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HEADLINE: DORIAN WIND QUINTET, WITH WIT FOR THE DAY

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The **Dorian Wind Quintet** has been an important contributor to the world of chamber music since 1962. They have always successfully mixed serious artistic intent with an informal, highly personal and engaging attitude toward audiences.

But the Dorian program for Monday evening involved a new high in wry wit, in my experience. As a sort of mini-centerpiece there was "Two Minutes and Thirty-three Seconds," the quintet's abridged version of John Cage's infamous 4' 33", described as "tacet, for any inst/insts." Oboist Gerard Reuter stood and explained that it usually involves a pianist who sits at the keyboard for precisely the prescribed time without so much as touching a key, closes the lid, bows and leaves.

Before rejoining the others Reuter looked at the audience and said, "Oh yes. April Fool!" The musicians then put their instruments in their laps for precisely two minutes and 33 seconds, stood and bowed. In the dead silence, it had seemed like much more time had elapsed, so the shortened version was fully justified.

In this ingenious program, the heavier entries were at the outer ends, with variably lighter selections surrounding the central April Fool's offering.

Lalo Schifrin's 1987 "La Nouvelle Orleans" espouses esoteric principles of renewal but in the playing seems a brief, spiky but not clashingly dissonant piece carried along by halting, jerky ostinato figures interrupted by various virtuoso solo lines, some involving precipitously fast tempos, with a little jazz influence thrown in here and there.

On the other side of John Cage was Luciano Berio's word-play piece "Opus Number Zoo." To four texts titled Tom Cats, The Horse, The Grey Mouse and Barn Dance, Berio provided music that was by turns mildly chatty, spare and reflective, scampering wildly, and a kind of martial square dance. The performers were armed with specific instructions for sequential narration of the texts, along with semi-theatrical effects such as rising in unison to play a dissonant chord, other body English gestures, narrating parts in a hooty falsetto and rapid interchanges among several narrators. A spirit of purposeful irreverence reigned and much fun was had.

Two arrangements by Mordechai Rechtman bracketed the program, closing with a Beethoven Quintet in E-Flat, Op. 4. This was the work which gave the best notion of the ensemble's main line artistry. It was distinguished by the first movement's jovial ornaments in the melodic line, all tossed off with taste and flair, the beautifully dovetailing, broadly flowing lines of the Andante, the Menuetto's fine conversational rapport and superbly articulated melodic gestures, and sparkling energy applied to the Finale, played with such joy it almost seemed a comic chase scene.

Dorian Wind Quintet

Monday evening at Lancaster Opera House.