

by Franco Donatoni at the International Academy L.Perosi, in Biella, and recently has been accepted on a course of training for young composers promoted by the Foundation A.Toscanini, in Parma, with sponsorship from the European Community, which enabled him to attend sessions held by Azio Corghi.

Active as a composer since 1991, he has been involved in many live performances of his pieces, many of which have been commissioned for first performances in festivals and concert seasons of importance. Distinguished in various international composition competitions, (Belveglio 1992, "Nuove Sincronie" '95 and '96, "Citta di Pavia" 1995), he won the prestigious "Premio Valentino Bucchi di Roma Capitale" 1994. The winning piece of the above-mentioned prize has been published and performed courtesy of the namesake Foundation, as well as being broadcast by RAI Radio 3.

For several years now Deserti has been involved in teaching activities in various musical institutes, including the Conservatory G.Frescobaldi in Ferrara.

"In TEMA, the composition takes, as its starting point, a fragment of four sounds (F, Eflat, Gflat, C) that are the basis of the principal material used in the piece, even if it is not to be regarded as a theme, in the traditional sense of the term. The different structures of each section, that make up the work, are unique in themselves.

The one-movement work consists of seven sections, each with a different metronome count and separated by pauses. The individual sections are dominated by a particular principal theme, and a matching rhetorical theme. For much of the time the four players are treated as a "collective" soloist. Heterophonic and polyphonic tutti are interspersed with passages in which one of the instruments (in particular the bass clarinet), is in contrast with the other three. I can assure you that, despite the dominant structuralist nature of the procedures used, the clarity of the sonic dramaturgy makes the work relatively accessible even on first hearing."

Gian Luca Deserti.

*Recorded 17th January and 16th February, 1997,
at the STUDIO SCA Perugia*

Sound engineer - Francesco Ciarfuglia

Group photos by Marco Veneziani

Additional photography by Carey Nutman

Graphics and type setting by Harry at Christers

Final digital mastering by Andy Forsyth at Octagon Records

MPSCD005, DDD



Namaste
NCO
clarinet
quartet

MPSCD005



NAMASTE CLARINET QUARTET

Claudio Miotto Luca Saracca Guido Arbonelli Ivan Gambini

"This disc is a sort of recognition of the fascination and potentiality of an organic entity which, in its multi-coloured complexity, (from the high-pitched tension of the piccolo clarinet in E flat, right down to the deep eloquence of the bass clarinet), is definitely rather unusual."

The variety (and the novelty) of the harmonic solutions, and of the mix of timbres, is assured by both the high degree of skill of the interpreters, and by the wealth of ideas of the composers. And, they offer a panorama of musics, sufficiently exhaustive for an ensemble of this type: from the first piece, which is a sort of guide to the rigours of counterpoint and the quasi-Brahmsian colours, to the other works, in which great musicality springs forth from seemingly impenetrable scores."

Virgilio Celletti.

The **Namaste Clarinet Quartet** began in 1991 to fill the need of proposing and popularising unusual and rarely heard programmes. Indeed, the most important part of the ensemble's work aims at the realisation, in collaboration with emerging contemporary composers, of projects designed to expand further than the small circle of "cultural concerts". This quartet chose its name after an Indian greeting which means "I honour in you the place where paradise lies, if you are in me and I am in you, we will be united", indicating thus the sense of unity - not only understanding and harmony - that should characterise any chamber orchestra. It is a message of humility, of love, and of joy. It is enthusiasm for giving special sensations, inherent in our minds, through music. It is the wish that the listener be with us and in us, and that the humility, the love, and the joy be intended not only for music, but for all the moments of our lives.

The ensemble's programmes range from classical to contemporary music, with openings in jazz and popular music, using most of the instruments of the clarinet family and extending the group with singing, piano, harp, percussion and accordion.

Many composers have written for this quartet, which can boast first performances, taking part in national and international festivals. It has been successful in many competitions, with first prizes at the following: "Riviera del Conero International Prize", Portonovo, 1993; "Citta di Barletta National Prize", Contemporary Music Section, 1993; "Young Concert Musicians' Selection Prize", Macerata Feltria, 1991; also a second prize at the "A.Ponchielli" contest in Cremona in 1992, and a third prize at the "European Contest" in Moncalieri in 1991.

The members of Namaste have also distinguished themselves in various national and international contests, in particular Guido Arbonelli, who won first prize at the Gaudeamus contest in Rotterdam, March 1995.

