

**DAVID MORITZ MICHAEL**  
**The Water Journey (Die Wasserfahrt)**

**New World Records 80490**

**Wind Music in the Moravian Musical Heritage**

*Our national culture owes much to the many religious and ethnic groups that comprised the flood tide of colonial immigration. In the front rank of those having made substantial contributions in almost every area of human endeavor . . . stand the Moravians, spiritual descendants of the pre-Reformation Unitas Fratrum (a dissident offshoot of the Bohemian Church).<sup>1</sup>*

**The Moravian Church**

The Moravian Church traces its origins back to the followers of Jan Hus (1369-1415), a Czech priest and reformer who was executed as a heretic in 1415. It is important to note that one of the positions for which he was condemned was his emphasis on worship in the language of the people, not in Latin or any other language foreign to the worshipers. This has remained a hallmark of the Moravian Church.

Hus' followers organized a society called the "Unity of the Brethren" (Unitas Fratrum) in 1457, devoted to piety and congregational participation in worship, including hymn singing. For about two hundred years this group led a precarious life, mainly in Bohemia, Moravia, and Poland. They made significant contributions in hymnody, theology, and education, but the Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years' War nearly destroyed the small church, forcing its remnants underground.

In 1722 some of the descendants of these "Bohemian Brethren" settled on the estate of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf in Saxony, and under his protection they re-established their church. Almost from that day the Moravian Church, as it came to be known, was highly evangelical, sending out missionaries to places such as Greenland; the West Indies (in 1732, to minister to the slaves); Africa; and the British colonies, coming first to Georgia in 1735. This initial settlement proved unsuccessful, partly because of war between Protestant England and Catholic Spain in Florida. More permanent work was established in Pennsylvania in 1741, with the town of Bethlehem as their chief center.

In part to facilitate the Moravians' settlement in the New World, the British Parliament in 1749 recognized the Moravian Church as "an ancient Protestant Episcopal Church." That vote of approbation brought several offers by English noblemen seeking solid, hard-working settlers for their lands in various parts of the world, including an offer by the Earl of Granville, who had chosen to retain his holdings in Carolina after the other Lords Proprietors had surrendered their lands to the crown in 1729. The Moravians established their first settlement in North Carolina in November of 1753. Further settlements followed, in Bethania (1759) and Salem (1766), North Carolina.

Always essential to the Moravians has been the emphasis on a "heart religion" of piety and joy; on the role of music in worship and in life; and on education for all. For some fifty to seventy years the American Moravian settlements were primarily closed communities, serving both as places where the Moravians could live the life they chose, and places from which many missionaries were sent out--to the Native Americans, whose languages the Moravians learned, in order to preach in the language of the people. The meticulous records of the Moravians show that they preferred to

maintain some separation in the early years, but they were not a separatist, monastic, or utopian society, and were much more involved in the world around them than were the Shakers or similar groups.

The Moravian Church has continued to spread, albeit slowly in comparison to other denominations. A reason for its relatively small size is that in evangelizing, the Moravians are not focusing on making more Moravians, but rather on winning people to Jesus Christ--who are then encouraged to become a member of whatever denomination they wish. Today there are roughly some 58,000 Moravians in the United States, some 100,000 in Central America, and more than 350,000 in Africa, as well as very many in Europe, England, Canada, and so on.

### **Moravian Music**

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Moravians considered music a necessity, not cultural veneer. Many Moravian clergy and laypeople were trained in music by the same composers who influenced Mozart and Haydn; thus they came to the New World fully conversant with the taste and practice of European classicism.

In Moravian life there was no distinction between what we now call "sacred" and "secular," or between what part of life is musical and what is not. Each person's gifts were used for the benefit of the entire community. While there was little emphasis given to music as a distinct profession--many of the composers were also teachers and pastors--music was an essential part of everyone's education.

Throughout the history of the Moravian Church, instruments have been used consistently in worship as well as in entertainments. The Moravian settlers brought with them the concept of the *Collegium musicum*, the German tradition of amateur musical organizations that played both sacred and secular music. Instruments came to America early with the Moravians; by 1742 Bethlehem had flutes, violins, violas da braccio, violas da gamba, and horns. By 1788 the Salem *Collegium musicum* was proud to have at least three violins, a viola, a cello, flute, two horns, and two trumpets. These instruments were played not by professionals, but by accomplished amateurs, who enjoyed orchestral and chamber music as well as accompanying vocal solos and anthems for worship.

