

BENNINGTON COLLEGE

presents

THE AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

Ronald K. Anderson, trumpet Allan J. Dean, trumpet
Arnold Fromme, trombone Robert E. Biddlecome, bass trombone
Richard A. Happe, french horn

Tuesday, May 12, 1964 at 8:15 p.m. in the Carriage Barn

PROGRAM

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| I. Vive le Roi | Josquin des Pres
(1450-1521) |
| II. Suite of Elizabethan Dances | Anthony Holborne
(d. 1602) |
| The Honie-Suckle | |
| My Linda | |
| The Fairie Round | |
| Pavana Floravit | |
| Wanton | |
| The Night Watch | |
| III. Brass Quartet | Ulysses Kay
(1917-) |
| Fantasia | |
| Arioso | |
| Toccata | |

I N T E R M I S S I O N

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| IV. Canzona Prima a Cinque | Giovanni Gabrieli
(1557-1612) |
| V. Divertimento for Brass Trio | Alvin Brehm
(1925-) |
| Andantino, Recitativo, Vivace | |

I N T E R M I S S I O N

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| VI. Contrapunctus Number Three
(from "The Art of Fugue") | Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685-1750) |
| VII. Triptych for Brass Quintet | Charles Whittenberg
(1927-) |
| Rotational Games: scherzo | |
| Sustenuto (Elegy in Memory of
Anton Webern, 1883-1945) | |
| Canonic Fanfares | |

PROGRAM NOTES

VIVE LE ROI by JOSQUIN DES PRES (1450-1521)

The Franco-Flemish Josquin des Pres is generally accepted as one of the first great composers on record. Although essentially a composer of vocal music, he wrote many instrumental pieces of which this is one of his more famous. Vive le Roi was written about 1498 and was probably a fanfare for Louis XII of France. The work is actually a three voice canon with three successive themes, all based on the same cantus firmus, a melody in longer notes played by the French Horn. The voices in the canon enter only one beat apart resulting in a composition of complex texture and of much brilliance and excitement.

SUITE OF ELIZABETHAN DANCES by ANTHONY HOLBORNE (d. 1602)

The Suite of Elizabethan Dances by Anthony Holborne, with their fanciful titles, was taken from a collection of dances, published in London in 1599 entitled Pavans, Galliards, Almains and other short Aeirs both grave and light.

Anthony Holborne, the composer, in addition to being one of the most accomplished musicians of his time was a gentleman courtier in Queen Elizabeth's court. Although the pieces are based on the dance forms and rhythms popular in that day they are not music for dancing. As chamber music they characterize the fun loving spirit of the Elizabethan Court.

BRASS QUARTET by ULYSSES KAY (1917-)

Ulysses Kay's Quartet for two trumpets, tenor and bass trombones, was written while the composer was in residence at the American Academy in Rome after being awarded the Prix de Rome. It was first performed in New York in 1952. Harmonically and melodically the work is in a traditional tonal idiom and has attracted much interest and excitement by Mr. Kay's unusually varied and complex use of different rhythms. His themes are reminiscent of Negro Spirituals although the material is much more extensively developed. The three movements are in very contrasting styles and make unusually extensive use of the sonorities, character and technical possibilities of its four instruments.

CANZONA PRIMA A CINQUE by GIOVANNI GABRIELI (1557-1612)

The prolific Venetian composer, Giovanni Gabrieli can truly be said to have been the culmination of the Italian Renaissance period, and the beginning of the Baroque in that country. He was one of the first composers to specify instruments and dynamics and to have developed a distinctly instrumental as opposed to a vocal idiom in his compositions. Mainly known for his works employing large groups of antiphonal vocal and instrumental forces, the Canzon Prima A Cinque is one of his earlier pieces and the only one composed for five instruments. As originally published in 1619, "to be played with any sort of instruments", no instrumentation was specified, although Cornetts and Tromboners were suggested. The character of the themes, in addition to Gabrieli's known use of cornetts and trombones, makes a performance by brass quintet quite authentic, and closest in sound and character to the composer's intention.

DIVERTIMENTO FOR BRASS TRIO by ALVIN BREHM

Alvin Brehm, born in New York in 1925, in addition to being a composer, conductor and pianist, is one of that city's leading contrabassists.