The group is responsible for the Clarinet Quartet section at the Information Museum in Senigallia, involved with repertoire research. This museum is about to become a world-wide interest pole for musicians, composers, and lovers of music.

Tracks 1-3. Sergio Calligaris. Quartet, No. 1 op. 34, (1995)

"Toccata, Adagio and Fugue." For three B flat clarinets and bass clarinet.

Copyright NUOVA CARISCH, Milan, Italy. (SIAE).

Sergio Calligaris was born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1941. He lived for many years in the United States, but has now become an Italian citizen and settled in Italy. He is well known on the international concert scene and, since 1954, he has appeared as a pianist in the most prestigious halls of Europe, North and South America, and Africa.

He joined, as teacher, the piano faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music (1966) and later the California State University in Los Angeles (1969). Since 1974 Calligaris has taught at the S.Pietro a Majella Conservatory in Naples, the A.Casella Conservatory in L'Aquila and the L.D'Annunzio Conservatory in Pescara, Italy. He has been the artistic director at the American Academy of the Arts in Europe, located in Verona, in association with the California State University of Los Angeles holding a master class for pianists. After more than twenty years devoted solely to performing, he returned to composition, almost unintentionally. The opportunity was offered him in 1978 by a work that is now part of the general repertoire - "Il Quaderno pianistico di Renzo" (Renzo's piano notebook), which is intended as a musical homage inspired by brotherly friendship. Only a few years were to pass before this work, and all his subsequent productions, received the admiration of the public and the most discerning international critics alike, which has made Sergio Calligaris one of the most frequently performed contemporary composers in the world. His compositions, including the quartet here recorded, have been greatly successful at some of the most important Italian musical festivals, as well as on TV and radio in Italy and throughout Europe, America, Africa, and Asia.

"When I composed this Quartet, I wanted it to sound like a full orchestra, for its compact sound. At the same time, I wanted that the four clarinetists sounded like four soloists. That is the reason why I chose for my composition a severe counterpoint writing, like in the wide virtuoso Toccata, in the style of a perpetual motion four part invention, while the final part of the Quartet is a complex four voiced fugue in the legato and expressive style. The captivating poetic timbre of the clarinet I reserved to be used in the melancholic central Adagio. The instrumental writing is extremely rigorous all the way through, so that the quartet of clarinetists which should play my work, could really demonstrate their complete value as performers in the classical way".

Sergio Calligaris

Tracks 4 and 5. Tzvi Avni. Two Pieces For Four Clarinets

"No Exit." "Three Aspects of Janus." (1965). For four B flat clarinets.

Copyright ISRAEL MUSIC INSTITUTE, Tel Aviv, Israel. (ACUM Ltd).

Tzvi Avni is a German-Israeli composer, born in 1927. He studied at the Tel Aviv Academy of Music, and in North America. Early works demonstrate an oriental impressionism influenced by his teacher, Ben Haim. Since 1964 he has used modernisms, and electronic means.

TWO PIECES FOR FOUR CLARINETS was composed in 1965, at a time when the composer was going through an inner process of intensive changes in his musical thinking. He was, just then, experimenting with new techniques, which included a preoccupation with electronic sounds, resulting from the two years of studies in this field in the USA (1962 - 1964). In these pieces Avni makes use of graphic elements and controlled aleatorics, which contribute to the special sonorities he sought to attain.

NO EXIT is a kind of rondo with a refrain repeated three times and interpolated with two "cadenzas". The motto of the piece is the warning of Daedalus to his son Icarus: "I warn you, Icarus, fly only the middle course. If you venture too near the seas, the wet of the waters will weigh down your wings, and if you soar too high, the fires of the sun will burn you". While the main section of the piece remains unchanged in the three repetitions, the two cadenzas contain some free elements which may vary considerably from one performance to another.

THREE ASPECTS OF JANUS is a study in symmetry in which three different variants of musical ideas are notated in a visually symmetric manner. In practice, this means that each of the variants will sound identical, whether it is played forwards or backwards. The idea is based on double-faced Janus, the Roman god of all beginnings.

The work had its world premiere at the World Music Days of the ISCM held in Boston in 1976. It was performed by four clarinetists from the New England Conservatory, directed by Gunther Schuller.

Track 6. Guido Arbonelli. "Immagini da Auschwitz." (1995)

For two B flat clarinets, basset horn and bass clarinet.

