal: brass, gold, mercury and steel."

Born in 1991 and the youngest composer to have an exclusive agreement with Schirmer/AMP, Jay Greenberg has had a prodigious career to date. Quintet for Brass was completed in 2012 after being awarded a commission from the American Brass Quintet Emerging Composer Commissioning Program, funded by the Jerome Foundation. The work is a phenomenal display of special techniques such as sliding glissandos, high muted chirping in the trumpets, and lyrical, long-breathed melodies in the horn.

Heralded as "music with a distinctive voice" by the New York Times and as "lyrical, colorful, firmly rooted in tradition, but absolutely new" by the Washington Post, Sebastian Currier's music has been performed worldwide by acclaimed artists and orchestras, including Anne-Sophie Mutter,



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the Berlin Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic and the Kronos Quartet. Cadence, Fugue, Fade for Brass Quintet was commissioned by The Juilliard School for ABQ. According to Currier, "When I started to think about writing a brass quintet, the first sound that came to mind was that of brass music of the late Renaissance and early Baroque, with its rich, full-bodied sound, weaving between polyphonic and chordal textures. Like a canzona, the piece is one continuous flow of sound, but divided into various sections of contrasting characters."

Former ABQ members Raymond Mase (trumpet), David Wakefield (horn), plus students Justin Waller (trombone) and JJ Cooper (bass trombone) join the current Quintet configuration for Eric Ewazen's *Canticum Honoris Amicorum* for The American Brass Quintet (Past, Present and Future). His unusual scoring for three trumpets, two French horns, two trombones, bass trombone and tuba allows additional players (whether former or new ABQ members) to play with the existing configuration. *Canticum Honoris Amicorum* is quintessentially Ewazen in the joy and energy it conveys, boasting fanfares, beautiful melodies, great sonority and a dazzling finish.

The American Brass Quintet's commissions by Robert Beaser, William Bolcom, Elliott Carter, Eric Ewazen, Anthony Plog, Huang Ruo, David Sampson, Gunther Schuller, William Schuman, Joan Tower and Charles Whittenberg, among many others, are considered significant contributions to contemporary chamber music and the foundation of the modern brass quintet repertoire. The Quintet's Emerging Composer Commissioning program has brought forth brass quintets by Gordon Beeferman, Trevor Gureckis, Shafer Mahoney and Jay Greenberg.

Highlights of the American Brass Quintet's 2016-17 season include their ongoing collaboration with avant-garde composer John Zorn for the World Premiere of *Blue Stratagem* at Columbia University's Miller Theatre, along with

additional performances at The Guggenheim Museum as a tribute to American abstract painter Agnes Martin. The New York Times commented, "'Blue Stratagem' showed off the layered textures - sometimes mellow, sometimes piercing - of the American Brass Quintet." Also at The Guggenheim, the Quintet performed Zorn's "Pulcinella" movement of his *Commedia dell'arte* suite for multiple ensembles.

Hailed by Newsweek as "the high priests of brass," the American Brass Quintet is internationally recognized as one of the premier chamber music ensembles of our time, celebrated for peerless leadership in the brass world. As 2013 recipient of Chamber Music America's highest honor, the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for significant and lasting contributions to the field, ABQ's rich history includes performances in Asia, Australia, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Canada and the United States; a discography of nearly 60 recordings; and the premieres of over 150 contemporary brass works. Committed to the development of brass chamber music through higher education, the American Brass Quintet has served as Ensemble-in-Residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and the Aspen Music Festival since 1970.

AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET:

Kevin Cobb (Trumpet)
Louis Hanzlik (Trumpet)
Eric Reed (Horn)
Michael Powell (Trombone)
John D. Rojak (Bass Trombone)

PERSPECTIVES

(Summit Records/ DCD 692)

Track Listing:

#1-4: ROBERT PATERSON: *Shine* (2015)

1. Ringing Brass Bells [5:00]

2. [*Quicksilver*](#) [3:54]

3. Veins of Gold [4:23]

4. Bright Blue Steel [3:41]

5: JAY GREENBERG: *Quintet for Brass* (2012) [13:49]

6: SEBASTIAN CURRIER: *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* (2013) [15:38]

7: ERIC EWAZEN: Canticum Honoris
Amicorum (2014) [6:09]

Click [here](#) for a behind-the-scenes look at
the making of Perspectives

UPCOMING 2017 TUR DATES:

[Thursday, February 9 at 7:30PM](#)

Schein Hall (presented by BIG
ARTS: [Barrier](#) Island Group)
Sanibel, FL

[Saturday, February 11 at 8PM](#)

Pensacola Christian College
Pensacola, FL

[Saturday, March 18 at 7:30PM](#)

H.W. Smith School (presented by
Syracuse [Friends](#) of Chamber Music)
Syracuse, NY

[Saturday, March 25 at 2PM](#)

Greenwich Library, The Cole Auditorium
Greenwich, CT

[Friday, March 31 at 7:30PM](#)

Lied Center of Kansas
Lawrence, KS

[Sunday, April 2 at 3PM](#)

Colorado College, Packard Performance
Hall

Colorado Springs, CO

For more, visit the American Brass
Quintet [website](#).



June 24, 2017

Perspectives

By Graham Rickson

Most brass quintets have a tuba as the lowest voice. Not the American Brass Quintet, formed in the late 1950s and early pioneers in playing transcriptions of Renaissance brass music, where the lower voices would have been sackbuts. They've got John D Rojak on bass trombone, who convincingly argues that using a trombone makes for a more blended sound. As heard on this wonderfully engineered disc, the ABQ's sound is both immaculately blended and thrilling in terms of sonic punch. You hear it in the first movement of Robert Paterson's *Shine*, a joyous five-minute sequence of bell-like fanfares. Subsequent movements make imaginative use of mutes and rapid tonguing, before an unambiguously positive close. It's highly appealing. As is another commission, a *Quintet for Brass* by Jay Greenberg. The musical language is a little more exploratory, Greenberg's separate voices more vocal in their differences. They argue, split, form cliques and manage to coexist, the piece ending with a muted trumpet squeak.

Sebastian Currier's *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* begins with allusions to 17th century brass music, the cadences repeatedly derailing the music's forward motion. Currier's fugue is technically brilliant, coming before a solemn close. Finally we get the *Canticum Honoris Amicorum* by Eric Ewazen, a nonet where the existing personnel are joined by an extra player on each instrument – here including two of the group's long-serving, recently retired players. An unabashed crowd pleaser, it's also a touching celebration of musical friendship and collaboration. The playing is exceptional throughout; this disc will enhance anyone's life. Summit Records' minimalist packaging is a winner, and full notes can be downloaded from the ABQ website.



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AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

GRAMOPHONE

April 2017



'A jubilant display of brass splendour': the American Brass Quintet shine in their new album, 'Perspectives'

'Perspectives'

Currier Cadence, Fugue, Fade

Ewazen *Canticum honoris amicorum*^a

Greenberg Brass Quintet Paterson Shine

American Brass Quintet with

^aRaymond Mase *tpt* ^aDavid Wakefield *hn*

^aJustin Waller *tbn* ^aJJ Cooper *btbn*

Summit © DCD692 (53' • DDD)



The American Brass Quintet has gone through many changes of personnel over the

decades, but the high quality of the artistry and devotion to living composers remain firmly in place. On this new recording, 'Perspectives', the ensemble take up music by four composers who bring individual takes to the complement of two trumpets, horn, trombone and bass trombone (not tuba, as in many brass quintets).

In the disc's final piece, Eric Ewazen's nonet *Canticum honoris amicorum*, the Quintet welcome two former members and two other colleagues in this 'song honouring friends'. It is a jubilant display of

brass splendour marked by swirling figures, layered textures and shifting colours. The preceding works provide a snapshot of the Quintet's versatility and gleaming sense of sonority. The four movements of Robert Paterson's *Shine* are evocative portraits of metals – brass, mercury, gold and steel – as depicted in contrasting atmospheres and instrumental techniques, including the deft use of mutes. Jay Greenberg's Brass Quintet combines complex interactions and vivid solos in extreme ranges through writing of chattering and ominous personality.

In *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* Sebastian Currier hearkens back to music of distant centuries as viewed through a keen modern prism. Harmonic pungencies in the opening cadences lead to an extended, boldly characterised fugue and final section abounding in compelling changes of mood and mysterious gestures.

Even with two new players recently in place, the American musicians bring utmost cohesion, balance and expressivity to each of the scores they perform with ear-catching intensity and finesse. **Donald Rosenberg**



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AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET



May/June 2017

Perspectives

Paterson, Greenberg, Currier, Ewazen
American Brass Quintet
Summit 692—53 minutes

American Brass Quintet is a truly venerable ensemble, having formed in 1960. It was one of the ensembles (with New York) that established the quintet as the standard medium of brass chamber music. Unlike New York, though, its foundation was bass trombone instead of tuba. Although the group's membership has changed a number of times, it has actually been quite stable over the years. Tenor trombonist Michael Powell joined in 1983, bass trombonist John Rojak in 1991, and trumpeter Kevin Cobb in 1998. The newest members are trumpeter Louis Hanzlik (2013) and horn player Eric Reed (2014).

