

AMATA MUSICA

Amata Musica, roughly translated as 'beloved music', are six good friends, each with distinguished performing careers, coming together to produce chamber music of the highest standards. In 1984 the celebrated bassoonist Martin Gatt took a three-year sabbatical from his position of principal in the London Symphony Orchestra, to become the first Head of Wind in the newly opened Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Here he met Margaret Lynn, an acclaimed pianist and Associate Dean of Music. During the next three years they undertook many recitals, broadcasts and recordings together. When Martin returned to the UK in 1987 to resume his career in the LSO they continued their partnership of recording and performing as a duo. In 1998 the oboist Jane Finch, who enjoys a fine freelance career, approached Martin with a view to bringing first-class chamber music to venues in the South West of England where they had both settled. As the Lynn Trio they developed an enthusiastic following, with eventual signing to MRC Classical in 2008 following their successful first release of Madeleine Dring's chamber works. In 2009 the trio were joined by the esteemed clarinetist Colin Parr when he retired to the West Country from the position of principal clarinet with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra – a post he had held for many years. Leslie Sheills, Head of Woodwind at prestigious Millfield school, and ex-principal flautist of the South African Broadcasting Corporation Symphony Orchestra was duly invited to expand musical forces. Amata Musica was completed later that year with the arrival of Sue Dent - one of the foremost exponents of the natural horn and Professor of both natural and modern horn at the Royal College of Music. Concerts sell-out on word of mouth alone, but for those not fortunate enough to catch them live, rest assured that Amata Musica signed to MRC Classical in 2010 for a series of sumptuous recordings for wind trio, wind quartet, wind quintet and piano sextet.



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Françaix Roussel d'Indy Thuille Sextets for Wind and Piano



Amata Musica

Leslie Sheills • Jane Finch • Colin Parr • Sue Dent • Martin Gatt • Margaret Lynn

Françaix Roussel d'Indy Thuille

Sextets for Wind and Piano

Equally interested in the Impressionism of Debussy and Ravel as well as the Neoclassicism of Stravinsky, **Jean Françaix** never allowed himself to be subsumed by one particular musical ideology;

I wish to be honest: when I am composing, the finest theories are the last things that come to mind. My interest is not primarily attracted by the 'motorways of thought', but more the 'paths through the woods'.

His father was a pianist, composer and director of Le Mans Conservatoire of Music, while his mother, a singer, founded a renowned local choir. Unsurprisingly, he showed an early talent for music and started piano lessons at home. At the age of 10 he received his first lessons in harmony, writing his first piece in the same year and was later taught counterpoint by Nadia Boulanger. Encouraged by Ravel, he went on to study at the Paris Conservatoire, while also forging a career as a solo pianist. His first international acclaim was received at the age of 24, when he performed his own *Concertino for piano and orchestra* at the chamber music festival of Baden-Baden. He was to continue writing throughout most of the rest of his life, producing music in all genres, including film soundtracks. His music is characterised above all by elegance and wit, often employing 'antique' musical forms such as the Cantata, while subverting them with references to popular culture.

Some musicians arrive at the destination of composition through other disciplines, but perhaps none via such a circuitous route as **Albert Roussel**, who came to composing via Mathematics and the French navy - with whom he served as a Midshipman on the frigate *Iphigenie*. His experiences of far away, exotic places later informed his music, as did his early exposure to Debussy and Vincent d'Indy. He resigned from the navy in 1894 and after having served as an ambulance driver on the Western Front in the First World War, he settled in Normandy where he produced most of his compositions. Roussel's early training at the *Schola Cantorum* with d'Indy - and his teacher's rigorous insistence on classical models such as Palestrina and Bach - left its mark on Roussel's music: his mature style is characterised by a classical formalism (among his works are four symphonies), while still being recognisably of the 20th century. He never fully espoused the idea of a typical 'French sound', and while his orchestral music is thought by some to be heavier than that of his contemporaries, Roussel's style is still far removed from those of Bruckner and Mahler. In common with others, he had an interest in the emerging jazz culture and composed a number of pieces in the jazz style. However, his most important works were his ballets of which the best known is *Bacchus et Ariadne*, Opus 43.

Vincent d'Indy, who was strongly influenced by César Franck and Richard Wagner during his youth, went on to teach a remarkable number of illustrious pupils including Isaac Albéniz; Darius Milhaud; Arthur Honegger; Albert Roussel; Eric Satie and Cole Porter during his time at his own *Schola Cantorum* and the Paris Conservatoire. Sadly, his own musical conservatism at a time of profound change resulted in his own works not receiving the popular acclaim that they deserved and only his *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* remains in the orchestral repertoire. His output was complex and varied including two large symphonic poems and several operas as well as chamber music; indeed, he is widely regarded as having written two of the finest string quartets of the late 19th century. The two movements presented here - arranged from the *Suite dans le style Ancien*, Op.24 - illustrate d'Indy's innate classicism, while demonstrating his superb skill and inventiveness.

Of French descent, but born in Bozen, Austria (now Bolzano, Italy), **Ludwig Thuille** was a boyhood friend of Richard Strauss and a member of the Munich School of composition. His initial musical education came from his father but when his parents died while he was still a child, he went to be a chorister at the Benedictine Abbey at Kremsmuenster, later going on to study in Innsbruck. He eventually moved to Munich, where he was taught by Josef Rheinberger, later returning to take up the post of Professor of Theory and Composition at the *Academie der Tonkunst*. Thuille's first love was always chamber music and though he was seduced into writing opera for a while by the charismatic librettist Alexander Ritter, he always returned to this. His *Sextett B-dur* presented here is from his early years as a student in Munich, yet it already shows in its structural clarity and melodic invention the great influence of Strauss. Thuille was decidedly a Romantic composer but a certain native conservatism kept him from the experiments of his contemporary, Reger; though an expert orchestrator, (he composed a Symphony and a Piano Concerto during his career), he never tried to compose with the audacity of Mahler. Despite being overshadowed by the scale of many late Romantic works, the exquisite music of Ludwig Thuille deserves a hearing.

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