



Saturday 1 September

**Leitzinger Bassoon Quartet
Plays *Symphonie Fantastique***

Teodor Naumov, David Petersen,
Dominik Schulz and Karl Ventulet,
bassoons

I. Rêveries, Passions

II. Un Bal

III. Scène aux champs

IV. Marche au supplice

V. Songe d'une nuit du Sabbat

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

(arr. Dominik Schulz)

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On the last day of the conference, I decided to broaden my horizons by going to a bassoon recital.

I have to admit that I thought this performance would be a miniature version of the original symphony for large orchestra.

How could four bassoons possibly do the work justice? ...Well they did in an absolutely brilliant and virtuosic full-length performance.

The quartet consists of principal bassoonists from some of Germany's leading orchestras. They all play custom bassoons made by Stephan Leitzinger and have been referred to as "magnificent bassoonists and musicians".

They are also versatile. In the 3rd movement (scene in the fields) for example, two of the bassoonists played cajóns (box shaped percussion instruments that are played by slapping the sides with the hands) to produce the rumbling sound of distant thunder. The duet normally played by the off stage oboe and cor anglais was a highlight. The sound of the two bassoons calling to each other

was even more haunting than when played with the original instrumentation.

The last two movements provided more double reed excitement with the contra bassoon triple tonguing the original timpani sextuplets at the start of the March to the Scaffold and the bassoon playing the crazy E flat clarinet solo in the Witch's Sabbath.

The whole recital was a showcase of technique, musicianship and stamina.

I'm so glad I was able to be there and enjoy it. ■

Liz Nurthen

Call me 'Queen of the Bassoon Quartets', having attended quite a smorgasbord of them during the conference, but this performance took the cake!

Sheer madness.

Yes, the Leitzinger Bassoon Quartet performed an arrangement faithful to the entire Berlioz symphony. Just imagine the string parts, the percussion parts, the brass and the upper woodwind parts reduced to four!!!

At the end I picked my jaw up from the floor and applauded until my hands hurt. I was astounded at the virtuosity and the sheer physical workout as they cackled and trilled their way through the Witches Sabbath, shrieking Eb clarinet parts in evidence.

The contrabassoon produced an eerily accurate representation of the percussive timpani rumblings to begin the March To The Scaffold, not to mention the hauntingly beautiful answer from offstage during In The Country. This drew a heretical observation from an oboist in the audience who marveled that Berlioz didn't write it for the bassoon in the first place as it sounded much better than on oboe!

Bassoons mimicking harps in Un Bal – all the more ironic as the bassoons are tacet in this movement in the original. What a

divine pizzicato effect the bassoon can produce. The flexibility of the instrument came to the fore as the bassoon was able to mimic all of the melodic and rhythmic elements of the original score.

Incredible playing from the evenly matched members of the quartet (the Leitzinger boys!), a little raw at times as some of the sections rated up there as some of the most difficult passages I have ever heard but one of the most insane and uplifting performances I have ever heard – it was truly fantastique! ■

Josie Hawkes