Some of the more popular brass quintets emphasize entertainment and showmanship. Not so ABQ; it has always concentrated primarily on bringing serious new works into the world.

Robert Paterson says that his 4-movement, 17-minute *Shine* has its roots in watching his sculptor father work with bronze. The work depicts four kinds of metal. I ('Ringing Brass Bells') is a strident fanfare, II ('Quicksilver') all fast lines and various mutes—often very much like a movement in Jan Bach's *Laudes*. Much of 'Veins of Gold' is also muted, with melodic lines (the veins) passed around the group. 'Bright Blue Steel' is fast and exciting. Paterson's harmonic language is sort of post-atonal: tonal but free, hardly bland.

Jay Greenberg (b 1991) was already an accomplished composer when he wrote his 14-minute Brass Quintet for ABQ at age 21. At its wildest, it reminds me strongly of brass music by Gunther Schuller; at other, more controlled but spectacular moments, Jan Bach. Individual parts are extremely difficult, with extended solos for each member. The harmon-

ic language is quite abstract. This work will not easily become part of the standard university brass quintet repertory—but I expect it will get there eventually.

Sebastian Currier is quoted (in ABQ's online notes) as saying his 16-minute *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* (2013) had 17th-Century Venetian brass music as its inspiration. And the writer of those notes goes on to say, "Currier's sound is indeed reminiscent of golden years of brass music around 1600, but with many striking modernisms." It's quite a stretch; without having been told, I would never imagine this piece has roots in the canzona—and even then, I can't find it. Even having been told how to detect the start of the Fugue, I had a hard time finding it, too. None of this means I don't like the piece. I do.

No one who knows Eric Ewazen's music will doubt for a moment that he is the composer of the 6-minute *Canticum Honoris Amicorum*. It bears all of his rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic trademarks. The instrumentation is unusual: a nonet with ABQ augmented by its retiring members Raymond Mase (trumpet) and David Wakefield (horn) plus another tenor trombone (Justin Waller) and bass trombone (JJ Cooper). Once again, the notes say the piece is rooted in brass music from the 1600s, but I just hear Ewazen. It's great to hear this intricate work played by such fine players. Subtlety, liveliness, beautiful tone and intonation, and group precision do wonders for Ewazen's music.

It is another outstanding ABQ release.

KILPATRICK



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AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

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February 9, 2017

“Perspectives”: American Brass Quintet – Music by PATTERSON, GREENBURG, CURRIER AND EWAZEN – Summit

By Mel Martin



Contemporary brass music from the premier brass ensemble:

The American Brass Quintet is one of the finest group of brass players in the world. In 2013 the quintet received Chamber Music America's highest honor, the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for significant and lasting contributions to the field. Committed to the development of brass chamber music through education and outreach, the American Brass Quintet has served as Ensemble-in-Residence at The Juilliard School since 1987 and the Aspen Music Festival since 1970.

On their latest CD from Summit Records, The ABQ offers a collection of works by American contemporary composers, commissioned by the Quintet for this recording.

The disc begins with *Shine* by Robert Patterson. The four-movement work is an exploration of four different metals. It's an interesting and varied piece, featuring a

movement representing brass bells, quicksilver, gold and blue steel.

The disc then moves on to the *Quintet for Brass* by Jay Greenburg, and then *Cadence, Fugue, Fade* by Sebastian Currier. Both works are highly listenable, and as a former brass player myself, I marvel at the skill of the ABQ in playing these pieces.

Finally we have *Canticum Honoris Amicorum* by Eric Ewazen. Ewazen is a terrific composer, who seems to grow with increasing prominence over the years. It's nice to hear something new from Ewazen. The ABQ previously appeared performing Ewazen's *Shadowcatcher*.

The CD is well-recorded, with a nice soundstage highlighting the positions of the instruments. It's not a demonstration quality disc, but it has a good dynamic range and a sense of space in the hall. My only complaint about this release is the complete dearth of liner notes exploring the composers and their compositions. There really isn't a better source for contemporary classical brass music than the ABQ. This album is worthy of your exploration.



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January 18, 2017

American Brass Quintet to perform at Schein Hall

By Meghan McCoy



A celebration will take the stage next month at BIG ARTS Schein Hall as the American Brass Quintet fills the space with music from composers of the Renaissance period to works of living composers.

The American Brass Quintet, comprised of Kevin Cobb and Louis Hanzlik, who play the trumpet; Eric Reed who plays the French horn; Michael Powell who plays the trombone and John D. Rojak who plays the bass trombone, will make a stop on Sanibel to perform at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 9, at BIG ARTS Schein Hall.

"It's a pretty standard concert for us in terms of what we present. The American Brass Quintet likes to present a diverse and varied program of works written for a brass quintet," Reed said. "The chamber music is a wonderful way to communicate with an audience. The audience can expect to get to know some really interesting,

varied musical styles and get to know the five of us. I think the audience will agree the music and the players are pretty charming."

The concert will include music that people may recognize, pieces originally written for brass, as well as commissioned work from living composers.

"There will be three pieces by living composers and three pieces by nonliving composers, and two of those are early music," he said about music from the Renaissance period. "It's a beautiful way of programming. There is a real diversity of sound and color and style. It really shows what brass instruments are capable of and a great way to learn some new music and new styles. I can promise you that there is something on our program for everyone."

Reed grew up with music filling his house as a young boy due to both of his parents being musicians. Due to that exposure, he began studying music at a very young age.

"I first played the piano and then switched to the French horn and sort of focused on that," Reed said.

His focus on the French horn was sort of pragmatic because one of his parent's colleagues played the horn.

"I tried it one day for fun and they thought it was sort of good that I could make a sound," Reed said.

When the band director had enough trumpet players, playing the French horn became his instrument. When asking the musician why the French horn has kept his



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attention over the years he said "the sound."

"It's a beautiful, special sound. It's kind of unique and that keeps us playing it and what to strive for," Reed said.

He joined the American Brass Quintet in 2014, making this his third year at The Juilliard School. The quintet is committed to promoting brass chamber music through education, resulting in a residence at the Juilliard School since 1987.

Reed said they teach the course, the American Brass Quintet Seminar, which fulfills the students chamber music credit. The quintet organizes brass players into chamber groups, teaches them about chamber music and organizes a concert for them to perform.

"You learn from your students and you can apply that to your performance," Reed said.

The quintet also has a summer residency at the Aspen Music Festival in the mountains of Colorado.

The American Brass Quintet was a 2013 recipient of Chamber Music America's highest honor, the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award. The quintet has traveled to Asia, Australia, Central and South America, Europe, Middle East, and all 50 states. In addition, nearly 60 recordings have been completed, as well as premiers of more than 150 contemporary brass works.

Reed said their time on the road often times comes in waves. Some tours take them on the road for a week to 10 days, followed by a month or so with no concerts.

"We play around 20 concerts a year and a few of those are usually in and around New York City where a lot of our fans and colleagues are," he said. "We will travel around and perform and teach at universities and (perform at) concert series like the one on Sanibel."



AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

THE NEW YORKER

October 24, 2016

CLASSICAL MUSIC 

Miller Theatre “Composer Portrait”:

John Zorn

Columbia’s stirring annual series opens with a night of five world premières from the iconic downtown rebel, long renowned for working with a multitude of genres—jazz, klezmer, classical, and more. In this concert, Zorn offers music inspired by Sigmund Freud, the Christian holiday Candlemas, and more esoteric subjects. The performers are an equally diverse bunch: the American Brass Quintet, the new-music-driven JACK Quartet and Talea Ensemble, and a cadre of virtuosos from Zorn’s own scene. (*Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Oct. 20 at 8.*)



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The New York Times

October 25, 2016

A John Zorn Weekend — 10-Hour Marathon Concert Included

By Zachary Woolfe



As far as performance marathons go, the 10 hours of John Zorn's bagatelles on Saturday at National Sawdust in Brooklyn may not have been the most sprawling. (Taylor Mac's full day of drag-pop two weeks ago, for one thing, was more than double the length of this Zornfest.)

But Mr. Zorn, 63, is a master of packing the greatest possible density of music into whatever vessel is available. Even a brief dip into his bagatelles — short, playful pieces that he unveiled last year in weekly concerts, featuring a variety of ensembles and styles — leaves your head spinning: exhilarated, exhausted. Ten hours on Zorn

time is like spending weeks with most other composers.