Copyright PIZZICATO, Udine, Italy. (SIAE).

Guido Arbonelli (born in Perugia, 1962) finished his studies at the F.Morlacchi Conservatory in Perugia with highest honours. He has been a member of various Italian and foreign orchestras and he has taken part in concert activities as soloist, with the Namaste Quartet, and with other musical groups.

Among his classical repertoire are the most important works of French, German, English, Swiss, Austrian, Russian, and American authors, which he performs in various combinations.

His meetings with composers such as Donatoni, Berio, Ferneyhough, Grillo, Manzoni, et cetera, gave him unique experience with contemporary repertoire. Of great importance is his solistic activity, using the whole clarinet family (from the piccolo clarinet (E flat) to the contrabass (pedal) clarinet), performing dedicated contemporary repertoire.

His didactic activity has been developed at the G.Rossini Conservatory in Pesaro, and at various specialist courses.

He is the author of teaching methods, elaborations, and published compositions for clarinet. He has collaborated with the most important Italian festivals and has taken part in concerts in England, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, Spain, Austria, Sweden, Yugoslavia, and Malta. He has recorded works for CRESCENDO of Bari, RUSTY RECORDS of Milan, and PENTAPHON of Rome.

Since 1984 he has won twelve first prizes in national and international competitions. In 1995 he won the International Gaudeamus Interpreters Competition in Rotterdam, making him one of the ablest executors of contemporary music at international level.

In addition, he is devoted to the composition of works for his instrument. With his work "Images from Auschwitz" (recorded here) he won the second composition prize in Donna Lucata (Sicily).

"I wrote IMAGES FROM AUSCHWITZ after reading the book "Hope Saved My Life" (the dramatic testimony of a Hebrew person). The music wants to give life to the hope, wants to hear the prayers again, is the despair of that holy people, is an homage to those who suffered."

Guido Arbonelli.

Track 7. Marco Montaguti. "Paprika." (1994)

For piccolo clarinet, B flat clarinet, basset horn and bass clarinet.

Copyright of the composer. (SIAE).

Born in Bologna, Marco Montaguti made his music studies at the local conservatory, obtaining his diploma in composition, choral music and choral conducting, and band orchestration. He furthered his studies in composition with S.Bussotti at the Scuola di Musica di Fiesole, and in conducting with J.Bodmer at the Istituzione Sinfonica Abruzzese.

In his activities as a composer, he was a finalist in the Premio V.Bucchi contest in 1985. His music has been performed in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, and is often broadcast by Italian radio. (Published by EDIPAN and AGENDA.)

He is currently a member of the Italian jury for international competitions, and teaches composition at the Conservatory of Pesaro. In 1995 he founded the "Synkronys mos Ensemble" which specialises in the performance of new music.

"Dedicated to the Namaste Quartet, PAPRIKA is an important step in my research on sound, both simple and complex. To focus better on the "sound object", other parameters do not have a substantial evolution."

Marco Montaguti.

Tracks 8 and 9. Alexander Graur. "Preludio e Toccata." (1988)

For piccolo clarinet, B flat clarinet, basset horn and bass clarinet.

Copyright BERBEN, Ancona, Italy. (FENTONE MUSIC Ltd).

Alexander Graur was born in 1952 in Bucharest, Romania. A master of arts graduate (in trombone and composition) of the Music Academy in Bucharest, he went on to specialise in contemporary music at Darmstadt, 1978 to 1980.

Between 1974 and 1995 he has been active as trombone soloist in Europe, giving concerts and recitals in Romania, Italy, Germany, and Greece, and also as a member of various symphony orchestras (Romanian Radio, Ploesti Symphony Orchestra, Mediterranean Symphony Orchestra), and chamber ensembles (European Ensemble Turin, Musica Nova, Hyperion). He has had compositions commissioned and performed by outstanding soloists, ensembles, and orchestras in Romania, Italy, Germany, and the United States. (Published by BERBEN Editions, TIRRENO G.E. Editions, EDIZIONI OTTOCENTO.) He is also active as a teacher in Romania and Italy, teaching trombone, harmony and counterpoint.

He has won several national and international prizes in both trombone performance and in composition. Between 1990 and 1994 he was a member of the jury at the International Composition Contest, Turin (Italy).

Alexander Graur has lived in Italy since 1981.