Of the music which is by Moravian composers, by far the greater portion is what today is called "sacred"--anthems and solos for liturgical use. These all share one primary characteristic: the text is of primary importance. This does not mean that the music is insignificant, but rather that the music serves to carry the text.

There are a number of instrumental pieces by Moravian composers, but the far greater portion of the instrumental works in Moravian collections were not written by Moravians. Moravian composers through the mid-nineteenth century focused their compositional skills on liturgical vocal music, rather than instrumental music, which gives us some perspective on how central to their lives their worship was. The sheer volume of instrumental music in the collections, however, shows how highly the Moravians valued instrumental music.

The Moravians' interest in instrumental music is demonstrated by their continuation of the *Collegium musicum*. The Bethlehem *Collegium musicum* was formed in 1744, for the twofold purpose of the

edification of the players and the improvement of the community's church music. However, this group finally began to thrive after the arrival in 1761 of Jeremias Dencke and Immanuel Nitschmann from Germany. By the time these two men left Germany, orchestrally-accompanied church music was being used extensively in Europe and gaining in popularity among the Moravian congregations there. It is likely that these two men brought this greater emphasis with them to America.

When the Moravians adopted wind instruments, it was for a specific purpose--to perform on a number of outdoor occasions. Brass instruments were the logical choice for more ceremonial occasions, being both louder and less susceptible than woodwinds to fits of temperament due to the vagaries of weather. Wind music in the Moravian tradition has consisted of two basic types: the trombone choir, which Hall refers to as "the ecclesiastical ensemble," and "secular" ensembles--chamber groups and bands. Brass (or trombone) choirs were often used, especially outdoors, to announce special services and events, to welcome visitors, and to accompany singing at outdoor services such as the Easter Dawn service, and at funerals.

The trombone choir name itself is sometimes misleading. Although there remain several groups which consist only of trombones (in Winston-Salem, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Madison, Wisconsin, and Downey, California, among others), this name is sometimes also used for ensembles that contain other brass instruments as well. This ecclesiastical ensemble plays today for outdoor services, including funerals, in many areas still announcing a death to the community by playing certain chorales--first the Passion Chorale ("O Sacred Head Now Wounded"), then a chorale that identifies to the initiated the age, sex, and marital status of the deceased, and again the Passion Chorale; the ensemble also leads the hymn-singing at the graveside. Most memorable is the participation of these groups at Easter for the dawn service. In Winston-Salem the Easter Band numbers up to 500 musicians.

Many of these church bands consist now not only of brass instruments, but of nearly all the woodwind instruments as well. Men and women of all ages play together, from the very young to the very old.

"Secular" groups--chamber ensembles and concert bands--developed from the *Collegia musica* along a parallel stream to the trombone choirs. While the trombone choirs and church bands focus their attention primarily on chorales, the community bands and chamber ensembles play primarily what we would now call secular music--chamber music, marches, dances, and arrangements of popular music of various sorts. These groups provide not only entertainment for players and audience alike but also enable the players to improve through exploring more challenging music.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth, there was an increased interest in woodwind chamber music in the *Collegia musica*, evidenced by a wide variety of pieces of early Classical and Classical-era music, ranging from duets and trios to eight- and ten-part works. Among the various combinations of woodwinds, the favorite seems to have been a basic combination of clarinets, horns, and bassoons, with an occasional flute or oboe. This music became very popular as both indoor and *al fresco* entertainment from about 1800 to about 1830.

By the 1780s the Bethlehem *Collegium musicum* was playing the music of the best composers of the

day--Bach's sons, Johan Hasse, Stamitz, Haydn, and many others now lesser known. Other *Collegia musica* were founded--Lititz around 1765, Nazareth around 1780, and Salem around 1786--the latter continuing on until around 1835.

The increasing demand for music by these groups stimulated the American Moravians to a veritable frenzy of copying and transcribing from European masterworks as well as composing their own works. The Salem *Collegium musicum* collection consists of some 500 compositions, of which about 150 are in manuscript form.