As wide-ranging an artist as there is, Mr. Zorn wrote his bagatelles for avant-jazz groups and experimental cellists, for solo piano (the traditional focus of the bagatelle form) and four guitars. On Saturday it was possible to hear, and love, the spacey spaciousness of Ikue Mori, playing on her computer, followed immediately by the punkish pummeling of the Mary Halvorson Quartet.

And even if "just" 10 hours, Mr. Zorn's marathon got extra credit because it was part of a felicitous confluence of concerts



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around New York focusing on him. On Thursday he opened the Composer Portraits series at the Miller Theater at Columbia University, and Sunday brought an encore presentation of his recent five-part suite “Commedia dell’Arte” to the Guggenheim Museum.

The concert at the Miller was made up almost entirely of new work. Mr. Zorn wrote in a program note that his recent pieces aren’t unlike his earlier output, but they’re subtler and more nuanced — “perhaps more poem than spell or manifesto.” But that shouldn’t fool you into thinking that he has lost his edge. His work remains frenetic and electrically charged, as careening — and yet also as confident — as a bobsled racer.

These pieces were of a piece. Filling the scores were Mr. Zorn’s characteristic jitteriness and scratchy energy, a sense of slightly satanic mischief. (The title of one premiere, “Diableries” (“Devilries”), could be applied to most of his works.)

But neither are these scores one-size-fits-all. Mr. Zorn is perhaps underrated in his sensitivity to different instrumental

groupings. “Blue Stratagem” showed off the layered textures — sometimes mellow, sometimes piercing — of the American Brass Quintet; in “Candlemas Eve,” flute lines darted around the shimmering aura of the vibraharp.

The musicians, including artists from the Talea Ensemble and JACK Quartet, were well schooled in Mr. Zorn’s style, passionately precise in manic moments and endowing the stillnesses with the expectation of inevitable explosion. Many of the players were old Zorn hands. His gift is for creating artistic communities, whether through his record label, Tzadik; his East Village performance space, the Stone; or his writing for frequent collaborators. (When he likes a musician, he really, really likes a musician.)

The result is performances of exceptional warmth and camaraderie, of shared purpose and extroverted fun. That was evident at the Miller and at National Sawdust, as it is wherever Mr. Zorn presides, an animated older-brother presence in his trademark T-shirt and camouflage cargo pants.



November 3, 2016

John Zorn: Composer Portraits

By Jean Ballard

In the first concert of the 2016-2017 Composer Portraits season at Columbia University School of the Arts' Miller Theatre, current music of American composer John Zorn (b. 1953), including five premieres, was presented and enthusiastically received. More accurately: Zorn's music-making – his understanding of individual composing and collegial collaborating as interconnected projects – was exuberantly celebrated.

Over the course of the evening, seven pieces of music by Zorn, the oldest of which was composed only three years ago, were played by some 25 musicians in various combinations – the Talea Ensemble, the American Brass Quintet, JACK Quartet, individuals – organized into chamber music groups of three to five musicians, with one soloist. Zorn has long histories with some of these musicians; in the program notes, for instance, he described the American Brass Quintet as “some of the sweetest cats on the planet.” In his compositions, Zorn writes equally for individual musicians, for particular instruments in particular combinations, and for the willingness of all involved to stretch technical virtuosity into exhilarating creativity.

Because all the works on the program were so recent, they were all similar in high-energy, high-voltage sensibility: they were all entrances into one man's artistic vision of the world around him at this one time of his life. But the virtual simultaneity of production of all these pieces didn't make for homogeneity of sound. Energy, extremes, edge, enervation and

ephemerality – all long-time Zorn preoccupations – were familiarly present, but new subjects for each of the premieres (as well as for *Il n'y a plus de firmament* (2014) and *Cagliostro* (2016)) provided Zorn with new material.

The program opened with *Freud*, a work composed for Christopher Otto/violin, Jay Campbell/cello and Michael Nicolas/cello, “three of the most trusted players in my inner circle, true warrior poets.” The intense ten-minute work resulted from Zorn's immersion in the writings of Sigmund Freud. The work is an examination not just of “dreams, memory and the subconscious” but of the psyche's migrations between, around, into and out of these states; it's a piece about internal movements and the inability to stay still. It's about the attempt to find a fixed location in the midst of geographies that can't settle and have no fixed borders. The three players, pushing themselves and their instruments from high-density frenzy to lyricism, represented not three voices or three beings, but constantly changing facets of self, separating and then coming back together.

Diableries, as its name suggests, was a piece about devils' dares. Suggested by the Book of Revelation's Beast 616, the work is a tour de force of cello wildness with bass and drum in rough embrace. The music is exceptionally visual: it's like Sufi dervishes gone into hard-tripping frenzy, and then suddenly stopped. The audience applause was giddy.

Blue Strategem was, according to Zorn, inspired by Agnes Martin's “mystical



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approach” to paint and painting, color, shape and line. The complex, demanding writing for brass quintet moves from one series of shades, echoes, overlaps, plays and replays to another similar round of iterations and reiterations, like extended communication attempts: “Yes, but ... No, wait ... What?” The instruments engage in constant calling, as though across time and space, always slightly off kilter. The sound is so densely knotty that it takes on its own alluring semblance of harmony, and the brass instruments become unexpectedly organic.

Candlemas Eve – “quirky, spooky and expressive,” in Zorn’s own description – was, in some senses, the most accessible work of the evening, the vibraphone providing familiar allusions of Celtic moodiness or Shakespeare’s mischievous, sensuous fairies translated from the Globe to our twenty-first century world via Max Reinhardt, William Dieterle and Mme. Nijinska. Written for flutes and vibraphone, the music explores gender, power, magic, dance and ritual; it is alternately sweet, seductive, unnerving and gorgeous.

Candlemas Eve’s cinematic feel provided a smooth transition to the evening’s last piece, *Obscure Objects of Desire*, Zorn’s tribute to Luis Bunuel and to Bunuel’s “surreal world of sexual and religious perversity.” Pianist Stephen Gosling and the JACK Quartet turned this music’s intensity into lushness, its gnarly nuances into sensuous, sinewy twists. As a Bunuel homage, the piece successfully evoked unsettling otherness and eroticism, retaining Zorn’s intense preoccupations

with experiences at the ragged edges of things, but dropped off Bunuel’s European accent, replacing it with his own robustly American all-purpose declarative tone.

The musicians Zorn works with can do just about anything: they are wildly skilled players who revel in risks. The brass players and string players, flute players, pianist, vibraphonists and percussionist all stretched themselves and their instruments to their full limits: musical sound extended from gut-deep bass rumbles to ear-killingly high screech-screams, and rhythms from multilayered staccato barrages to caressingly extended, long breath single notes. Zorn’s energy is unremitting; his music-making is unstoppable. Collaboration and inspiration are each other’s oxygen; consistent integrity of purpose and invigoratingly catholic artistic curiosity ensure that the urgency of Zorn’s music is both sincere and without cliché.

At the end of the evening, Zorn came on stage; in a dark t-shirt and improbably perky orange camouflage pants, he was half congenially patriarchal and half gleefully subversive dark-magic priest. All the musicians came on stage, too, lining up for scraggly bows, greeting each other, beaming, sneaking in the occasional embrace, and then joining in with the audience’s raucous applause.

For Zorn, whose musical output is apparently close to continuous, this was a wonderful evening of successful sharing; for the audience, it was an exhilarating evening of receiving. And for the Miller Theatre, it was a marvelous beginning to the 2016-2017 Composer Portrait Season.

The New York Times

December 2, 2013

American Brass Quintet Makes Sure It Doesn't Shrink to a Trio

By Allan Kozinn

Among North American brass ensembles none is more venerable than the American Brass Quintet, which was founded in 1960 and has been a resident ensemble at the Aspen Music Festival since 1970, and at the Juilliard School since 1987. But rosters change, and the retirement of the trumpeter Raymond Mase and the hornist David Wakefield has created two openings in the quintet in quick succession.

As of Monday both spots have been filled: the trumpeter Louis Hanzlik joined the ensemble on Dec. 1, and the hornist Eric Reed will take over from Mr. Wakefield on March 23. They are the 25th and 26th members of the ensemble, which has seen several distinguished players pass through it, among them the trumpeters Gerard Schwarz (who traded in his trumpet for a baton), Allan Dean and Chris Gekker, and the hornist Edward Birdwell.

The current roster includes, along with Mr. Hanzlik and Mr. Reed, the trombonist Michael Powell (who joined in 1983), the bass trombonist John D. Rojak (1991) and the trumpeter Kevin Cobb (1998).



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THE ASPEN TIMES

July 30, 2016

Musical detours enliven Festival's busy week

By Harvey Steiman

The American Brass Quintet's annual recital Wednesday in Harris Hall included two world premieres among its usual mix of Renaissance and contemporary works.

