

Originally adapted from French and Flemish chansons, the *canzon* is a type of instrumental music that was popularized in the 16th and 17th centuries. Most often characterized with the opening dactylic rhythm (long, short, short), the *canzon da sonar* (chanson to be played) became independent of earlier vocal models in the 1570s, and by 1600 had become the most important form of instrumental music in Italy. Ensemble canzoni were composed by all sorts of musicians—from the master composer/organist Giovanni Gabrieli with his multi-choired works for the ceremonies at San Marco in Venice, to lesser-known Northern European composers like **Erasmus Widmann**, who spent most of his career working as court musician in the region of Germany near Nuremberg. Widmann's canzoni, included in his *Gantz Neue Cantzon, Intraden, Balletten und Couranten* (Nuremberg, 1618) were considered his finest instrumental works. Strikingly similar to the Venetian canzoni of earlier decades, these canzoni were described by composer Michael Praetorius—the greatest musical academic of the day—as “fresh, joyful, and fast.” While most of the Venetian canzoni of the period are written in four parts, Widmann composed his instrumental music in five parts much like the music of his contemporaries Brade and Simpson. This scoring, with two equal soprano parts, makes Widmann's canzoni particularly well suited to adaptation by the modern brass quintet.

Charles Whittenberg's Little Fantasy on Bach's Advent-Chorale: “*Nun komm, der heiden Heiland*” (Cantata #62) had its premiere performance at Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center on December 31, 1968. After a statement of the Chorale theme, Whittenberg develops the material in a brilliant fashion. There is certainly an undisguised reference to Stravinsky, who Whittenberg admired. Whittenberg, a holder of two Guggenheim Fellowships, was born in St. Louis in 1927 and graduated from the Eastman School of Music in 1948 with a degree in composition and percussion. He served as guest lecturer on electronic music and serial techniques at the University of Massachusetts, as an affiliate of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center, and Instructor of instrumental techniques at the Summer Institute of Bennington College, Vermont. From 1969 to 1977 he served on the faculty of the University of Connecticut at Storrs. Whittenberg considered his association from 1961 with the American Brass Quintet highly significant. The association resulted in a “solo-chamber-virtuoso...agile, elegant, truly chamber music approach to brass instruments” which has influenced other composers. Whittenberg also composed the “Triptych” in 1962 and the “Concerto for Brass Quintet” in 1968, both for the American Brass Quintet. “Triptych” is recorded by the American Brass Quintet on its Classic American Brass CD (Summit 275).

Little is known of **Antonio Troilo**, but he may quite possibly have been a cornetto player. He came from Verona and worked in nearby Vicenza in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Only two collections of his instrumental music have survived—both represented on our recording. The five-part canzona is from his 1606 *Il Primo libro delle canzoni da sonare*...that includes both four and five part works. His *Sinfonie, scherzi, Ricercari, capricci et fantasie a due voci*, a collection of two-part music published in 1608, shows the composer in a wide variety of musical styles.

Trevor Gureckis studied composition and piano at the Yale School of Music and the University of Texas at Austin. His teachers included Kevin Puts, Dan Welcher, Ezra Laderman, and Martin Bresnick. He has received numerous awards for his music including a JFund commission from the American Composers Forum, a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts, and young composer awards from both BMI and ASCAP Foundations. Gureckis writes of *Fixated Nights*: “I came up with the title *Fixated Nights* well after I had completed the work. In fact, the American Brass Quintet was already rehearsing the piece with the heading of “Title TBD” for a number of weeks. Looking over what I had written, while wracking my brain for a title, I noticed that I indicated a lot of character words like “quiet”, “tranquil”, “still” and “hazy”. However, the music itself was very erratic and angular. There are explosions that jump out of quiet pointillistic textures. There are simple melodies distorted by incessant staccato repetitions. As a person with epilepsy, this can be analogous to my experience with sleep. Often there is an undercurrent of ‘buzzing’ energy while I sleep. This of course can then intensify into a seizure but mostly it just exists. The obsessive quality of this energy and the fact that it happens during sleep led me to the title of *Fixated Nights*. Other than that, it's just a piece of music in three movements.” *Fixated Nights* was commissioned by the American Brass Quintet with funds from the Jerome Foundation. The work was premiered at the Aspen Music Festival in 2010 and received its New York premiere at Alice Tully Hall. Trevor is currently working on an evening length experimental ballet entitled “Potential Energies” with the Nouveau Classical Project and TrioDance Collective, to be premiered at BAM in the summer of 2014. Gureckis' orchestral work, “Very Large Array,” was premiered by the Minnesota Orchestra under the direction of Osmo Vänskä as part of the orchestra's renowned Composer Institute. Trevor is a co-owner of a composer collective, known as Found Objects. Formed in 2007, it consists of a recording studio in the Flatiron District of New York City which produces music for film, TV, ads, and other media. In addition to working on commercial projects, the group has worked with some of today's most exciting artists, including DJ/Producer Mark Ronson and singer-songwriter Rufus Wainwright. My Great Ghost, his electropop duo with singer Drew Smith, released their first self-titled EP last July. My Great Ghost is featured on the recent Philip Glass remix album “REWORK_” along with Beck, Cornelius, and Tyondai Braxton among others. He has also arranged some of Mr. Glass' music for film and television, including the Brazilian blockbuster film “Nosso Lar” and the Errol Morris directed documentary “They Were There”.

