
Copyright 1993 The New York Times Company
The New York Times

September 28, 1993, Tuesday, Late Edition - Final
Correction Appended

SECTION: Section C; Page 14; Column 5; Cultural Desk

LENGTH: 327 words

HEADLINE: Classical Music in Review

BYLINE: By ALEX ROSS

Dorian Wind Quintet
Merkin Concert Hall

Wind quintets often fall victim to compositional busywork. Joan Tower's "Island Prelude," commissioned by the **Dorian Wind Quintet** in 1989 and played by the same group on Sunday night at Merkin Concert Hall, strikes off in a new direction: hovering sonorities, slowly unfolding lines, patient construction of motifs. Set as a miniature concerto for oboe, the piece eventually heads toward more familiar ground, with chattering Stravinskyite episodes and florid cadenzas for the soloist. But it has a thoroughly distinctive shape overall, and the Dorians -- Elizabeth Mann (flutist), Jerry Kirkbride (clarinetist), Gerard Reuter (oboist), Jane Taylor (bassoonist) and Nancy Billmann (horn player) -- added their usual flair. George Perle's Quintet No. 2 also stands out for its patient enjoyment of wind sonorities. Mr. Perle has now written four wind quintets, all of them recorded by the Dorians for the New World label; he has a thorough mastery of the medium and matches it effortlessly to his singular brand of tonally centered 12-tone expressivity. This second quintet, composed in 1962, is especially notable for the sighing motions of its central movement, reflective of Alban Berg's "Lyric Suite."

Both the Tower and the Perle have touches of Ravel in their instrumental colorings, so it was eminently logical that the Dorians presented a wind arrangement of five out of six pieces from "Le Tombeau de Couperin" by Ravel. Kenneth Moore made the highly idiomatic adaptation, adding a part for harp; Deborah Hoffman was the guest artist on Sunday, providing glistening atmosphere for the Dorians' polished solos.

At the beginning of the program was a fine specimen of Antonin Reicha's enormous 19th-century wind-quintet output, the Quintet No. 16 in D Major. Wind quintets would be poor without Reicha, and the Dorians paid him thanks with an enthusiastic, incisive performance.

ALEX ROSS