Kenneth Fuchs' Brass Quintet No. 2 "American" lit a fire under the players' virtuosity, with rapidly moving, colorful and delightfully accessible writing that never flagged. It was so good I wished they had played the entire 12 minutes over again. Eric Nathan's "Missing Words II" went more for wit, with music inspired by invented German words. The best of the three parts was "Brillenbrillanz," translated as the sudden feeling of bright focus when trying on a new pair of glasses. Each players remove one tuning tube from his instrument, creating an out-of-focus sound to contrast with the clarity of a whole trumpet or trombone. Although this music ventured beyond the single effect, the other two parts did not.

The quintet's mellow and rich playing on the "old" music of Gabrieli, Stölzer and others of the Renaissance contrasted nicely with these works, and the virtuosic fun of the opener, Clint Needham's Brass Quintet No. 1 "Circus."



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July 27, 2016

Composer Robert Paterson Celebrates World Premiere of THREE WAY, New Recordings and More in 2016-17

The 2016-17 season is an exceptional year for Robert Paterson, the New York-based composer whose music has been praised for its elegance, wit, rhythmic vitality, and wonderful sense of color that "often seems to shimmer."

He will have the first evening-length, fully-staged opera production of his career: *Three Way*, a trio of comic operas with libretto by David Cote "about craving and connection," co-produced by Nashville Opera and American Opera Projects, will have its world premiere in Nashville and its New York premiere at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music.

Three recordings will be released featuring Paterson's music: an all-Paterson disc by the Claremont Trio featuring three works spanning 20 years, *Sun Trio*, *Moon Trio*, and *Elegy for Two Cellos and Piano*; a recording by the American Brass Quintet featuring *Shine*, a 2015 work by Paterson that the quintet commissioned; and an upcoming release by the flute, viola, and harp ensemble *The Aureole Trio* featuring *Embracing the Wind*, a 1999 work that has been performed internationally.

And in addition to *Three Way*, new works by Paterson to be premiered in 2016-17 include *Sea Glass* for two harps and five-octave marimba, commissioned by the *SeaGlass Carousel/The Battery Conservancy* of lower Manhattan, which will receive its world premiere performance by *Duo Scorpio*; and the song cycle *Night Songs*, which will have its world premiere on a program by the *Cayuga Vocal Ensemble*. The New York

premiere of *In Real Life*, a song cycle about online dating, will be presented by *American Modern Ensemble* on a program with arias from *Three Way*; and the *New Amsterdam Singers* will perform the New York premiere of *Life Is But a Dream*, a work featured on Paterson's recording *Eternal Reflections*.

Recent performances of Paterson's music include *Ghost Theater*, commissioned by the *Albany Symphony*, *Dark Mountains* with *Jaime Laredo* and the *Vermont Symphony Orchestra*, and *A Dream Within a Dream*, commissioned by the *Chamber Choir of Europe*. His work *The Book of Goddesses*, performed by the ensemble *MAYA* on recording, was named one of the Top 10 favorite pieces of the year by NPR's *Best Music of 2012*; his most recent recording is the highly-praised *Eternal Reflections*, a disc of choral music performed by *Musica Sacra* conducted by *Kent Tritle*. He is the founder and artistic director of *American Modern Ensemble*, and he directs the affiliated record label, *American Modern Recordings (AMR)*, which is distributed by *Naxos*.

Three Way, Co-Produced by *Nashville Opera* and *American Opera Projects*

Three Way is a trio of one-act operas that, in the composer's words, "explore the future of love, sex, and power with a balance of humor and drama." "The Companion" is about what happens when *Maya* decides she wants more from her android lover, *Joe*, and consults a technician, *Dax*, with surprising results. "Safe Word" explores the



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unexpected dynamics of a session between a dominatrix and her businessman client. And "Masquerade" dramatizes a party at a mansion in which four couples don masks and shed their outer selves.

With a libretto by playwright, librettist, and journalist David Cote, *Three Way* is written for eight singers and chamber orchestra. "The Companion" and "Safe Word" have been seen in workshop and semi-staged performances presented by American Opera Projects and Fort Worth Opera Frontiers Showcase. Reviewing "The Companion," *Opera News* said, "Composer Robert Paterson and librettist David Cote have created an effortlessly funny, clever and deeply resonant opera, in which the music and the story fuel one another to create an entertaining and meaningful theatrical experience," and *I Care If You Listen* magazine said, "Paterson's score showcased an excellent musical vocabulary and flowed beautifully."

The world premiere of the work in its entirety, directed by John Hoopes, will be presented in a three-performance engagement by Nashville Opera on January 27, 28, and 29, 2017, at Nashville's James K. Polk Theatre. The cast features singers Eliza Bonet, MeLisa Bonetti, Samuel Levine, Wes Mason, Danielle Pastin, Courtney Ruckman, Jordan Rutter, and Matthew Treviño, with the Nashville Opera Orchestra conducted by Dean Williamson.

Visit www.nashvilleopera.org/three-way.

The New York premiere, an engagement of four performances of the same production, presented by Nashville Opera and American Opera Projects, takes place on June 15, 16, 17, and 18, 2017, at BAM (the Brooklyn Academy Of Music) with the same cast and the American Modern Ensemble conducted by Dean Williamson.

Excerpts of *Three Way* can be heard at the American Opera Projects project page, and

on Robert

Paterson's

website: robertpaterson.com/three-way.

Recordings in 2016-17

Three recordings by three prominent American ensembles slated for release in the coming season feature Paterson's music, including one all-Paterson disc:

- The Claremont Trio (Emily Bruskin, violin; Julia Bruskin, cello; and Andrea Lam, piano), who have been called "one of America's finest young chamber groups" by *The Strad* magazine, will release an all-Paterson recording featuring *Sun Trio* (1995, revised 2008); *Moon Trio* (2015); and *Elegy for Two Cellos and Piano* (2006-8), featuring guest cellist Karen Ouzounian. "Rob's music is descriptive and poignant, vibrant and thrilling," said Emily Bruskin. "These trios take you on a wild ride filled with colorful gestures and gorgeous panoramas." The disc is scheduled for release in December 2016 by American Modern Recordings, distributed by Naxos. claremonttrio.com

- Shine, a 2015 work commissioned by the ABQ and Rick Teller, is featured on, and lends its name to, a new recording from the American Brass Quintet (Kevin Cobb and Louis Hanzlik, trumpets; Eric Reed, horn; Michael Powell, trombone; and John D. Rojak, bass trombone), called "the high priests of brass" by Newsweek. The recording is scheduled for release in December 2016 by Summit Records. An excerpt of Shine can be heard on the quintet's [media page:www.americanbrassquintet.org/media](http://www.americanbrassquintet.org/media) "The American Brass Quintet was excited to have a chance to work with Rob Paterson and get him writing for brass quintet. Shine is a challenging, rewarding and effective piece that has stopped the show at every performance. Working with Rob was like having another member in the quintet - he knew how to solve technical issues without sacrificing the integrity of the music."

May 16, 2014

American Brass Quintet: Blowing their trumpets for 'high art'

It's been a while since Australian audiences have heard their mellifluous music, but the American Brass Quintet is back.

By Ben Nielsen

After four decades, the American Brass Quintet has returned to Australian shores. Considered by many to be the world's 'high priests of brass', the ensemble will tour the country as part of Musica Viva's International Concert Series.

When the American Brass Quintet gave its first public performance in 1960, brass chamber music was still a novelty in the concert hall. The quintet joined with other well-known groups like Canadian Brass, Empire Brass and the New York Brass Quintet, in a concerted effort to push the genre from niche to mainstream. Nearly 60 years later, the perceived abilities and reception of the brass quintet has shifted dramatically.

"In the early days, it really was a new art form; nobody knew what to play and how it was going to take shape," said Kevin Cobb, American Brass Quintet trumpeter. "Most of the time audiences expected some entertainment with a sort of a show value to it, but I think they're coming in with a different preconception now. I suppose though that when people come to our concert, they're going to experience something a little bit more unusual simply because not many brass quintets are playing chamber music in a very high art form."

The American Brass Quintet has built its reputation on the foundation of selective repertoire; only performing works written specifically for brass. As well as this, the

quintet is one of the biggest commissioners of new works for brass.

"Classical music was never intended to be a static institution, it was meant to be a current art form," said Cobb. "Beethoven was once a modern composer, and the world would be a much poorer place without that. I think everybody feels that there is a certain obligation to try to commission the next Beethoven."

Beyond its significant contribution to the catalogue, the American Brass Quintet is committed to education and the promotion of music. The ensemble is in residence at The Julliard School, where the five members teach and perform brass chamber music. During their Australian tour, they have scheduled visits to various institutions including the Sydney and Melbourne Conservatoriums of Music.

"We've had some wonderful young Australian brass players come through Julliard over the years so we know that there's high quality brass pedagogy here. It also seems like there's a certain knowledge out there that's maybe different than the States," said Cobb. "The pedagogical aspect of what we do is something we feel strongly about. Reaching out to students – not only music students but also students who are not musicians. We really feel like we want to reach out and bring our educational arm to as many people as we can."