He was Associate Professor of Music at Plattsburgh State Teachers College in New York and is a graduate of both Juilliard and Columbia University. He also studied composition with Edgar Varese and Wallingford Riegger.

The Divertimento for Brass Trio was commissioned by the American Brass Quintet and premiered by that ensemble in New York in March 1962. This Trio is an example of Serially composed music that nevertheless has the sound of more conventional compositions, often giving an impression of tonality. The composer uses his tone row in specific rhythmic patterns forming definite themes, thus making the manipulation of the musical material much more discernible. Mr. Brehm's avowed compositional goal is clarity and comprehensibility. His use of dissonance, more noticeable in the climactic moments of the work by the tension they produce, is an organic result of the logical manipulation of his material rather than a superimposition of the dissonance for coloristic or shock effect. Despite the unconventional idiom, the music has distinct mood, character and logic that is immediately apparent. The first movement is in sonata allegro form with a slow introduction. The second movement is an evocative recitative, stated first by the trombone, then developed by the other instruments, to end with an echo-like restatement of the theme, again by the trombone. The last movement is a lively scherzo-like Rondo with satirical elements, using thematic material from the other movements.

CONTRAPUNCTUS NUMBER THREE, FROM "THE ART OF THE FUGUE" by BACH

The Art of the Fugue was composed by Bach from his death bed... much of it being dedicated to his children. It consists of 18 fugues, 4 canons, an uncompleted fugue and probably every contrapuntal technique known.

It is truly an overwhelming summation of Bach's life's work. Written for instrumental performance, Bach never specified an ensemble. It has been performed on keyboard, by string quartets, and many other combinations, but many of the fugues in the collection, and particularly Contrapunctus No. 3, lend themselves particularly well to performance by the Brass Quintet. The sound of Brass instruments give a fitting majesty to the nobility of this last great document of the age of polyphony.

TRIPTYCH FOR BRASS QUINTET by CHARLES WHITTENBERG

Charles Whittenberg, a holder of two Guggenheim Fellowships, was born in St. Louis in 1927 and graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1948. A New Yorker since 1950, his music has been performed with increasing frequency in major musical centers of the United States and Europe. He has served as guest lecturer on electronic music and serial techniques at the University of Massachusetts, is an affiliate of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center and Instructor of instrumental techniques at the Summer Institute of Bennington College, Vermont.

The "Triptych for Brass Quintet" was composed in the summer of 1962 on commission from the American Brass Quintet and was first performed by them in Carnegie Recital Hall on November 20, 1962. The first movement is concerned with alterations of the pitch and order classes of the fundamental twelve tone set, often with gestures of raucous humor. The middle movement utilizes a classically inverted set formation containing several "cadential" implications; its mood is elegaic. Ultimate stability (the vertical fanfares) is contrasted with ultimate motion (the canonic mesh extracted from the fanfares) in the ferocious last movement.

(Program notes by Arnold Fromme)

THE AMERICAN BRASS QUINTET

Organized in 1960, the group is an example of the rebirth of brass chamber music, and is one of its best proponents. A unique ensemble of virtuoso instrumentalists, the group's formation was the result of over a decade of individual devotion to this ideal. As musicologists the artists have successfully researched and transcribed ancient manuscripts and have published editions of early music. As modern day musicians, also, they maintain a strong interest in contemporary composition, performing and commissioning many new works. The Quintet has been featured in radio and television concerts, and has performed in concert halls throughout the nation with excellent critical acclaim.

ALLAN DEAN, TRUMPET

A free-lance player in the New York area, he has played with various Broadway show orchestras, Fred Waring Pennsylvanians, the Musica Aeterna Chamber Orchestra and other orchestras. He has B.M. and M.M. degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, New York City.

RONALD K. ANDERSON, TRUMPET

A former faculty member of Teachers College, Columbia University, Mr. Anderson performs regularly with the New York City Ballet Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic and the Symphony of the Air. He is currently taking a Doctorate in Higher Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

RICHARD A. HAPPE, FRENCH HORN

Much in demand as a free-lance artist, Mr. Happe has appeared with the American Ballet Orchestra, the Orchestral Society of Westchester, the Rye Chamber Orchestra, the Manhattan Woodwind Quintet, and at present time is engaged with a Broadway musical show.

