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Wind quintet treats audience with commissioned piece

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Rick Justice
For the Daily Mail

The internationally renowned Dorian Wind Quintet celebrated its 40th anniversary with a unique commission.

And you don't get to do that unless you have played some of the right notes along the way.

It was no surprise, then, that when the quintet appeared at Christ Church United Methodist Saturday night as guests of the Charleston Chamber Music Society, it brought the work to life with a casual excellence that demonstrated the difference between style and fashion.

The commission in question was "Variations on a Theme From Woodwind Quintet #2" by Antonin Reicha.

Reicha's quintet was played as the opening work of the program. The variations are based on the slow movement of the piece.

This set of variations is the combined effort of five different composers who have produced commissioned works for Dorian in the past.

Richard Rodney Bennet was first up to bat with his "Eleganza," a very British-regimental-military-band sort of thing that was perfect for the opener.

Next was George Perle's "Four Variations," followed by Billy Child's "On a Reicha Theme," then Burce Adolphe's "Draino Variation." The piece ended with Lee Hoiby's appropriately titled "Finale: Andante-Lento-Allegro."

Reicha's theme was handled empirically, mysteriously, mischievously and humorously, yet it never lost the thread of the known. In fact, one could almost believe the composers, Reicha included, worked in conjunction rather than completely independently. The symbiosis was that well perceived. Dorian made mad music of the road with different paths.

The second half of the program featured a lovely Adagio by W.A. Mozart. It ended with a "Quintet for Winds" by flute master Paul Taffanel that spotlighted, you guessed it, the flute mastery of Gretchen Pusch.

As with almost all of the Chamber Music Society's concerts, the hall was filled with music lovers whose earnest applause was rewarded by an encore of French fun.

Great concert by great players.