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MNOZIL BRASS

The Morning Call • October 17, 2013

'Brass Gods' wow Lehigh's Zoellner Arts Center with musical talent, humor

BY DAVE HOWELL

You might not have heard of them, but to horn players they are brass gods. The Mnozil Brass sold out Baker Hall in Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center on Sunday, with an audience of all ages and fans that came from many states, including California.

This was their "Happy Birthday" show, celebrating the unit's 20th anniversary. The seven Mnozils are three trumpets, three trombones (with one doubling on bass trumpet) and a tuba player. There was not a note out of place in a 2 1/2-hour show with intermission. Unless they had it planned.

For the Mnozils are also comedians, mostly silent, since they are based in Vienna and German is their native language. It is hard to pull off humor that can be equally enjoyed by children and adults, but they did it effortlessly between their musical numbers.

Seven brasses can produce a powerful sound, as they showed on the crime jazz of Henry Mancini's "Streets of San Francisco" and "Birdland," on what might be the best version ever done of Joe Zawinul's classic. They can also be refined and melodic, as on "Moon River." Much of the program featured their own compositions, which stood up perfectly alongside pop, jazz, and classics by Bach and Strauss.

They also sang a smooth a cappella version of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" in English, and contributed their vocals to Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody." The latter is one of their signature pieces, and won them a standing ovation.

Another of their favorites is Paul Anka's "Lonely Boy." This had Leonhard Paul twisting his body around on the ground with a chair and finally seating himself. As the others gradually surrounded him, he fingered two trumpets with his hands and maneuvered two trombone slides with his feet.

On a pop medley, three players went to the front of the stage to boogie to "Staying Alive," and, accompanied by Wilfried Brandstötter's tuba, the other six emulated zombies and other monsters to Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

They also did a slow-motion race to "Chariots of Fire," a piece on which Paul played bass trumpet while carried on the shoulders of four other Mnozils, and Haydn's "Flotennummer," where they performed with recorders via nose instead of mouth.

There was so much interaction, you might be focused on one part of the stage while a laugh would direct you to action somewhere else. In one quick bit, as Paul observed someone seating themselves after the show's opening, he stared at them feigning disgust as he pointed to his eyes and an imaginary watch.

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It would be no surprise if the Mnozil Brass returned to Zoellner. If they do, you can enjoy them a family outing, as a lover of either music or comedy, or all three.

More than 100 people saw the Southside Brass for the pre-show on the second floor of the Zoellner Center. The Brass played an eclectic set that included "After You've Gone," "Liechtensteiner Polka," "Tuxedo Junction," "I Got Plenty of Nuttin," "When I'm Sixty-Four," and selections from Handel's "Water Music."

They provided the feeling of an old-time concert band, both rousing and fun, but with jazzier arrangements and a bit of classical and Broadway mixed in. The group, more than 25 years old, added songs not heard very often, including "The Ecstasy of St. Mute" and "Jupiter Hymn."

The Southside Brass are staff and faculty of Lehigh University and community members. They are Jim Long and Clark Hamman (tubas), Patty Alercia and Jim Roberts (French horns), John Linkert and Ashleigh Pizzino (trombones), and George VanDoren, Alan Babp, and Rick Weisman (trumpets).



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MNOZIL BRASS KCMETROPOLIS.org • October 17, 2013

Musicality and Brassy Mischief

BY KRISTIN SHAFEL OMICCIOLI

The members of Mnozil Brass do not talk during their show. They don't need to. Their non-stop pace, comedic timing, and astounding playing had the audience simultaneously in stitches and rapt with attention for the full two-hour show. Musical selections ranged from classical to pop to jazz, showing versatility in style and varied tastes. Tunes heard included Al Hirt's "Green Hornet Theme," "Amazing Grace," Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," themes from popular films, Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue, and much more.

Physicality and theatrics played an integral part in the show, and Mnozil hammed it up to the fullest effect. The gentlemen galloped on invisible horses to Arutiunian's Trumpet Concerto, performed the famous zombie moves and moonwalked to Michael Jackson's "Thriller," and dramatically teased each other from one end of the stage to another (and even from off-stage) to Mancini's "Baby Elephant Walk" and Sousa's Stars and Stripes Forever.

Of the concert's many memorable moments, three bits stood out in particular to me. A parody of old westerns evolved into an elaborate fight scene between two band members—one playing the jilted lover and one the "other man." Suddenly, the action slows to a crawl and the fight is carried out at a molasses pace. Trumpeter Roman Rindberger is punched and (assisted by his bandmates) spins head-over-heels in slow-motion... while playing a theme from the Kill Bill films. His tone was amazingly clear and strong for being upside-down and then flat on his back. Trombonist Zoltan Kiss dodges a "bullet" (mouthpiece) by leaning back, Matrix-style.

