



## Northern Lights Wind Quintet

13<sup>th</sup> February 2016

This concert, the penultimate in the MAAA's winter programme, was given by the Northern Lights Wind Quintet - 1 each of flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon - in the Council Chambers, Kilmory. We are indebted to Argyll and Bute Council for allowing us to use this fine venue, and, for once, giving our valiant audience a warm environment in which to enjoy a wonderful evening's entertainment.

The well crafted programme was in two halves, with each centred on an original composition for wind quintet, and filled out with a mix of shorter and generally lighter arrangements - a format which worked really well. The group started with Suite 1 (Debussy arr. Hallam). This was an arrangement of 3 piano pieces including the familiar "Golliwog's Cakewalk"

This was followed by a Quintet by French flautist / composer Taffanel written in the late 19th century. The 3 movement piece is a fine example of French composers' skill at writing for wind instruments and was well delivered. The first half of the concert ended with Poulenc's charming "Novelette in C" and a truly zany "Polka" by Shostakovich - great fun.

Piazzolla's "Milonga sin Palabras" followed the interval. Although well played, it seemed to lack the bite of the traditional Argentinian instruments. Then followed the "meat" of the second half - the first two movements of Nielsen's Wind Quintet. Written as a set of "portraits" of wind-playing friends, it is a witty "conversation" between the various instruments.

An arrangement of Elgar's much-loved "Salut d'Amour" was followed by two light-hearted and amusing pieces, the latter - "Les Animaux" by Jim Parker - included farm-yard vocals and tap-dance. The evening ended with the clarinet dismembering her instrument in "The Incredible Shrinking Clarinet" !

Throughout the evening's wide repertoire Northern Lights ably demonstrated their dedication to this genre. Their obvious technical skills were matched by great sensitivity and crisp ensemble playing - even when the lights went out momentarily! The well-deserved and rapturous applause was proof-positive that the large audience had thoroughly enjoyed the performance, returning home with smiles on their faces.

Philip Bowden-Smith