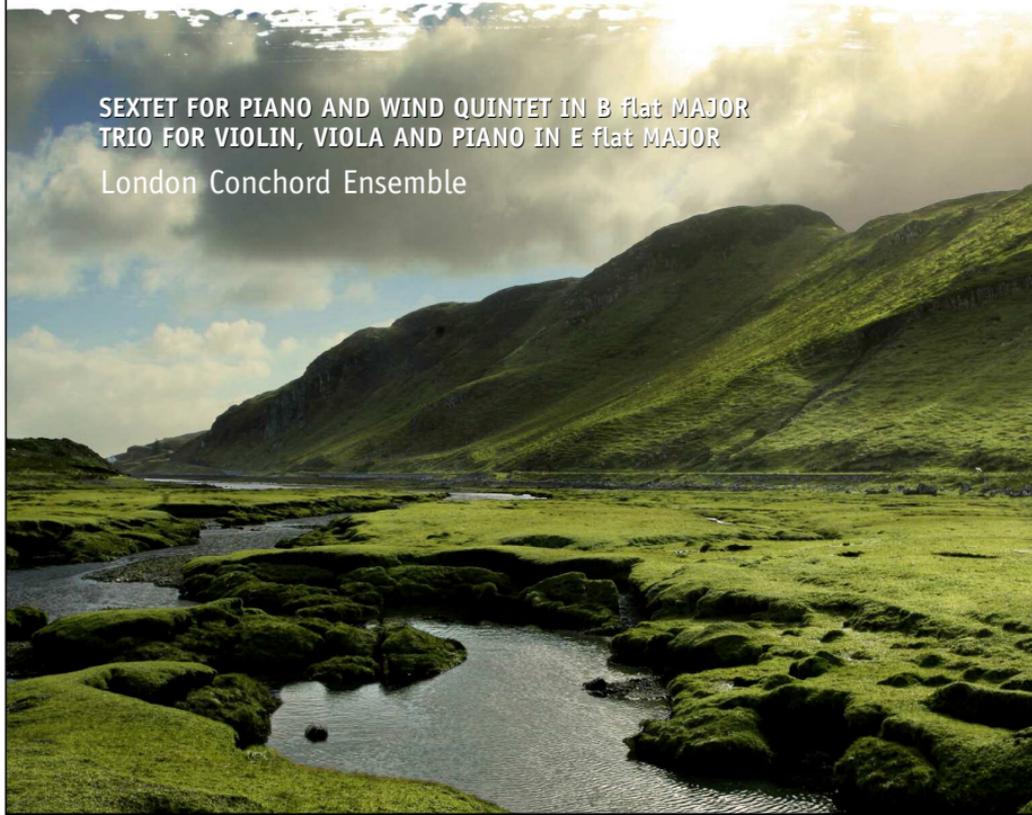




Ludwig Thuille

SEXTET FOR PIANO AND WIND QUINTET IN B flat MAJOR
TRIO FOR VIOLIN, VIOLA AND PIANO IN E flat MAJOR

London Conchord Ensemble



LUDWIG THUILLE (1861-1907)

SEXTET FOR PIANO AND WIND QUINTET IN B flat MAJOR

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Allegro moderato | 10'41 |
| 2 | Larghetto | 7'36 |
| 3 | Gavotte: Andante, quasi Allegretto | 3'51 |
| 4 | Finale: Vivace | 5'34 |

TRIO FOR VIOLIN, VIOLA AND PIANO IN E flat MAJOR

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------|
| 5 | Allegro moderato | 12'19 |
| 6 | Andante maestoso | 10'03 |
| 7 | Moderato cantabile | 6'38 |
| 8 | Allegro vivace | 9'03 |

Total time ~ 65'47

Recorded at the Music Room, Champs Hill, West Sussex
on 6th & 7th April 2003 (Sextet), 19th & 20th July 2004 (Trio)

Produced & Engineered by Chris Craker

Edited & Mastered by Richard Sutcliffe

LONDON **CONCHORD** ENSEMBLE

The London Conchord Ensemble was formed in 2002 by internationally-recognised young soloists, chamber musicians and principals from the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Opera House Orchestra, the Philharmonia and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe.