Each member of Mnozil has a distinct personality, and a notable scene featured the awkward, bashful character of trombonist Leonhard Paul. After much enticing to sit in a chair, he gingerly removed his socks and shoes. With a snap of his fingers, Paul's fellow trombonists appeared, and placed their main slides between his toes and started blowing. Paul proceeded to supplement tuba player Wilfried Branstötter's bass line with trombone harmonies, all played by moving his feet. Another finger snap and trumpeters Thomas Gansch and Robert Rother joined, having Paul play their valves with his hands while they supplied the air. Throughout the stunt, Paul remained stoic and steady. Have you ever seen a person play two trombones and two trumpets at the same time? The audience was enthralled.

Last, and definitely my favorite sketch was World Premiere. A sharp mockery of both classical traditions and ostensible compulsory seriousness of contemporary music, this piece had all the stuffy elements of a formal concert setting and humorously (and gloriously) ripped them apart. From the grave, self-important conductor, a tacet soloist, embellished extended techniques, strange vocal wailings, and overall nonsensical cacophony, World Premiere poked fun at convention in an absolutely brilliant way.

Not only are the men of Mnozil comedic actors, all seven are talented musicians as well. Each enjoyed solos throughout and together impressed with tight ensemble work, good intonation, strong breath support and sustains, clear-ringing tone, well-controlled dynamics, and timbral variation. Their ability to shift from whisper quiet to a thick

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wall of sound without being piercing was especially effective. And on top of all this, they are unexpectedly good vocalists to boot.

After three encores (including crowd-pleaser and mostly sung “Bohemian Rhapsody” by Queen) and as many standing ovations, the audience let out a collective deep sigh when the lights came up and the show finally ended. This crowd would have been happy for Mnozil to play all night.

If you ever have the chance to see the dynamic and widely appealing Mnozil Brass perform live, take it. And don't blink—you might miss something hilarious.



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MNOZIL BRASS

USAF • March 12, 2011

International brass sensation to perform with Band of Flight

BY TECH. SGT. ERIC KNORR

Mnozil Brass from Vienna, Austria, will perform as guest artists with the U.S. Air Force Band of Flight in the Modern Flight Gallery inside the National Museum of the United States Air Force at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, March 20.

This concert is part of the Austrian group's first United States tour that will take them from New York City to Los Angeles. The band's seven musicians have gained a worldwide reputation as virtuosic brass players, comedic actors and vocalists who appeal to all ages.

Mnozil Brass has performed in Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Italy, France, Spain, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Russia, Taiwan, Japan, Canada and Australia at such illustrious venues as Royal Albert Hall in London and the Salzburg Festival in Austria.

Formed in 1993, the members of Mnozil Brass were all students at the University for Music and the Arts in Vienna, Austria. Across the street from the school was the Mnozil Inn, which provided a relaxed environment where many musicians tried out their craft.

Mnozil Brass, as they came to be known, initially gained notoriety performing marches, polkas and concert pieces indigenous to Austria (songs they all grew up playing in their respective town bands). They improvised on these common melodies by injecting modern tunes like themes from "James Bond" and "Superman," to name a few.

A writer for the "British Bandsman," an international brass magazine, writes, "A trip to a Mnozil Brass concert is almost impossible to describe in words. If you want to know what to expect, expect the unexpected and, if you get the chance to see them, seize it. Guaranteed is an evening of superlative entertainment blended with great humour."

Members of the Band of Flight first discovered Mnozil on YouTube while preparing the group "Hot Brass" for a CENTCOM deployment in November 2007. Members of the six-person Air Force ensemble were looking for new and interesting ways to entertain the troops and were inspired by Mnozil's "outside the box" ideas.

Hot Brass specifically targeted Mnozil's arrangement of "Bohemian Rhapsody" by British rock group "Queen." Hot Brass performed the song at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, for more than 4,000 multi-service troops awaiting a visit by then President George W. Bush. The crowd sang along and the performance received rave reviews, helping in the band's effort to bring a piece of home to the deployed troops.

Please join us for an evening of slapstick comedy, singing, brass playing, and of course your patriotic favorites, as the Band of Flight shares the stage with Mnozil Brass at the National Museum of the United States Air Force on March 20 at 7:30 p.m. The concert is free and no tickets are required. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Seating is limited to the first 1,200 people.

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For more information about upcoming performances by your United States Air Force Band of Flight and to sign up to receive our new electronic newsletter, please go to www.bandofflight.af.mil.