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# An evening of heavenly proportions offered by Annapolis Brass Quintet

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There must have been a choir of angels circling above First United Methodist Church here Thursday night, summoned by the empyreal outpourings of the Annapolis Brass Quintet.

This young, nonpareil quintet treated subscribers to the Chamber Music in Napa Valley concert series to a recital of heavenly proportions.

Repertoire for the 90-minute recital ran the gamut of Baroque and Renaissance to 20th century, with a smattering of jazz mixed in for good measure.

The quintet's four veterans — trumpeters Robert Suggs and David Cran, bass trombonist/tubist Robert Posten and trombonist Wayne Wells — were joined by a brilliant young French hornist, Arthur Brooks, for an imaginative, impeccably performed evening of music written and arranged for brass.

America's foremost exponents of repertoire for brass quintet, the Annapolis-based aggregation are quintessential instrumentalists all.

Each and every member of the quintet is a virtuoso in his own right. The performance of each conveys a

range of timbre, a personality and elegance rarely heard on discs, let alone in a live concert setting.

As members of the quintet are quick to point out, compositions for brass quintet have been prevalent only the past 40 years. There are brief pieces from Baroque periods, from Renaissance courts, and such were offered last evening — a march by William Byrd, three dances by Anthony Holborne, a Spanish Renaissance Suite by the prolific Cabezon family.

The 20th century works, then, were the focus of the recital. One of the most highly regarded works for this collection of instruments is a "Quintet in B Flat" written in 1942 by music scholar Robert Sanders. It is a melodic work, as haunting themes are juxtaposed with jaunty figures.

Another is a 1953 composition by Emil Petrovics, "Cassazione," chock full of Hungarian gypsy melodies that sounded as if they had been laundered in Tin Pan Alley.

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## A Register review

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Englishman Edward Gregson's "Quintet for Brass" is not a profound work, according to trombonist Wells, a statement with which this listener heartily agrees. But it proved a showcase for these technically brilliant performers.

"Four Irish Folk Songs," arranged by Los Angeles trumpeter Keith Snell, proved popular program pieces, conjuring up visions of moors, pipers, marketplaces and Celtic conundrums.

The concert finale was reserved for Johann Sebastian Bach, with the celestial incantations and lamentations of the "Prelude and Fugue in C Sharp Minor" and the joyous devices of the "Little Organ Fugue," a highly satisfying transcription.

For an encore, the Annapolis Brass Quintet turned to jazz, although Cran was quick to point out no member of the group is actually a jazz musician. They chose an arrangement of Duke Ellington's "I'm Gonna Go Fishin'," a sensational reworking of this mainstream

jazz classic by one of the quintet's hometown musical cohorts. It was a most fitting close to an already transcendental experience.

Thursday's performance by the Annapolis Brass Quintet marked its third appearance in the Napa Valley. The most recent was its 1982 engagement as part of the local chamber music program, a marvelous series of five impressive events underwritten annually by Clos du Val Winery.

Both concerts proved to be tremendously vivid and exciting musical happenings. The ensemble playing is outstanding, almost as if a hidden conductor was shaping the music.

During the Bach, I'm sure I saw a cherub smile approvingly from a heretofore unnoticed vantage point behind the organ pipes. All present then seemed to be in agreement — sheer jubilation!