Moravian contributions to this collection include works by David Moritz Michael (1751-1827) and Johann Christian Bechler (1784-1857), both of whom were quite able composers of church anthems as well as of lighthearted woodwind ensembles. Michael, in particular, wrote fourteen woodwind "Parthien" and two lovely "Water Music" suites that were very popular among the Moravians in Bethlehem, and which were used for boat excursions on the Lehigh River at Bethlehem.

David Moritz Michael was born in Germany, and became a member of the Moravian Church when he was thirty years old. He taught in the Moravian school at Niesky and came to America in 1795. His official church position was as a worker with the young men of the congregations in Nazareth and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and his contributions to the musical life of the settlements were great. He revitalized the Bethlehem *Collegium musicum* and conducted what may have been the first American performance of Haydn's *Creation*. He wrote anthems and arias for church services, but is also well known as a composer of wind ensembles. He returned to Germany in 1815 and died in Neuwied, Germany, on February 26, 1827.

*Die Wasserfabrt* (The Water Journey) is harmoniemusik in the manner of a divertimento, with fifteen movements plus two unnumbered sections. The piece was meant to be played outdoors, and, in fact, was played on board a boat piloted along the Lehigh River near Bethlehem. Mirroring the various "experiences" the boat passes through, each movement symbolizes a condition of the river, from the quiet, still stream at the beginning to a whirlpool in the middle to the safe journey home. According to one contemporary account, "the inhabitants assembled on the river bank. . . . A large flat-bottomed boat . . . propelled by long poles and provided with seats and music stands, received the musicians. A procession was formed by those who intended to participate. . . . When all was in readiness, the boat started, the music began; the party moved up the Lehigh, accompanied by hundreds of listeners, enjoying the music, social intercourse, and [the] delightful prospect. . . . Eventually the poles no longer touched bottom [and] the composer, poet-like, suppos[ing] a case of great peril, caused the music to convey the idea of fear and terror; the boat was kept in the whirlpool [evidently a very gentle one] long enough for the musicians to act out their part, when it emerged . . . the sounds changed into lively airs and graceful melodies. The boat meanwhile glided with the current, and the party wended their way homeward." *Die Wasserfabrt* was considered by many to be Michael's masterpiece. Three copies of the suite survive: two sets in the Bethlehem Archives, and one in Winston-Salem.

Although written for outdoor entertainment, *The Water Journey* is music for the soul as well as for the imagination. Some movements (notably Numbers 6, 10, 13, and 14) offer unexpected contrasts in character, while others maintain a single mood, be it of rollicking joviality or heart-catching tenderness. There is no redundancy in *The Water Journey*, as there is none in a stroll along a river

bank. The subtle and infinite variety of nature is portrayed through the interplay of instrumental textures and colors. Never is Michael's imagination restricted by custom; each instrument is an integral player in a free-flowing conversation among equals.

Listening to *The Water Journey*, then, is like hearing a kaleidoscope of sound--one moment the clarinet catches the attention, and the next moment it moves gracefully to the background. The range of available colors expands with the recognition that each instrument carries a different "color" in a different register--a subtlety which may well be lost in a performance on late-twentieth-century instruments!

Also delightful is Michael's respect for his performers. Although written for amateur players, the writing is anything but condescending or simplistic. All six parts are interesting and challenging. As he treats his players, so also the audience--with tantalizing harmonic twists, irregular phrase lengths, and unexpected humor. The chorale-like ending is unusual in a suite, but somehow fitting here; again Michael will not be caged by custom. Far more inventive, and more deeply touching, than contemporaneous European wind music, this is truly music to be cherished and loved.

Michael's wind parthias (fourteen in addition to the two "water music" suites) show the development of his compositional technique through his experiments with instrumentation and timbre, phrase structures, and an increasing facility in subtle variations. Parthia 1, in E flat major, is written for two clarinets, two horns, bassoon, and trumpet. This work is found in music collections of the *Collegia musica* in Salem and in Lititz. The trumpet adds a new color to the texture with characteristic fanfare rhythms, especially in the first movement (Allegro), and brilliant ornaments in the third movement. The writing for all of the instruments is much less innovative than in the *Water Journey* suite, although even here Michael is not compelled to use all of the instruments all of the time, often using them in pairs.

