

The John Wallace Collection

John Miller (cornet, trumpet, conch) – Bede Williams (petit bugle, trumpet, conch)
– John Wallace (petit bugle, bugle, conch) – Fergus Kerr (saxotromba/horn,
didjeridu) – Symone Hutchison (trombone/didjeridu) – Paul Stone (trombone,
basse, didjeridu) – Tony George (ophicleide, tenor tuba, didjeridu)

Programme notes

Giovanni Gabrieli (1553/6–1612)

Canzone V, VI, VII (1615)

Gabrieli's music to the brass ensemble is the equivalent of late Beethoven to the string quartet. It is the ultimate challenge. During his lifetime, Gabrieli was one of the most influential of composers, and St Mark's in Venice was a mecca for budding composers such as Heinrich Schütz. These three *canzone* for seven instruments were published after his death in a commemorative book of *Canzone e Sonate*, which remain unsurpassed to the present day as a monument of brass music, beginning with Canzon One for 5 players, and ending with Canzon Twenty, for 22 instrumentalists, which we performed in September with the National Youth Brass Band of Scotland and members of Fife Brass Bands.

The Wallace Collection's approach to this music is novel. Gabrieli's music fell out of fashion soon after his death in 1612, as the new baroque style swept over Europe. His music was rediscovered some 250 years later, sometime after the mid-nineteenth century, and began to be performed again by musicians interested in the music of earlier times. We play Gabrieli on nineteenth century instruments, on the premise that this is what it would have sounded like when it was first heard again, fresh and new, after languishing for so long in obscurity.

Jean-François Bellon (1795–1869)

Quintet no. 1: first movement *Allegro*

Quintet no. 4: third movement *Andante*

Quintet no. 8: second movement *Minuetto*

Quintet no. 10: third movement *Allegro maestoso*

Bellon is the earliest composer after Gabrieli known to have written a substantial body of music for brass, although he wrote it not for performance in church but as chamber music to be performed in public. He wrote twelve brass quintets between 1848 and 1850 for the new chromatic brass instruments invented in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In this concert we will play a representative sample of this *oeuvre*. Bellon's quintets were written for the virtuoso brass players of the Paris Opera and first performed at the Paris Conservatoire, at the concerts of the *Société Calco-Philharmonique*, a society set up by Bellon and others to espouse the furtherance of brass music.

His music is melodically and harmonically interesting, possessing great rhythmic drive, and the thematic interest is spread evenly amongst all the instruments. In his choice of instruments, he did not aim for the homogeneity of timbre which became a prized twentieth-century asset – but aimed instead for a kaleidoscope of brass colourings. The Wallace Collection have recorded all of these quintets on their own label, and the boxed set is available on their website www.thewallacecollection.world

Group Improvisation

Back to the future: *Ebb & Flow*

One of the developments The Wallace Collection has been involved in during the pandemic is StAMP – the St Andrews Music Participation project, which has started around 250 young beginners in Fife, Clackmannan and Angus playing polycarbonate natural trumpets online. Beginning on a basic instrument which has been around for about 6,000 years in one or other shape or form has acquainted children with the fundamentals of playing a brass instrument, which is all about using the air inside the body to excite the air around the body into the waves our brains translate into sound by passing through the throat and mouth over vibrating lips. The phenomenon of 'blowing'.

Unable to convene together face to face in large ensembles we undertook online projects with the children and young people in partnership with the Earth Sciences and Astronomy departments in the University. One of our projects was *Ebb and Flow*, all about wind and waves and the power of the ocean and its importance to our survival as a species. As part of this project, the Wallace Collection played on the sorts of lip-blown instruments we humans played on before the invention of metallurgy. These were found objects such as conches from the sea and hollowed out objects from the environment around us – the hollowed-out tree branches made famous by the aboriginal peoples of Australia that we call didjeridus. In this group improvisation, The Wallace Collection go back deep into human history to make futuristic sounds.

Beethoven (1770–1827)

Die alte gute Zeit

Heil Unserm König! Heil!

Sion, der Sohn Evan's, oder die Wolfjagd

Our bugles sang truce

Die alte gute Zeit

The Fifer, George Thomson (born Limekilns), became Chief Clerk to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Art and Manufactures in Scotland in Edinburgh. He also became a mainstay of the Edinburgh Musical Society (as a violinist). However, he is best known for his friendship with Robert Burns and his collections of Scottish folk songs, which came out in six volumes between 1793 and 1841. He engaged illustrious composers to arrange these folksongs such as Haydn, Pleyel, Kozeluch, Hummel and Weber.

His biggest catch, however, was Beethoven, and an interesting and informative correspondence exists between Thomson and Beethoven which shows Beethoven to be no shrinking violet whenever money is mentioned. Beethoven's scores were delivered by boat through the port of Leith, and the relationship between the two men went on for some seventeen years, producing over 150 compositions. Beethoven's introductions, refrains and ritornellos, as well as his harmonisations, accompaniments and countermelodies are full of great interest, and he took this work very seriously. These four works we have chosen to arrange for brass are from around the British Isles and Ireland: beginning in England, travelling to Wales, then Ireland, then finally, home to Scotland.

Hans Werner Henze (1926–2012)

Fragments from a show

The show which these fragments came from, first performed at the Deutsche Opera in Berlin in 1971, was Henze's socialist-inspired opera *Der langwierige Weg in die Wohnung der Natascha Ungeheuer* (The tedious way to Natascha Ungeheuer's apartment). Written for 17 performers, it was originally performed by the Fires of London with the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, the percussionist Stomu Yamash'ta and baritone William Pearson. These fragments were put together by Henze at Philip Jones's request after the first performance, which was met by booing from the audience. Henze afterwards reflected that this reaction was 'quite understandable, given that our portrait of Berlin caused displeasure amongst the very intellectuals it savaged'.

Auguste Mimart (1828–68)

Septuors no 2 and 6

The composer Auguste Mimart was discovered recently in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris by our ophicleide player, Tony George. Mimart wrote six septets and six quintets for brass, and they are remarkable for both their harmonic daring and *joi de vivre*. Little is known about Mimart except that he was a horn player and became a *chef de musique* first in the French army, and the Navy, with whom he travelled to Indo-china and Tahiti. He must have become renowned as an expert on Chinese music as he was mentioned in an article in the Caledonian Mercury (Edinburgh) on 19 August 1862 as follows:

“The chief of the musical department of the French navy employed in the Chinese seas, a M. Mimart, has been playing the part of a musical *savant* during his sojourn in the Celestial waters, and has, it is said, collected a vast amount of original Chinese music, which he intends to publish, and states to be very peculiar. No doubt of it.”

These septets are an example of the sort of music that the new brass instruments invented by Adolphe Sax were capable of, and which composers such as Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner heard on their visits to the concert hall in his factory in Paris. Music such as this was so influential to the brass-rich sounds that we have now become accustomed to in the late romantic repertory.

Improvisation

Forward to the future: *Stars and Spectra*

Once again, we take up conches and didgeridus to bring tonight's programme to a close. We work closely with the astronomy department at the University of St Andrews in our Discovering Brass projects with mainly primary-age children. Space is one of those universal subjects which is of fundamental interest to people of all ages. As we look into the night sky all sorts of interesting musical ideas come to mind

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