Conchord made its Wigmore Hall debut in October 2002 and followed with a European début at the Schleswig-Holstein festival. The group performs across the UK, Europe and North America and make regular live appearances on BBC Radio 3. The past season has included a 10 concert tour to Ireland including Dublin Castle and performances at Concertgebouw Amsterdam, Tonhalle Düsseldorf, Windsor Festival with Sue Bickley, Newbury Festival with Andrew Kennedy, and Chelsea Festival with James Gilchrist.

Conchord has a busy recording career, having already made several discs for Sanctuary Classics/ASV, Black Box and Quartz, and a number of current recording projects which will be released on Champs Hill Records, including the complete chamber works of Poulenc.

"The ensemble clicks perfectly, the playing seemingly effortless and a regard for precision never stifling the musicians' natural feeling for life and breath."

BBC Music Magazine

LUDWIG THUILLE - CHAMBER MUSIC

Despite a substantial and diverse compositional output, Ludwig Thuille is perhaps best remembered for his seminal harmonic textbook, the *Harmonielehre*. This volume is, somewhat misleadingly, referred to as the “Louis Thuille” on account of the co-authorship of Thuille and Rudolf Louis, resulting in a title which renders Thuille’s name apparently Gallic. In fact, Thuille is a Tyrolean name; the composer was born in Bozen (later Bolzano) on 30 November 1861.

Thuille’s reputation has since been eclipsed by that of Richard Strauss, but the two were friends and correspondents from adolescence up until Thuille’s death, from sudden heart failure, on 5 February 1907. Their admiration was mutual: Strauss dedicated his tone poem *Don Juan* to the older composer, and, in a discussion of his *Sinfonia Domestica*, deferred to Thuille with the comment, “You are the better counterpointer”.

Thuille’s contrapuntal facility is perhaps unsurprising given his education. Following a rigorous musical upbringing as a chorister in the Kremsm Benedictine monastery, Thuille was taken in by the highly musical Nagiller family of Innsbruck, which arranged his formal musical education from the age of 15. In 1879 Thuille entered Munich’s Royal School of Music where he was taught by Joseph von Rheinberger, whose fastidious attitude to counterpoint had a lasting effect on Thuille’s musical language.

It was during this time that Thuille’s relationship with Strauss cooled a little; the former was at music college while the latter was still at grammar school, yet while encouragement was lavished upon the younger composer, Thuille met with a dearth of such praise and patronage. But it was a later falling-out between the two composers to which Thuille’s devotion to chamber music can in part be attributed. A series of contentious comments surrounding Strauss’s over-written *Taillfer* led to a misunderstanding, from which their friendship only recovered shortly before Thuille’s death. His criticism of the work was exaggerated to Strauss, who took great offence. This conflict, as well as Thuille’s own failure to succeed in the genre

of opera, can account for his soured relationship with such a large-scale medium. And while Strauss did not pursue chamber music with the same assiduity as Thuille, the older composer blossomed through smaller-scale works into his maturity; tantalisingly so, as the quality of the music suggests greater things to come.

The French horn features prominently in many Strauss works, and it is this instrument that, along with the piano, opens the first two movements of Thuille’s *Sextet in B flat*, Op.6 (sometimes listed as Op.5), published in 1889. The *Allegro moderato* is characterised by the distinctive contrast between lyricism and jollity. The warm opening subject, in which the various combinations of instruments available are explored, gives way to material dominated by dotted rhythms and played by the winds in alternation with the piano, showing Thuille exploiting the array of possible sonorities from this ensemble.

The opening horn line is taken over by clarinet, then flute and bassoon take up the theme before the full ensemble passes through a series of fluid modulations. This in turn leads to a pared-down section in which the piano accompanies soloistic phrases for clarinet, flute and then oboe. The spotlight then falls on piano alone, some of the writing for which might almost belong to a concerto, as though to demonstrate that the piano is by no means confined to an accompanimental role in this work. This solo is gradually joined by the remaining instruments, after which the various combinations are repeated: piano solo, clarinet and piano, bassoon and flute with piano, then the fuller ensemble. It is now that the contrasting material emerges to surprise the listener: the winds are grouped together, their dialogue with the piano characterised by great *joie de vivre*. The following developmental passages ebb and flow between delicate textures and high drama, with subtle instrumental writing. For instance, Thuille pairs horn and bassoon in such a way that the latter operates as a second horn; their hunting-horn style figures add a pastoral quality to the movement. The opening section is then recapitulated, beginning with the soloistic passages followed by the dotted-rhythm material. A

build in drama precedes the final return of the movement's initial lyricism before jollity wins out, driving the movement to its close.