ARNOLD FROMME, TENOR TROMBONE

A member of the New York Pro Musica Renaissance Wind Ensemble, he has also performed with the San Antonio Symphony, the Symphony of the Air, the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Symphony, New York City Ballet, R. C. A. Victor Symphony and other orchestras.

ROBERT E. BIDDLECOME, BASS TROMBONE

Mr. Biddlecome is also an accomplished baritone player, having played Solo Baritone with the U. S. Army Band and the Goldman Band. His forte, however, is the bass trombone on which he has performed with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Symphony of the Air, Orchestra of America and many others.

American Brass Quintet Gives 'Impeccable' Concert

By LISA TATE

NORTH BENNINGTON — Reverberations of sound filled the Bennington College Carriage Barn and surely some of the surrounding outdoors, as the American Brass Quintet performed its program of old and new music Tuesday night.

But right off the bat, it should be made very clear that two trumpets, two trombones and a French horn don't have to sound loud, and this impeccable quintet exposed its eager listeners to all the nuances of their instruments — in dynamics, in ways of blowing and tonguing, in slides and runs, in sustained as well as staccato phrasing, and in another whole range of "contemporary" effects that defy verbal description.

After the opening fanfare for a 15th - century king, in the form of a canon by Josquin des Pres, these musicians established their versatility by lifting into a suite of Elizabethan dances by a 16th-century composer, Anthony Holborne. Complexity of rhythms (some at a racing pace), dynamic shadings, elaborate melodic figures were made to seem effortlessly enchanting. The unity of the quin-

tet was most moving in the only seemingly sad dance of the suite, a beautifully woven pavane.

A similar but even more impressive depth, and for me the peak of the concert, was reached in the quintet's sustained and sensitive performance of the third contrapuntal fugue from the Art of the Fugue by Bach. Its performance on brass instruments proved to be very effective, the sound full and prolonged, the building of the piece clear and climactic, the dissonances of the crossing voices distinctly perceptible and shockingly modern.

Yet the shock of the contemporary music on Tuesday night's program made the older polyphonic pieces seem somewhat sedate, despite their undeniable subtleties. Two of the three contemporary pieces were written by composers who have been associated with the Bennington College Composers Conference for the past several summers, as has the first trombonist of the quintet.

Charles Whittenberg's Triptych for Brass Quintet (1962) which concluded the program, provided the most startling display of the potentialities of the assembled instruments, as they

shuddered and sometimes shimmered through an incredible range of agitated sound, sometimes for comic (though gummy) effect. This first movement had some things in common with the "canonic fanfares" of the third, which kept the two trumpets running against the blurtings of the other three instruments. The second movement, though, (written in memory of Anton Webern) lost the wild quality of the rest of the piece, concentrating instead on seemingly serene clusters of sound which hovered in the ear.

Alvin Brehm's Divertimento for trumpet, trombone and French horn (1962) was less startling but a good deal clearer in its structure, achieved not through conventional harmony but through rhythmic images, contrasts in phrasing, and most satisfying, by the pattern of interplay between the three instruments.

A brass quartet composed in 1952 by Ulysses Kay might be called the transition piece between very old and very new music on Tuesday's program. It had a singing quality, especially evident in the second movement, that no one of the other works had, and could be grasped fairly readily, sprinkled as it was with melodic snatches that are distinctly American.

Unhappily we do not often hear the particular combination of sounds produced by the American Brass Quintet, and those present wanted more and more of it. They got it, graciously, in the form of three tour de force encores. More important is the fact that some 15 college music students had the unique chance to hear works they had composed specifically for brass quintet performed by these first-rate professionals in the weekly Tuesday afternoon Music Workshop earlier that day.

Performers in the quintet include Ronald K. Anderson, and Allan Dean, trumpets, Arnold Fromme, trombone, Robert Biddlecome, bass trombone, and Richard Happe, French horn. They gave very generously of their time and talent and must have felt rewarded by the warm reception they got from the two Tuesday audiences.