Thomas Morley was a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, which was an elite group of composers and musician in Queen Elizabeth's court. A student of William Byrd, he was one of the most esteemed musicians of his day. He was organist at St. Paul's Cathedral in London and active in nearly every genre of English music. Morley was instrumental in the popularity of the Italian madrigal in England at this time, and during the 1590's, published numerous volumes of his own works and those of Italian madrigalists. In 1601 he compiled and published *The Triumphs of Oriana*—a collection of twenty-six madrigals by the most illustrious English composers in tribute to Queen Elizabeth I. Morley's *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practical Musicke* (1597) and *Consort Lessons* (1599) are considered the best sources of information about sixteenth century musical composition and performance practice. In his *Consort Lessons*, Morley illustrates the techniques of adapting vocal models for instrumental performance as was commonly done in this period. While best known for his light madrigals and canzonets like *Fyer, Fyer!* and *Good morrow, fair ladies of the May*, Morley's five-part motet *Gaude Maria virgo* shows him in complete command of a more serious, weighty style.

Shafer Mahoney's *Brass Quintet* was commissioned in 2009 by the American Brass Quintet with funds from the Jerome Foundation. It features three contrasting movements; each one is about five minutes long. The first movement is essentially a long chain of perfect fourths and fifths, the strong intervals traditionally associated with brass signals and fanfares. The movement begins slowly and quietly, with various wandering, interlocking duets for muted brass. Soon, the music builds momentum: it becomes faster and more colorful, and ends with a vigorous, majestic fanfare. The second movement is an unhurried setting of the medieval round *Sumer is icumen in*, also known as the "Summer Canon." With no counterpoint from the original setting, the flowing melody is played three times, each time by a different instrument, and supported by simple, bittersweet chords. Flugelhorns, in place of trumpets, contribute to the languid, melancholy sound world of this movement. The last movement is tense, fast, and jittery, constantly slipping between major and minor. As in ritornello form, it alternates between two contrasting textures: spirited, stuttering solos, one for each instrument in the quintet; and connecting passages featuring syncopated, boisterous commentary from the rest of the group. At the end, the work stumbles into a minor one last time before concluding in A-flat Major. Shafer Mahoney was born 1968 in Albany, New York. He graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University and earned graduate degrees at the Eastman School of Music, where he was a Sproull Fellow. He studied composition with Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, David Liptak, Steven Mackey, and two recipients of the Pulitzer Prize in Music, Christopher Rouse and Joseph Schwantner. His music is published by Boosey & Hawkes. Mr. Mahoney's compositions have been performed around the world and at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center. His music, which critics have described as "dazzling," "tonal and imaginative," and "gorgeous," has won many national awards, including two from BMI, a Morton Gould Award from ASCAP, and the Bearn Prize from Columbia University. Absolute Ensemble's recording of his music was nominated for a Grammy Award. Future commissions include new works for the Lubbock Symphony, the Tucson Symphony, the Degas String Quartet, and the wind ensembles of the Big 12 universities. Mr. Mahoney is an Associate Professor at the City University of New York and teaches advanced orchestration at the Juilliard School. His music is recorded by Enja, Mark, and Summit Records.

Splitting his career between his native Germany and St. Petersburg, **Ludwig Maurer** was well-known as both a violinist and composer. His technique must have been extraordinary, as his pre-Paganini compositions demand spiccato, multiple stopping, and complex bowing. His Symphony op. 67 and Sinfonia Concertante op. 55 for four violins were both performed often in his lifetime. Maurer devoted his later years to directing opera in St. Petersburg. In 1871, as a member of the opera committee at the famed Marynsky Theater, he joined in a veto of Boris Godunov, bitterly disappointing Mussorgsky. They objected not to the bold modern sounds that Rimsky-Korsakov would later feel compelled to "correct," but to the lack of a prominent female role and to certain "ungodly" demands inflicted upon the double basses! Maurer's sons became prominent Russian musicians, and his oldest, Vsevolod, eventually assumed directorship of the Italian Opera in St. Petersburg. The five pieces presented here are taken from a set of twelve, originally scored for two B-flat trumpets, two E-flat horns, and trombone. As the earliest brass chamber works of significance heard in St. Petersburg, their brevity and simple structure recall older ceremonial traditions in brass ensemble performance, as in the Leipzig tower music of Johann Pezel (1639-1694), but the required delicacy and nuance encourage a more intimate setting.

By the year 1620, consort music for groups of instruments of two to six players was an essential part of English music. The most common ensembles were consorts of viols, but groups of winds and brass also performed regularly. The repertoire of these instrumental consorts included the well-known English fantasias (commonly referred to as fancies), as well as dance music and adaptations of madrigals. Fantasias—freely-composed, highly-contrapuntal pieces—remain today as Elizabethan England's most important contributions to instrumental music. Many collections of fantasias and other consort music exist in English libraries today, attesting to the enormous popularity that this repertoire enjoyed during the early decades of the seventeenth century. Considered one of the best and most serious of the English madrigalists, **John Ward** pursued dual careers throughout his life—both as composer and attorney. Like many of the English composers of the day, he was inspired by Italian music. His beautifully expressive *Fantasia No. 11 (Cor Mio)* is most likely based on Monteverdi's madrigal setting of the Guarini text *Cor Mio*.

– Raymond Mase