Thuille's deft alternation of instrumental roles continues during the autumnal *Larghetto*, which features a warmly blended wind choir playing passages independently of the piano, before the piano takes over the theme, staccato winds decorating its solo. Pairings of the wind instruments, such as clarinet and bassoon in octaves, sound deceptively simple to the listener, but in fact demand precise ensemble playing from the instrumentalists. This is a paradox central to the chamber music tradition and one that also applies to the Trio: great accuracy and skill are required to convey apparent effortless ease. Following the central trio, the movement ends with warm colours: the flute in its lower register followed by the combination of piano, clarinet, bassoon and horn.

The *Gavotte* opens with a sprightly oboe melody which is then passed around the other instruments. Witty and galant, the movement might almost be a parody of Baroque elegance; it certainly captures Carl Dahlhaus's description of chamber music's nature requiring "an attitude of light-handed gentility". In addition to this, however, there is virtuosity, albeit of a skittish kind, in the quicksilver trio, *Doppio movimento*, heralded by robust piano chords.

This lively character spills over into the *finale*, with the thematic material passed from instrument to instrument in a fleet-footed, lightly-textured conclusion to the work. The *Sextet* is remarkable for its quirky amalgamation of lyricism and humour, as well as for the control Thuille shows in his very specific and idiomatic instrumental writing.

Thuille's *Trio* is more conventional than the *Sextet*, both harmonically and structurally. The joyously airy writing, injected with moments of turbulent passion, might be argued to be the Austro-German equivalent of the chamber works of Borodin or Franck, and had not the "New German" school, which favoured large-

scale works, dominated Thuille's home land so thoroughly, it is possible that his chamber music would have achieved the popularity enjoyed by those two composers.

The first movement's sonata form is articulated by Classically-influenced, architected piano writing, as opposed to the *Sextet's* liquid pianism. In common with the *Sextet*, however, is the duet writing; the violin and viola parts, as with the wind pairings, shift between conversational exchanges, and material played together separated by octaves, requiring precise performance.

A substantial slow movement opens with the viola playing a stately theme, before the insistent piano rhythm increases the music's momentum, creating an understated tension that pervades the whole movement. Even during the sunny central section, melancholy simmers beneath the surface and returns in the reprise of the opening material. It is unclear which mood will prevail until the final *Tierce de Picardie* ends the movement in the major, like the sun breaking through the clouds. The minuet's innocent opening belies the drama that unfolds in the central trio; again Thuille's style is permeated by strong contrasts. These tensions are resolved in the finale, its rumbustious character incorporating the joys and passions of the whole work.

The late 19th-century focus on large musical forces can draw the attention away from any advancements made in chamber music, but writing for few instruments need not denote a lack of musical ambition, and Thuille's chamber works are at times symphonic in their structural scope. As with the *Sextet*, the *Trio* shows Thuille writing with great awareness of the instruments, fusing filigree piano writing with the singing violin and mellow viola. While perhaps not as grandly impressive as the large orchestral works of his day, Thuille's chamber music displays substantial skill in a more exposed, less celebrated genre.

LONDON **CONCHORD** ENSEMBLE



Daniel Pailthorpe ~ *Flute*
Emily Pailthorpe ~ *Oboe*
Barnaby Robson ~ *Clarinet*
Andrea de Flammineis ~ *Bassoon*

Nicholas Korth ~ *Horn*
Julian Milford ~ *Piano*
Maya Koch ~ *Violin*
Douglas Paterson ~ *Viola*

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- 5 Allegro moderato
- 6 Andante maestoso
- 7 Moderato cantabile
- 8 Allegro vivace

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