

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Music
presents

The Clarinet Quintet

Beyond Brahms

featuring

Donald L. Oehler, *clarinet*

Nicholas DiEugenio and Leah Peroutka, *violins*

Samuel Gold, *viola*; Brent Wissick, *cello*

Sunday, September 26, 2021

3:00 pm

James and Susan Moeser Auditorium

Program

Quintet for Clarinet and Strings (1988)

Allegro ma non troppo

Andante mesto

Allegro ma non troppo

Fredrick Kaufmann

(b. 1936)

Quintet A–dur, Opus 146 (1916)

Moderato ed amabile

Vivace – Un poco meno mosso – Vivace

Largo

Poco allegretto

Max Reger

(1873 – 1916)

Herbstlied (1876) for clarinet and string quartet (arr. 1993)

Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

(1840 – 1893)

Arranged by Tōru Takemitsu

(1930 – 1996)

Program Notes

Johannes Brahms' *Clarinet Quintet in B minor, Opus 115* (1891) is a towering pillar in any review of chamber music repertoire as well as the foundation for all chamber music repertory with clarinet. No serious performer of chamber music, professional or otherwise, or devoted concert goer, will go through life without experiencing this inspired and popular composition. Just over a century before Brahms wrote his 'autumnal' quintet, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart had experimented with adding a clarinet to the newly popular string quartet, creating one of the most beautiful of chamber works, the *Quintet in A, K581* (1789). With few exceptions, the several dozen works for string quartet with clarinet, which appeared from composers between these two giants, boarder on, in Max Reger's own words, "becoming a concertino" (i.e., not chamber music) leaving the potential of this genre sinking into obscurity. Ludwig van Beethoven's *Symphony No. 3*, Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and perhaps Robert Schumann's *Piano Quintet, Op 44*, are clearly examples of benchmark masterpieces. Yet, it may be argued that no single composition discovered the possibilities of a genre as much as Johannes Brahms' monumental Opus 115 did for what is now known as the clarinet quintet.

In the wake of Brahms' triumphant work is a body of repertoire for clarinet quintet which is astonishingly vast, diverse, exciting and certainly worthy of continued attention and enjoyment. This writer's personal catalog lists close to a thousand works with the majority of the compositions written in the past 30 to 40 years. The selections for this afternoon's program includes a most remarkable and important contribution to the clarinet quintet repertoire post Brahms; Max Reger's *Quintet, Op. 146*. Accompanying Mr. Reger's work on our program is a composition from a very vibrant American composer, Fredrick Kaufman, and an arrangement from the Japanese composer, Tōru Takemitsu, who offers a tender affirmation to Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky.

American composer, **Fredrick Kaufman** (b.1936), is an extremely prolific and successful composer of over 150 works, an educator and an experienced performing musician. Born in Brooklyn, Kaufman studied with Vincent Persichetti and Vittorio Giannini at the Juilliard School of Music, graduating in 1960. His *Clarinet Quintet*, formerly known as the *Aaronson Clarinet Quintet*, dances with Bartok-like string work and technical dashes for the clarinet referencing Max Reger's refrain, and disdain, of 'concertino' like passages.

German composer, **Max Reger** (1873 – 1916), studied with Adalbert Lindner (1860 – 1946), who had introduced to the younger Reger the two sonatas, Op. 120, for clarinet and piano from Brahms, which further inspired Reger to write for the instrument with two like sonatas. His later work, the *Clarinet Quintet, Op. 146*, (1916) was the last composition completed before Reger's untimely death at the age of 46. Reger's bent of stretching tonality to its limits, without ever abandoning the structure, his ability to work the clarinet into the ensemble with balance and companionship, creating powerful moments and at times the most delicate of textures, all within one movement, offer a work of great substance on the verge of becoming '20th century' yet with a nod to the past.

Tōru Takemitsu (1930 – 1996) is still one of Japan's most well-known and prolific composers. Here he has taken a movement from Tchaikovsky's 12 short character pieces for piano, *The Seasons, Op. 37a*, and arranged it for the clarinet quintet setting. The *Herbstlied*, or autumn song, is a lovely tribute to Tchaikovsky with perhaps, in my mind, a hint of clarinet quintet color from Brahms and Reger.

~DLO

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