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While their schedule is tight, Cobb said that he and his four colleagues (Louis Hanzlik, Eric Reed, Michael Powell, and John Rojak) would also make some time to sightsee while in Australia. The quintet members have already strolled the beautiful Sydney Opera House precinct, have planned a walking tour of Brisbane this weekend, and have booked a wine tour of Adelaide.

“What I really like about Australia so far is that things have a certain European feel. The cities seem very clean; there are beautiful little cafes, a lot of coffee, great little stores. It seems like people are proud of their cities and what they have to offer.”

The American Brass Quintet concert series began last night in Newcastle, and will continue in Brisbane and Sydney this weekend. The program consists of works from the Renaissance period to those written by contemporary American composers – a varied selection that will be altered slightly for each performance.

“There’s a lot of variety and we feel very confident that when someone comes to one of our recitals they will leave enriched with the knowledge of new brass works as well as exposure to music from the Renaissance and beyond,” said Cobb. “I guess we would like to think that we’re expanding the horizons of our listeners.”

THE ASPEN TIMES

August 1, 2015

The American Brass Quintet has been performing at this festival for more than 40 years, bass trombonist John D. Rojak noted Tuesday evening in one introduction. Tuesday's program made a case for being the best. The quintet's clear sound and precise articulation let the music speak with big-time personality. And the works on the program brought plenty of their own charisma.

Among the highlights were the two newest — a world premiere and a 2014 piece. Premieres and new pieces are something of a regular occurrence in the quintet's concerts here. "Shine, for Brass Quintet," by Robert Paterson, who mentioned in his introduction that he was a student composer here 16 years ago, challenged the members of the quintet with difficult solo and ensemble passages, all in service of colorful music that made joyful use of everything brass instruments can do. Mutes, glissandos and brief fanfares all played roles in four very different movements. The first, — emphasized staccato playing — all brightness, and the second cast the brass as chorale singers — all interweaving lines. The third, a scherzo, explored contrasts between open and muted sounds, and the finale

raced hell-bent for brilliance, and achieved it.

"Fata Morgana," by Nina C. Young, who wrote it last summer at Tanglewood, ended the concert with a stage populated by two full brass quintets, five extra French horns and a battery of percussion led by Jonathan Haas providing shimmering phrases on vibraphones, clashes on tam-tams and powerful use of bass drums. The 10-minute tone poem explores the effects of seagoing optical illusions, which can be magical or disastrous. Never let it be said that a woman can't write muscular, powerful music. This one nearly took the roof off with its intensity.

Other highlights included Lutoslawski's cheeky and pungent little Mini Overture and two of Raymond Mase's always eloquent adaptations of early music. A collection of offbeat 16th-century canons held more interest than a pleasant group of Elizabethan Consort Music, all of it played with refinement and detail.

- Harvey Steinman



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davidbrubeck.com

September 27, 2015

The Incomparable American Brass Quintet Visits “FIVE!”



The American Brass Quintet is distinguished in so many ways. As educators, their residencies at Aspen and Juilliard alone have shaped generations of the most promising brass musicians, not to mention their innovative residencies around the globe. As preservationists of a traditional chamber music approach to brass (which more closely parallels that of a string quartet), they are unmatched. From the ABQ dedication to the more evenly matched timbres of two trumpets and two trombones as the core of a brass quintet, to their persistence in bringing new music for brass to every concert, they are the champions of *art music* for brass. With a bass trombonist as the bottom voice, it was perhaps natural to take advantage of brass literature from earlier historical style periods, to have done so with such detailed vigor is unprecedented. With over 150 new pieces commissioned and premiered for brass, 50 albums, countless tours, and an

impressive array of current and former members, the American Brass Quintet has literally shaped the course of chamber music in America for more than half a century.

“FIVE!” tm is delighted to host the innovative American Brass Quintet as featured guests for our chamber music interview series. Our respondents are: Eric Reed-ER, French horn (formerly of the Canadian Brass)

Michael Powell-MP, tenor trombone
John Rojak-JR, bass trombone.

How would you describe the distinct musical values passed down from the ABQ founding members to the current performers?

When ABQ was founded, the members at that time made it their mission to champion music written for brass instruments and to avoid transcriptions of popular classical music, jazz, and music that had been written for other ensembles. Our current group



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continues that tradition. This has resulted in over 150 pieces from composers of our time, as well as dozens of editions of early music adapted from music written for the predecessors of modern brass instruments. We have always known that a concert of original brass music can be entertaining and leave an audience richer for that experience. -JR

How do you view the development of the Brass Quintet in the United States, and the role of the ABQ in that development?

Brass quintets started developing in the mid-20th century and all brass players owe tremendous thanks to Robert King, who published a wealth of arrangements and original pieces starting in the late 1930's. The New York Brass Quintet made an incredible impact with their domestic touring in the 1950's and '60's, bringing serious brass chamber music to many audiences. *(By the way, before Harvey Phillips played tuba with NYBQ, the bottom voice was Julius Mencken on bass trombone!)*

ABQ came along in 1960 and continued what NYBQ had begun, commissioning new works, touring internationally and showing brass as a viable option on chamber music series. The Eastman Brass Quintet, Annapolis Brass and other groups formed and brass music began to develop a repertoire. When the Canadian Brass changed the nature of brass music in the 1970's, some of those ensembles had a harder time programming serious repertoire. Many groups emulated the CB model, and ABQ became more unique in the field. Currently, it seems that audiences can accept both the ABQ and the CB models and young quintets have been formed that play serious rep, light rep, and a mix of styles.

ABQ's role in brass quintet development has been long-term, and we think in deep-rooted manner. As a result of our commitment to new music, ABQ has been highly influential in commissioning leading composers of our time and recording dozens of their compositions for brass. Having performed on five continents and in all fifty of the United States, our performances have given thousands of audience members access to the brass music of Ewazen, Sampson, Druckman, and many others. Our

residencies at the Aspen Music Festival (since 1970), and Juilliard (since 1987), have allowed us to share our values about chamber music with the young musicians we have coached. Many of those students have become performers and teachers, passing on ABQ traditions to the next generations. JR

How would you describe the access to composers, musicians and cultural influences that have arisen due to your residence in New York City?

New York City is truly a melting pot of all sorts of influences. We are lucky to be rubbing shoulders with both preeminent and aspiring artists on a daily basis, and that continues to inspire us. I absolutely love the variety of experiences the city offers to artists. Just to think that for every event occurring in NYC there are at least another hundred occurring at the very same time-all with different musicians, music and composers behind the music, is truly mind-boggling. *If we could only be in 100 places at once!* The knowledge that other inspired creators of art are right around the corner, perhaps even on the cusp of writing the greatest brass quintet ever written, drives us to keep on our mission to find them-and to get them to write it. We are in a wonderful place to be able to do that. -ER

Adapting to different styles is arguably the most challenging for a brass chamber music due to the greater span of historical music, and the intensity with which the brass timbres were explored during the 20th century-particularly in jazz. As one of the few groups who excel at each style, how does ABQ maintain artistic integrity at such a daunting challenge?

Our artistic integrity is due to performing music written for brass quintet or the predecessors of our instruments. In early music, that means cornetti and sackbuts, or 5 part instrumental music, and in some cases, vocal music from the Renaissance. We consider our early music performances to be historically informed, and have spent a considerable amount of time studying treatises and listening to fine examples of performances by musicians who have dedicated their careers to those styles. Contemporary music is actually easier in

many ways. Composers tend to mark the score precisely how they want it heard and, better still, we can talk to them! We always spend time with composers who write for us and make sure we are representing the music as it was intended. JR

What is it like to tour with the ABQ? On the bus? After the concert? What have been some of your most memorable audiences?

The current members of ABQ are having a blast on tour! Our first major tour with Louis and Eric was 3 weeks in Australia. We spent a lot of time together, eating probably 80% of our meals as a group. We had some wonderful nights after concerts, but we're a fairly conservative bunch—no wild parties or morning hangovers. We talk! We've had many memorable audiences and concerts, but perhaps the most moving in recent memory was in Prague shortly after 9/11. We played "Ah! dolente partita" by Monteverdi, a madrigal with text that refers to painful separation, in St. Bartholomew's Church. The ambiance of the church, the ring off of beautiful harmony, and the hushed, then warm, reception of the full house was stunning. The empathy towards us as Americans in the time following our country's tragedy was incredibly touching. JR

The ability of brass to radically alter their timbre seems vastly superior to other acoustic instruments, and yet sometimes rarely prized. Can you address the pros and cons of mutes, and whether you think that they are under-utilized?

