

**Lumas Winds**

19-20 July 2024

Bridport Arts Centre, Ilminster Arts Centre, the Dance House, Crewkerne

Compositions from earlier periods may not be very numerous for the quintet of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon, compared to say the string chamber music tome, but the twentieth century saw a significant increase of works written for or arranged for this line-up. This was thanks in part to the structural development of these instruments in the 19th century and to more recent composers such as Malcom Arnold, Carl Nielsen, Amy Beach, Paul Hindemith, and Samuel Barber. The development of transcribing music for wind quintet from the original scoring has also increased immeasurably the repertoire available to groups like Lumas Winds.

Lumas Winds, Beth Stone (flute), Chris Vettraino (oboe), Rennie Sutherland (clarinet), Benjamin Hartnell-Booth (French horn), Florence PIane (bassoon), performed a mix of original and arranged repertoire emanating from 20th century.

Gyõrgy Ligeti *Six Bagatelles* originated from a set of piano pieces, *Musica ricercata* (1953). Each has its own peculiar character, sometimes a burst of rhythmic light around three pitches (Bagatelle 3). Other *Bagatelles* projected dark colours or folkish-modal lyricism, but always based around two or three pitches only. These terse and concentrated musical episodes, played with taut precision, proved to be an excellent starting point for the Lumas programme.

Following on from Valerie Coleman’s innocuous *Vocalise* (Afro-Cuban Concerto 2001), Lumas Winds performed a transcription of Dvorak’s ‘American’ String Quartet, a work known to many of Concerts in the West audiences in its original form. Some audience members came with string expectant ears and found the ‘old wine’ in a new bottle’ a challenge. Of course, four-part writing is going to alter the complexion and experience when redistributed to five instruments of a different ‘tribe’. But if the listener can set aside the understandable recall of Dvorak’s original instrumentation and listen with a ‘new pair of ears’, then this transcription can be a very satisfying experience.

After the interval we were treated to a medley of popular pieces taken from film scores and ballets by Shostakovich and arranged by the Lumas horn player, Benjamin Hartnell-Booth. This provided the individual players of Lumas Winds to shine as personalities as well as being players of notes.

The programme ended with the classic of wind quintet fayre, namely, Carl Nielsen’s 1923 Quintet. The music is full of unusual character in both structure and content and was written for an established quintet of players that Nielsen knew. Movements one and two have passages of wonderful folk-like simplicity, especially the antique *Menuet,* contrasting with points of harmonic complexity in the *Allegro ben moderato*. In the last movement, a theme with eleven variations, contrast continues to be a feature with solos, duets, trios, a wide range of tempos and moods, and the gentle and evocative hymn-like theme sitting alongside a clarinet and bassoon variation seemingly in argumentative dialogue.

From the opening Ligeti *Bagatelles* to the last note of the Nielsen one felt that Lumas Winds is not only a quintet with tremendous individual technical capability but a group that projects great character into its performances.

As an encore, Lumas Winds played a lively arrangement of traditional American songs, leaving the foot-tapping audience with a spring in their step as they headed home on what had been a very rewarding summer’s evening.

Andrew Maddocks 2024