UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN CONCERT SERIES 2016 – 2017
McOPERA WIND OCTET
KING’S COLLEGE CHAPEL
15th September, 2016

The name McOPERA is short for Music Co-OPERAtive Scotland, a unique organisation of classical musicians working together to generate and promote a range of artistically exciting and diverse work in Scotland. The company was formed in 2012 by players drawn from the Orchestra of Scottish Opera. It has a total membership of over 50 instrumentalists, singers, conductors and composers. The group is currently Ensemble in Residence at the University of Aberdeen. The first concert in Aberdeen University’s Concert Series 2016 – 2017 was given by the McOpera Wind Octet in King’s College Chapel where they were welcomed by Professor Paul Mealor. Their concert was introduced by clarinettist Lawrence Gill.

Their programme consisted of three pieces for wind octet, a pair each of oboes, horns, bassoons and clarinets. It began with a particularly breezy and optimistic work by the Czech composer Franz (František) Krommer (1759 – 1831). In the opening movement the characteristics of the various instrumental groups shone through in brilliant colours - the eloquent fluency of the clarinets, the mellow richness of the horns, the rhythmic solidity of the bassoons and the sweet cutting edge of the oboes. All of these contributed to the melody and especially the rhythmic punch of the bright opening Allegro.

The horns and oboes were nicely to the fore in the trio section contrasting with the rich full instrumental blend of the Minuetto. In the third movement, Andante Allegretto, both oboes and clarinets displayed marvellous fluency with powerful rhythmic pulse supplied by bassoons and horns.

The final movement echoed the rhythmic content of the opening movement but faster, more frisky and with more than a hint of humour. This was a splendid opening statement for our new concert season.

Lawrence Gill introduced the next piece the outer sections of which were every bit as extrovert and exciting as Krommer’s music. This was the Harmonie Music for Wind Octet from Mozart’s opera “The Marriage of Figaro”. The outer movements were the Overture and the quasi-military aria Non più andrai. The central section was the Countess’s wistful aria Porgi, amor, “sung” beautifully by the oboes. In the overture, the instruments themselves seemed to be dancing excitedly along in this music.

The final piece is one of the greatest works in the wind chamber repertoire. This was also by Mozart. It was his Serenade K388 in c minor. Mozart the opera composer was present in much of this music. The portentous opening chords suggested a curtain about to rise. The Andante could easily have been a vocal quartet and the conversation between the oboes and bassoons in the trio of the third movement suggested the stage.

The finale Allegro con Variationi led to a bright and happy conclusion for this colourful instrumental drama – a marvellous ending for the opening concert of a new University Music Season.