"Written in 1987 and dedicated to the Italian virtuoso Guido Arbonelli, "Preludio e Toccata" is part of a whole series of compositions inspired by the Romanian poet and mathematician, Ion Barbu.

His spiritual world is one of constant fight for synthesis, an eternal search for his place in history and culture; an eternal tendency to balance the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the Orient and the Occident.

To reveal the dual feature of his spiritual and intellectual world, you will hear a contemporary musical language, (i.e. multiphonics, clusters, slaptongues) within the codified structure of a Baroque instrumental Toccata.

The sounds and forms of Byzantine music are echoing in this piece.

The ison (pedal) generates harmonics; the upper harmonics of the ison will flow and expand to become the musical cells of the Preludio; while the constricted versions of the cadenced tunes of the Preludio will become the basic rhythmic and melodic elements of the Toccata.

All these features try to make the expressive canvas of this music. It is the composer's strongest belief that art has to be able to communicate and be expressive. Music is self explanatory. When asked by a listener, "What is the message of your music, Maestro?", Beethoven sat down and performed his sonata again."

Alexander Graur.

Track 10. James Clarke. "Broken." (1988)

For four clarinets (one E flat, two B flat, and bass).

Copyright of the composer.

James Clarke was born in London on the 15th October, 1957. After completing his university studies in Britain, he was awarded a Finnish Government Scholarship to study with Usko Merilainen in Helsinki. He has lectured in several European countries and taught composition at the Sommer-Seminar für Neue Musik in Vienna. He was a member of the jury for the International Gaudeamus Music Week in 1994, in which year he was also appointed Composer-in-Residence at Queen's University, Belfast.

James Clarke's music is performed and broadcast widely and regularly features in international festivals. His works include "Verstörung" for bass clarinet, cello and piano (first performed at Ars Musica, Brussels, and selected for the ISCM World Music Days in Zürich in 1991), "Maalima" for solo percussion and orchestra, (first performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1993), "La violenza delle idee", (commissioned by the Gaudeamus Foundation for the Nieuw Ensemble), "Oboe Quintet", (Kranichsteiner Musikpreis, Darmstadt, 1992 and selected for the ISCM World Music Days in Copenhagen, 1996), "Pascal, pensée 206", (an Arts Council of Great Britain funded commission for the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra), "Afterglow", (commissioned for the first performance at the ISCM World Music Days in the Ruhr, Germany, in 1995), and "Delirium", (premiered in Darmstadt by Ensemble Köln, 1996).

"BROKEN is scored for four clarinets (E flat, two B flat, Bass) and was written in 1988, to a commission from the Royal Overseas League, London. After working with ideas of gradually evolving continuous transformations as a basis for some compositions, I both "broke away from" and "broke up" these concerns in writing this piece. The ensemble is treated very much as a homogeneous unit, with much use made of glissandi and of scales (as broken or filtered glissando lines)."

James Clarke.

Track 11. Daniele Gasparini. "Enigma." (1995)

For four B flat clarinets.

Copyright PIZZICATO, Udine, Italy. (SIAE).

Daniele Gasparini, (born 1975), initiated studies in composition at a very young age, at first under the guidance of Roberta Silvestrini, and subsequently with Aurelio Samori, at the Conservatory G.Rossini in Pesaro, graduating at the age of twenty. At the same time he carried out classical studies at the Liceo-Ginnasio G.Perticari in Senigallia. At present he is studying orchestral conducting at the Conservatory G.Rossini, and philosophy at the Free University in Urbino.

The clarinet quartet "Enigma" is one of his principal works.

"ENIGMA is a perpetual motion for clarinet quartet. The piece comes from nothing, and presents a gradual rhythmical intensification, obtained by superimposing different figures and by repeating them continuously, and a gradual crescendo of dynamics, which culminates in the appearance of a "theme" which, because of its melodic and cantabile nature, contrasts with the lower implacable motion, from which it seems to stand out, but without succeeding in doing so.

When the last exposition of the theme is reabsorbed by the general motion, the musical discourse is brought back to its initial intimacy, until it comes to nothing".

Daniele Gasparini.

Track 12. Gian Luca Deserti. "Tema." (1993)

For three B flat clarinets and bass clarinet.

Copyright of the composer. (SIAE).

Gian Luca Deserti graduated in pianoforte, choral music and conducting, and in composition at the Conservatory G.Frescobaldi in Ferrara, (with maximum marks in all subjects). He has attended courses held