I'd say mutes are not under-utilized by any means in the ABQ. *It's difficult to navigate the stage setup without kicking one, and some of the trombone mutes I see on stage look like alien spacecrafts!*

Indeed, there is always room for more color, it's just a matter of how the mutes are utilized, by the composer and by the player. The trumpet players in ABQ are continuously getting new versions of similar mutes because they are shaped differently or made of a heavier material or offer different tuning options. It's a wild world of mutes out there, and the ABQ utilizes most if not all of them. I agree, it's an amazing thing about brass writing that mutes can so

vastly alter the sound and color. The only down side that I can see is carrying the things in our luggage! -ER

What is a quintet warm-up like with the ABQ?

I have been in the ABQ for over 30 years, and there has never been a coordinated quintet warm-up. It sounds like a fine idea for a younger ensemble, however. Even when warming up independently in the same room, acceptable manners absolutely apply: Always be personally and musically polite regarding sound level, intonation, and your own passage-work connected with your warm-up. -MP

With the ABQ it is clearly all about the music, and yet the prominence of the bass trombone (certainly not to the exclusion of the tuba), often gives your ensemble a characteristic sound. How would you describe the ABQ relationship with the bass trombone, and what do you make of the trend for smaller tubas in other brass quintets?

The use of tuba in a brass quintet adds a nice roundness of sound, coupling with the conical French horn in a pleasing way. *That said, it's a bit like using a double bass in a string quartet instead of a cello; certain voicings and instrument ranges leave something to be desired in the middle of the spectrum.* In the ABQ, the matching qualities of the two pairs of trumpets and trombones create a nice balance of sound timbre, which I think outweigh the sometimes deeper, rounder quality of a quintet with tuba. As for the popular use of smaller tubas in brass quintet, the often unfortunate trade-off for easier transport is a lack of full, round tuba sound mentioned above, and a wonky low-register, which begs the question, *why use tuba after all?* Nothing against tuba in brass quintet, it just presents more challenges, including overhead bins. We're happy with the bass trombone for so many reasons. -ER

Describe the ABQ commitment to new music and composers. How do you find it best to bring challenging pieces before the public?

From the beginning, one leg of the ABQ's mission is to foster new works for the genre. Having a new work embedded in a mixed program is our method of introducing our

audiences to music of our time. In general, the newest work is performed at the end of the first half of the recital, after playing older, stylistically familiar works which more easily connect with many concertgoers. On tour, we always speak from the stage between works, which is undoubtedly helpful in introducing the audience to us *and* the music-whether old or new. -MP

Which are the chamber music groups that inspire you?

We often say that a goal of the ABQ is to be on the same chamber music series as string quartets and piano trios, and I'd say we are achieving that goal in virtually every venue. In order to be fully aware of what those chamber groups bring to a series, it's important for us to see them perform. In the last month, we've been fortunate to be presented alongside the American and Borromeo String Quartets at the Aspen and Cape Cod festivals, respectively. Hearing and seeing those fantastic quartets perform was truly inspiring. -ER

The Wichita Eagle

February 16, 2014

Wichita Symphony, American Brass Quintet paint musical portrait of America

By Guy Vollen

Saturday night's performance by the Wichita Symphony Orchestra under the direction of maestro Daniel Hege gave the audience a vivid musical portrait of America, including the music of Native Americans, from several different perspectives. Guest performers included Native drummers and the American Brass Quintet.

Following a drum circle performed by the Thunderhead Singers, the symphony played the "Concert Suite from Dances With Wolves" by John Barry.

Rather than extracting individual scenes from Barry's Oscar-winning film score, the suite is a "free compilation" of themes. As such, it featured the horns prominently as well as showing off the symphony's rich, transparent strings and a lovely, lilting flute solo toward the end.

Barry's composition recalls the open spaces that figure prominently in musical Americana, but with martial touches, as well as a lush "love theme" and surprising chord changes that invite comparisons to the James Bond soundtracks (some of Barry's best-known work) and the "New World Symphony" by Dvorak that closed the program.

The American Brass Quintet joined the orchestra onstage to perform Eric Ewazen's "Shadowcatcher," a four-movement concerto composed specifically for them. Inspired by iconic photographs of Native American life and culture taken by Edward Curtis at the beginning of the 20th century, the music was paired with projections of some of Curtis' photos.

Like John Barry, Ewazen is essentially a romantic, composing sweeping melodies and colorful textures to evoke the grandeur of the American landscape and the nobility of the Native Americans Curtis photographed. Ewazen's decision to eschew the dissonances of modernism sometimes leads him too far in the other direction, however, toward a triadic sweetness that becomes cloying without something to create tension and drive.

The most interesting parts of "Shadowcatcher" were often the beginnings of movements, in which the quintet members (Kevin Cobb and Louis Hanzlik, trumpets; David Wakefield, horn; Michael Powell and John D. Rojak, trombones) were featured individually in freely unfolding melodies modeled after Native American music. Only in the third movement, "The Vanishing Race," did the music move beyond the pictorial to convey the monumental sense of loss implied by the title; there was dissonance, yes, but more importantly the brass soloists were given melodies with a sense of momentum that went beyond filling out chords.

Those concerns aside, the symphony and quintet were more than up to the task of performing this carefully-crafted work. Ewazen, a well-known contemporary composer, is intimately familiar with the capabilities of the brass instruments and creates dramatic and lively soundscapes for the quintet as individuals and as a group balanced with the orchestral accompaniment.



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The fourth movement, “Dancing to Restore an Eclipsed Moon,” was the most virtuosic, with an extended group cadenza for the quintet, leading up to a musically depicted “sneeze” (as explained in the notes, this was part of the ritual by which a nocturnal beast would be forced to disgorge the moon that it had swallowed, causing the eclipse of the title).

Just as importantly, the five members display a sense of tight ensemble born of years of playing together as a group. In several places they formed a sonorous whole, balanced against the full orchestra; for a group made up only of brass instruments, they conveyed a wide range of tone colors and dynamics.

The second half of the concert was devoted to Antonin Dvorak’s “Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, Op. 95,” nicknamed “From the New World.” Dvorak, born in Bohemia (now the Czech Republic), lived in New York during 1892-1895 and became enthralled by the music of the United States, especially that of Native Americans and African-Americans (both of which were largely ignored by classically-trained musicians at that time).

Seeking to provide a model by which American composers might find their own musical roots, Dvorak incorporated

American rhythms, scales, and melodic motives (but not whole tunes) into a European classical symphony. The result has been by far his most popular work and a staple of the concert repertoire for over a hundred years.

From the first downbow the symphony dug into the music, resulting in an impassioned and sometimes inspired performance, despite some persistent intonation problems that dogged the high woodwinds in places.

The brass were prominently featured, especially the horns under the leadership of principal Nicholas Smith. English horn soloist Emily Tsai’s rendition of the famous “Largo” melody was both tender and steady, but she wasn’t the only soloist featured in the transparent textures of the second movement. Principal oboist Andrea Banke had moments to shine, and there was a brief but exquisite duet between concertmaster John Harrison and principal cellist Jakub Omsky. Throughout the wide variety of melodies, rhythms and textures in this ambitious and influential symphony, it was clear that the Wichita Symphony and Hege were not only going to play the notes, but were determined to communicate their passion for this music.

Works written for the **American Brass Quintet** (year of performance)

2011-

Sorey, Tyshawn – Largo (2025)
Barfield, Anthony - Samsara (2023)
Hitomi Oba - Mycelium Stories (2023)
Higdon, Jennifer - Book of Brass (2022)
Higgins, Timothy - Quintet (2023)
Biedenbender, David - Sacred Geometry (2022)
Ching-chu Hu - A Distant Hope (2022)
Day, Kevin - Fantasia III (2021 premiere by Axiom Brass)
Young, Nina C. - The Glow That Illuminates, the Glare That Obscures (2019)
Lasser, Philip - Common Heroes, Uncommon Land (2018)
Paterson, Robert - SHINE (2015)
Bolcom, William - Fantasia for BQ & Organ (2015)
Bineli, Daniel - Alma Iluminada for BQ, organ, percussion and bandoneon (2015)
Ewazen, Eric - Canticum honoris amicorum, A Nonet for Brass (2014)
Currier, Sebastian - Cadence, Fugue, Fade (2013)
Greenberg, Jay - Quintet for Brass (2012)
Plog, Anthony - Songs of War and Loss for BQ and baritone voice (2011)
Sampson, David - Chesapeake (2011)