Parthia 2 adds flute to Michael's more or less standard two clarinets, two horns, and bassoon. For the most part the flute adds a softer color (and a higher octave) to the first clarinet, rather than presenting independent melodic materials; this may be a concession to the challenge (in technique and intonation) playing in a flat key presented to the flute of the day.

### **Preservation and Rediscovery**

By the middle and later nineteenth century, the Moravian settlements were not as isolated as in earlier years, and as more music became more readily available, the Moravian-written music was less and less used. How then did it survive at all?

From the very beginning the Moravians kept and preserved careful and meticulous records of their church, community, and commercial life. Along with this emphasis on record-keeping, the Moravians maintained, then as now, active communication with other Moravian centers in Europe and throughout the world. Thus as the music was less used, it was not thrown out, but rather stored in boxes, crates, cabinets, attics, basements, and so on. In the 1930s and 1940s some of this music was uncovered, and as research began it became apparent that this was a treasure store. The first Early American Moravian Music Festival was held in Bethlehem in 1950, conducted by Dr. Thor Johnson (who went on to conduct the first eleven Moravian Music Festivals). Other festivals and seminars followed, and in 1956 the Moravian Music Foundation, an independent 501 (c) (3)

nonprofit institution, was chartered for the purpose of preserving the music, preparing modern editions for publication and performance, and generally making it available for performers, churches, researchers, and scholars worldwide, as well as to encourage contemporary composition. Of the roughly ten thousand pieces in MMF holdings, some four hundred have been edited and performed in recent years. Much remains to be done.

Thus the Moravian Music Foundation has a monumental task, which is exhilarating and overwhelming. What is presented on this the first compact disc recording issued by the Moravian Music Foundation is a part of the Moravian musical heritage, one look into the kaleidoscope.

### **Significance of the Moravian Musical Heritage**

The Moravian musical heritage is an important piece of musical and cultural history for several reasons:

First, because of its craftsmanship, musicality, and sincere portrayal of spiritual values. As written for capable amateurs, it avoids virtuosic display, but it is far from simplistic or condescending.

Second, this music represents the finest body of music written or performed in America during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During the eighty years from about 1760 to 1840, American Moravians wrote hundreds of anthems, duets, solo sacred songs, and instrumental pieces, and collected hundreds of others--both printed and hand-copied. Visitors to the Moravian communities were consistently high in their praise of Moravian musical activities.

Third, the Moravians performed the best of European music, often prior to performances of the same works in larger American cities. The question of "firsts" is difficult to establish in any historical discipline, but there is no doubt that the Moravians were cognizant of the finest in contemporary music from Europe and America.

—Dr. Nola Reed Knouse

Dr. Nola Reed Knouse *is Director of The Moravian Music Foundation.*

Notes:

1. Harry H. Hall, "The Moravian Wind Ensemble: Distinctive Chapter in America's Music," Ph.D. dissertation (George Peabody College for Teachers, 1967), page iii.

### **The Moravian Music Foundation**

The Moravian Music Foundation was founded and chartered in North Carolina in 1956, to preserve, study, edit, and publish the music retained in the Archives of the Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces. Since its establishment, the Foundation has acquired many additional items, including the Irving Lowens Collection of early American tunebooks; the band books of the 26th North Carolina Regimental Band (from the Civil War); and a reference library of over six thousand volumes, specializing in Protestant church music and American music history.

The Moravian Music Foundation is responsible for many first modern-day performances of music

from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Foundation serves as a resource for scholars, performers, and students worldwide as well as for church musicians. Over forty orchestral works from the Foundation's holdings have been edited and placed in the Fleisher Collection of the Philadelphia Free Library.

The collections of the Moravian Music Foundation contain some ten thousand manuscripts and early imprints of vocal and instrumental music, sacred and secular, from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries. Not all of this was written by Moravian composers, but it is all music that the Moravians used and enjoyed.

Included in the collections of the Moravian Music Foundation are works by Haydn and Mozart, J. C. Bach, Carl Friedrich Abel, Johann Stamitz, and a host of lesser-known composers. A number of these are the only known copies in the world. The Moravian collections provide a cross-section of classical musical culture, placing the masters in their proper historical perspective.

