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Wind group maintains balance even at high speed

By **David Williams**

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Every once in a while the Charleston Chamber Music Society strays from its focus on string instruments to explore the larger world of small ensembles. Such was the case Saturday night in a concert by the Dorian Wind Quintet.

I'd like to say that the Dorian plays with a perfect sense of balance and timbre — not an easy thing to do when each of the instruments, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn, are completely different. But that could conjure an image of finicky neatness, which comes nowhere close to capturing the go-for-broke gusto it brought to the more extroverted music on the program.

So the opening octaves of Taffanel's Quintet for Winds burned with energy while the Mendelssohnian hurdles of the finale were leapt at breakneck pace.

Such energy needs balance, though, and the Dorian struck it with expressive understatement in slow movements — like Nancy Billmann's wistful horn playing in the Taffanel and the well-shaped lines the group wound in the Adagio, K. 411 by Mozart.

The group opened with Reicha's Quintet, Op. 88, No. 2 — solid music, dexterously played, especially the percolating bassoon-led textures of the finale — and followed it with five variations written by living composers on the theme of the slow movement.

This was the heart of the concert and delightful to hear. NPR "Piano Puzzler" Bruce Adolphe's variation offered hearty virtuosity driven by a fanfaring horn. Richard Rodney Bennet's take dashed florid lines with tall harmonies.

Billy Child's piece spun modal counterpoint in contrast to George Perles' variation full of spiky aphorisms. Leo Hoiby's sparkling finale built to a shriek before melting away like a scoop of ice cream on a warm summer day.