2001-2010

Plog, Anthony - Concerto 2010 for BQ & Wind Ensemble (2010)
Gureckis, Trevor - Fixated Nights (2010)
Mahoney, Shafer - Brass Quintet (2009)
Sampson, David - Chants and Flourishes (2009)
Beeferman, Gordon - Brass Quintet (2008)
Dello-Joio, Justin - Blue and Gold Music for BQ & Organ (2008)
Childs, Billy - Two Elements (2007)
Maggio, Robert - A Sense of Space (2007)
Schoenberg, Adam - Reflecting Light (2006)
Sampson, David - Entrance (2006)
Dennis, Robert - Il Ritorno (2006)
Tower, Joan - Copperwave (2006)
Gasser, Nolan - “GLAST Prelude” Op. 12 (2006)
Moravec, Paul - Cornopean Airs for BQ & Organ (2005)
Rio, Huang - The Three Tenses (2005)
Sacco, Steven - Quintet (2004)
Harbinson, William - Brass Quintet No. 1 (2004)
Asia, Dan - Brass Quintet (2001/2002)
Adler, Samuel - Be Not Afraid: the Isle is Full of Noises (2001)

1991-2000

Beaser, Robert - Brass Quintet (2000)
Wagner, Melinda - Brass Quintet No. 1 (2000)

Wintle, James - American Intrada (2000)
Fennelly, Brian - Velvet and Spice (2000)
Sampson, David - Strata (1999)
Lazzaro, Henri - Invenzione Concertata (1997)
Plog, Anthony - Mosaics (1997)
Ewazen, Eric - Shadowcatcher for BQ & Orchestra (1996)
Fennelly, Brian - Locking Horns (1994)
Schuller, Gunther - Brass Quintet No. 2 (1993)
Tsontakis, George - Hensel (1993)
Elder, David - Canzone XXXI (1993)
Thorne, Francis - Two Environments (1992)
Rorem, Ned - Diversions (1991)
Adolphe, Bruce - Triskelion (1991)

1981-1990

Ewazen, Eric - Frost Fire (1990)
Sampson, Davis - Distant Voices (1990)
Bach, Jan - Triptych (1989)
Naylor, Craig (1989)
Wintle, James - Scene da Camera (1989)
Roseman, Ronald - Double Quintet (1988)
Kupferman, Meyer - Rock Shadows (1987)
Dennis, Robert - Blackbird Variations (1987)
Wintle, James - Tonen des Erz (1987)
Ewazen, Eric - Colchester Fantasy (1987)
Fink - Antique Suite (1987)
Plog, Anthony - Animal Ditties (1986)
Sampson, David - Morning Music (1986)
Wright, Maurice - Quintet (1986)
Oliver, Harold - GGRYYZY MLGORN (1986)
Coyner, Louis - Eolith No. 4 (1985)
Ussachevsky - Anniversary Variations (1985)
Ussachevsky - Dialogues and Contrasts (1984)
Tsontakis, George - Brass Quintet (1984)
Silverman, Faye Ellen - Quantum Quintet (1983)
Welcher, Dan - Brass Quintet (1982)
Thomas, Andrew - Consonanze Stravaganti (1981)
Starer, Robert - Evanescence (1981)

1971-1980

Bolcom, William - Quintet (1980)
Schulman, William - American Hymn (1980)
Bland, Ed - Brass Quintet (1980)
Balada, Leonardo - Sonata for 10 winds (1980)
Bames, Ed - Variations for Brass Quintet (1980)
Heussenstamm, George - Brass Quintet No. 3 Op. 64 (1979)
Bazelton, Irwin - De-tonations (1979)
Bennett, Robert Russell - Arabesque (1978)
Reck, David - Panchalohan (1977)
Bennett, Richard Russell - Piece for Trumpet, Trombone and Saxes? (1977)

Hoffer, Bernard - Brass/Saxes (1977)
Mascheyeki - Contradictions II (1976)
Druckman, Jacob - Other Voices (1976)
Thomson, Virgil - Family Portrait (1975)
Austin, Larry - First Fantasy (1975)
Moryl, Richard - Soundings (1975)
Reck, David - Metamusic for Brass Quintet, Slides and Tape (1974)
Carter, Elliot - Brass Quintet (1974)
Purcell-Carter - Fantasy (1974)
Jarrett, Keith - In the Light (1973)
Thorne, Francis - Simultaneities for BQ, Electric Guitar and Percussion (1971)
Lessard, John - Two Movements for BQ (1971)

1960-1970

Phillips, Peter - Gesualdo Variations (1970)
Kupferman, Meyer - Brass Quintet (1970)
Lewis, Robert Hall - (1970)
Balada, Leonardo - Mosaico (1970)
Whittenberg, Charles - Concerto for Five Solo Brass (1970)
Tanenbaum, Elias - Patterns and Improvisations for Brass Quintet and Tape (1969)
Lovelock, William - Suite (1968)
Manzoni - Quadruplum (1968)
Whittenberg, Charles - Little Fantasy of the Bach Advent Chorale (1968)
Etler, Alvin - Concerto for Brass Quintet, Strings & Percussion (1967)
Phillips, Peter - Music for Brass Quintet (1967)
Etler, Alvin - Sonic Sequence (1967)
Amy, Gilbert - Relais (1967)
Brehm, Alvin - Quintet (1967)
Kriki, Boric - The Cries (1966)
Ghent, Manny - Dithyrambos for BQ & Coordinome (1965)
Shapey, Ralph - Quintet (1964)
Levy, Frank - Concertpiece for Brass (1964)
Bazelton, Irwin - Quintet (1964)
Brehm, Alvin - Divertimento for Trumpet, Horn and Trombone (1962)
Tanenbaum, Elias - Structures (1961)
Nelhybel, Vaclav - Quintet No. 1
Whittenberg, Charles - Triptych (1962)



American Brass Quintet Discography

Summit

- 692 **Perspectives:** Robert Paterson: Shine; Jay Greenberg: Quintet for Brass; Sebastian Currier: Cadence, Fugue, Fade; Eric Ewazen: Canticum Honoris Amicorum (January 2017)
- 639 **Chesapeake: Music of David Sampson:** Breakaway' Chesapeake, Three sides, Powell Trio, Just Keep Moving (September 2014)
- 617 **Snapshot:** works by Erasmus Widmann, Charles Whittenberg, Antonio Troilo, Trevor Gureckis, Thomas Morley, Shafer Mahoney, Ludwig Maurer, John Ward (January 2014)
- 553 **State of the Art: ABQ at 50:** music by Gordon Beeferman, Billy Childs, Justin Dello Joio, Robert Dennis, Nolan Gasser, Robert Maggio, Paul Moravec, Huang Ruo, David Sampson, Adam Schoenberg, Joan Tower (October 2010)
- 484 **Jewels:** Laceda; Lovelock; Needham; Rieti; Sacco; Sampson (August 2007)
- 365 **American Visions:** Wagner: Brass Quintet No. 1; Thomas: Consananze Stravaganti; Beaser: Brass Quintet; Adler: Be Not Afraid, The Isle Is Full Of Noises; Tower: Fifth Fanfare For the Uncommon Woman; Schuman: American Hymn (August 2005)
- 429 **In Gabrieli's Day:** Marenzio: Scendi dal Paradiso, Scaldava il-sol, Qual mormorio soave, Gia torna a rallegar; Merulo: Canzon 36; Chilese: Chanzon 32; Priuli: Canzon a 7; Agostini: Solo e pensoso, La Pastorella; Gastoldi: Balletti a cinque voci; Cangiasi: La Giormetta; Mazzi: Canaon Prima a 5; Biumi: Canzon Decimasetimma; Canali: Battaglia Francese; Scultz: Primo Libro de Madrigali; Gabrieli: Canzon duo decimi a 10, Donna leggiadra, Sacro tempio d'honor, Canzon XV, Canzon XII, Canzon XX (July 2005)
- 385 **Trilogy -- Daniel Asia:** Woodwind Quintet, String Quintet No. 2, Brass Quintet *with Daniel Asia*, *Dorian Wind Quintet*, *Cypress Quartet* (February 2004)

- 275 **Classic American Brass:** Whittenberg: Tripytch for Brass Quintet; Sanders: Quintet in B Flat; Carter: Brass Quintet; Dahl: Music for Brass Instruments (December 2000)
- 263 **Quintessence:** Brade: Courtly Canzons; Stoltzer: Fantasias; des Pres: Chansons; J.S. Bach: Contrapunctus VII; Cherubini: Four Marches; Ewald: Quintet No. 2; Plog: Mosaics; Lazarof: Invenzione Concertata (April 2000)
- 187 **Premier:** Schuller: Quintet for Brass No. 2; Sampson: Distant Voices; Welcher: Quintet; Jan Bach: Triptych (November 97)
- Fyre and Lightning:** Consort Music of 1600, Monteverdi, Andrea Gabrieli (June 1995)
- 133 **New American Brass:** Composers: Robert Dennis(Blackbird Variations) , David Sampson (Morning Music), Eric Ewazen (Colchester Fantasy) , Bruce Adolphe (Triskelion) (August 92)

Composer's Recordings

- 327 **Contemporary Music: Percussion and Brass:** Boehm Woodwind Quintet, Wanda Maximillien, Gunther Schuller (January 2011)