**Pacific Classical Winds** is a not-for-profit corporation established for the performance of chamber music on period instruments. Classical period wind instruments differ significantly from their modern descendants: The early clarinets and bassoons have many fewer keys, and the classical ("natural") horn has no valves. While these instruments do not possess the evenness of tone or the volume associated with modern orchestral wind instruments, they are capable of greater nuance and a more intimate sound, qualities much exploited by the better composers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The overall pitch common in the Classical era was rather lower than modern pitch; Pacific Classical Winds uses A=430 cycles, as opposed to the A=440 (and higher) in use today. Historically, instruments have gradually crept up in pitch, becoming more and more tightly wound (literally so, in the case of the strings) in order to meet demands for louder and more brilliant sounds occasioned by ever-larger performing venues. The scale itself has changed over the centuries, and where there was once an interesting variety, performers on modern instruments have for the most part settled on the consistent, if bland, equal temperament. One of the many pleasures of playing period instruments has to do with the musical rewards that accompany the exploration of the more textured and harmonious older scales.

## **The Instruments**

### **Bassoons**

Michael O'Donovan: P. de Koningh (after H. Grenser, c. 1810)

Rose Corrigan: P. Levin (after Bühner & Keller, c. 1810)

### **Clarinets**

Charles Zukovsky: P. Levin (after H. Grenser, c. 1800)

Gary Boyver: P. Levin (after H. Grenser, c. 1800)

### **Natural Horns**

Paul Avril: L. Greer (after A. Courtois, c. 1820)

Rebecca O'Donovan: L. Greer (after L. Uhlmann, c. 1830) (*The Water Journey*); R. Seraphinoff (after Halari, c. early 1800s) (*Partbias*)

### **Contrabass**

Edward Meares: John Juzek, Prague, c. 1930

Pacific Classical Winds  
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Producers (*Parthias*): Jonathan Stockhammer and Lolly Lewis

Engineer: Phillip G. Richards, The Olive Branch Audio

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### **The Duke C. Willard Fund for Recording**

Duke C. Willard (1926-1993) was an enthusiastic and knowledgeable proponent of the best in classical music, and particularly of the Moravian Music Foundation. In acknowledgement of his love for this music, and in grateful appreciation for his life, his family and friends, along with the staff and Board of Trustees of the Moravian Music Foundation, established in 1993 the Duke C. Willard Fund for Recording. The income from this restricted fund is used to support, in whole or in part, new releases of previously recorded music as well as new recordings of music from the collections of the Moravian Music Foundation.

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### **DAVID MORITZ MICHAEL (1751-1827) 80490-2 *THE WATER JOURNEY (DIE WASSERFAHRT)***

#### *THE WATER JOURNEY (DIE WASSERFAHRT)*

- 1 No. 1 March
- 2 No. 2 Andantino
- 3 No. 3 Menuett
- 4 No. 4 Allegro



- 5 No. 5 Adagio  
6 No. 6 Presto  
7 No. 7 Echo: Allegretto  
8 No. 8 Menuett: Allegretto  
9 Grave (Zusammenruf)  
10 No. 9 Vivace (Retour March)  
11 No. 10 Polonese  
12 No. 11 Rondo: Vivace  
13 No. 12 Adagio  
14 Allegretto  
15 No. 13 Menuett: Allegretto  
16 No. 14 Andante/Allegro/Presto  
17 No. 15 Finale: Choral-mässig  
Rose Corrigan, Michael O'Donovan, bassoons; Charles Zukovsky, Gary Boyver,  
clarinets; Paul Avril, Rebecca O'Donovan, natural horns; Edward Meares, contrabass
- 18 *PARTHA 1*  
19 *PARTHA 2*  
Rose Corrigan, Michael O'Donovan, bassoons; Charles Zukovsky, Gary Boyver,  
clarinets; Paul Avril, Rebecca O'Donovan, natural horns; Edward Meares, contrabass;  
Raymond Burkhart, natural trumpet; Louise Carslake, transverse flute

**Pacific Classical Winds:**

Rose Corrigan, Michael O'Donovan, bassoons  
Charles Zukovsky, Gary Boyver, clarinets  
Paul Avril, Rebecca O'Donovan, natural horns  
Edward Meares, contrabass

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