Albany

- Concerto 100 **Regenesis - Music of Renewal:** music by Anthony Plog, Alfred Reed, David Maslanka (October 2010)
- Music of David Sampson:** Serenade for Fugelhorn and Strings; Sontata Forty; Strata for brass quintet; Dectet (October 2005)
- Robert Starer: Evanescence:** Starer: Hudson Valley Suite, Evanescene; Thorne: Symphony 7, Simultaneities (May 1997)
- 154 **Walker: Chamber Music:** George Walker: Piano Sonata No. 2; Sonata for Cello & Piano; Poem for Soprano & Chamber Ensemble; Sonata for Violin & Piano No. 1; Music for Brass, Sacred & Profane (March 1995)

Delos

- 3003 **Music of the Renaissance:** Ludi musici, Book 1: Cantus no 21, Galliard battaglia à 5, SSWV 59; Dovehouse Pavan; Joyne Hands; Widow's Myte; Why are you ladies staying?; Hark I hear some dancing; Allemande; Volta; The Art of the Fugue; Sonata for 4

Voices in D minor; Sonata for 4 voices; Al primo giorno; Fancie for 5; Canzoni et sonate; Madrigail et ricercari (July 2007)

New World

- 80652 **Cheer, Boys, Cheer!:** Cheer, Boys, Cheer!; Screech Owl Gap; Capt. Jones Waltz; Ever of Thee; Listen to the Mockingbird; Dead March; Dearest, I Think of Thee; Lula Is Gone; Grand Confederate Quickstep; Zampa: Ballade; Cast That Shadow From Thy Brow; Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr; Brightest Eyes; Serenade Waltz; Irish Emigrant's Lament; Parting; 21st Regiment Quickstep; Nun danket alle Gott; Easter Gallop. (October 2006)
- 80608 **A Storm in the Land:** Daniel Emmett: Dixie; MacCarthy: The Bonnie Blue Flag; Donitzetti: Belisario (Excerpts); Beethoven: Songs, Op. 48; Verdi: Il Trovatore; Sousa: Rifle Regiment; Mygrant: My Maryland (April 2002)
- 80587 **Shadowcatcher:** Ewazen: Shadowcatcher; Schuman: New England Triptych; Powell: Capriccio for Band (July 2001)
- 80442 **Torquemada/Qt Pno Winds & Perc:** Leonardo Balada (October 1993)
- 312 **The Yankee Brass Band:** (December 1992)
- 80413 **New York Woodwind Quintet:** (December 1992)
- 377 **ABQ Plays Bolcom/Druckman/Shapey:** Bolcom: Quintet; Shapey: Quintet; Wright: Quintet; Druckman: Other Voices (June 1992)

Musical Heritage Society

Brass Music of St. Petersburg: Sextet in E-flat minor; Modo Religioso; Six Pieces; Quintet No. 1 in B minor, Op. 5 (September 2006)

Well-Tempered Productions

- B00004C4KY **Music For The Soloists Of American Brass Quintet:** Mase: Fant; Gekker: Son; The American Brass Quintet: A Western Fanfare; Powell: Son; Nugent: Ballade, Pastorale, and Dance (August 2006)
- 5172 **Eric Ewazen: Chamber Music:** (February 1995)

Japan VIC

28181

The ABQ: The Music of America: (September 2004)

Soundspells

133

Meyer Kupferman -- Orchestral Music Vol XIV: Elegy for the Vanished, Icon Symphony, Brass Quintet, Chamber Concerto in One Movement (April 2002)

Cybele

660202

Portrait: stabil -- instabil, for large orchestra; Passagen for modulate speech sounds; String Quartet No. 1; Correspondances 1; Nacht und Traumgesänge; Concerto for electronically modulated oboe and orchestra; Serpentinata; Fragments from 'Hymnen an die Nacht'; Scanning, for brass quintet & 2-channel tape; Caprices concertants, for mandolin, mandola, guitar & orchestra (April 2002)

ECM

1033/34

In the Light: Metamorphosis; Fughata for Harpsichord; Brass Quintet; A Pagan Hymn; String Quartet; Short Pieces for Guitar and Strings; Crystal Moment; In the Cave, In the Light (May 2000)

Titanic

81

ABQ: Music of the mid-1800s: Works From Foster: The Social Orchestra and G.w.e. Friedrich: Brass Band Journal, on Period Instruments (September 1999)

Mercury

S42-9133

Music from Spoleto: (September 1997)

Master Musicians Collective

2048

Robert Starer: Annapolis Suite: Starer: Kli Zemer, Samson Agonistes, Concerto a quattro, Annapolis Suite (May 1997)

CRI

- 229 **Modern Music for Brass:** (September 1996)
- SD543 **Vladimir A. Ussachevsky: Dialogues and Contrasts:** Ussachevsky:
Dialogues and Contrasts, Colloquy (October 1987)

Serenus

- 12041 **4 for 5: For Pieces for 5 Brass Players:** (September 1996)
- 12024 **The Music of Arthur Custer:** Custer: Cycle for Nine Instruments,
Three Pieces for Six Brass, String Quartet No. 2, For Ideas for Piano
(October 1980)
- 12035 **Music of Francis Thorne:** (October 1980)
- The Music of John Lessard, Vol. 2:** Lessard: Quodlibets, Fragments
from the Cantos of Ezra Pound (October 1980)

Bridge

- 9049 **Journal/November Sky:** Felder: Journal, Three Lines from Twenty
Poems, November Sky, Canzone XXXI, Third Face (June 1995)
- 9023 **Sings Faure and Druckman:** (November 1990)

Cambria

- 1026 **Urban Classical: The Music of Ed Bland:** (January 1995)

Crystal

- 214 **American Brass Quintet:** Antonio Bertali; Bach Contrapunctus VII;
Victor Ewald; Willian Lovelock; Gilbert Amy (June 1993)

CGNJ

- Jersey Sessions, Vol. 1:** (September 1989)

Nonesuch

D-79024 **Virgil Thomson: A Portrait Album:** Thompson: Bugles And Birds: A Portrait Of Pablo Picasso, With Fife And Drums: A Portrait Of Mina Curtis, An Old Song: A Portrait Of Carrie Stettheimer, Tango Lullaby: A Portrait Of Mlle. Alvarez De Toledo, Solitude: A Portrait Of Lou Harrison, Barcarolle: Portrait Of Georges Hugnet, Alternations: A Portrait Of Maurice Grosser, In A Bird Cage: A Portrait Of Lise Deharme, Catalan Waltz: A Portrait Of Ramon Senabre, Chromatic Double Harmonies: (Portrait Of Sylvia Marlowe), Aaron Copland: Persistently Pastoral, Sonata No. 4 (Guggenheim Jeune), Eight Portraits For Violin Alone, Family Portrait For Brass Quintet (October 1982)

H-71222 **American Brass Music:** Works by Charles Ives, Alvin Brehm, Henry Brant, Peter Phillips (September 1981)

Columbia Odyssey

Y-34137 **Elliot Carter: Brass Quintet:** Carter: Brass Quintet, Eight Pieces for Four Timpani (October 1980)

Arabesque

Z6695 **Music to my Ears:** (October 1980)

Avie

4975 **The ABQ: Festival of Two Worlds, Spoleto, Italy:** (September 1980)

BASF

20812 **The American Brass Quintet:** (September 1980)

Desto

6474-77 **Music for Brass 1500-1970:** Palestrina: Ricercar Sopra Il Primo Tuono; Reiche: Baroque Suite; Dowland: Four Dances; Susato: Five Flemish Dances; East: Desperavi, Triumphavi; Pezel: 16th Century Dances; Simon: Quatuor En Forme De Sonatine Op.23, No.1; Ewald:

Quintet in B Flat Minor; Glazounov: In Modo Religioso; Poulenc: Sonata For Trumpet, Horn And Trombone; Hindemith: Morenmusik; Bergsma: Suite for Brass Quintet (1945); Dahl: Music for Brass Instruments; Starer: Five Miniatures; Tanenbaum: Improvisations And Patterns For Brass Quintet And Tape; Manzoni: Quadruplum; Bozic: Kriki For Brass Quintet, Voice And Tape; Whittenberg: Triptych For Brass Quintet (September 1980)

Folkways Records

- 3625 **Music of the Renaissance and Baroque:** Anonymous: Sonata From "Die Bänkelsänger"; Gabrielli: Canzona Prima A Cinque; Pezel: Six Seventeenth Century Dances; Isaac: La Mi Sol La - Part 1, Part 2, Der Hund (The Dog) Part 1, Part 2; Scheidt: Canzona Bergamasca, Battle Suite; Finck: Grenier Zanner (The Grumbler), Susato: Four Flemish Dances; Dowland: Three Dances (September 1980)
- 3651 **Music for Brass Quintet:** (September 1980)

American Brass Quintet Family Tree

