



THE ARTHROPOLOGIST

Don't leave it to Bieber:

WindSync, the future of music as you don't know it



BY NANCY WOZNY
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Anyone who thinks classical music is in trouble has not spent an hour in a room with WindSync, a group of energetic young musicians trained at Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

This upstart woodwind quintet has big plans, bold ideas and major designs for the future of classical music. The quintet is about to launch its first tour through The Music Bus, an innovative outreach program.

Move over Justin what's-your-name with the hair. Meet the highly accomplished artists of WindSync.

Tracy Jacobson, WindSync and The Music Bus founder, plays the bassoon. She exudes confidence. We should let her take over the banks.

Nick Wolny plays the horn and does yoga. In another life, he would be a motivational speaker.

Freddie Blood plays the oboe and helped develop the troupe's savvy press kit. She looks like Tina Fey. Portuguese native Carlos Cordeiro not only plays the clarinet, he can also dance with it, seamlessly combining movement with music.

Any mom would trust their child to Canadian Garrett Hudson, the flutist. He's calm, positive and quite possibly the glue of the operation.

Together they are about to take the world, or at least New Jersey, by storm. On Saturday at Te House of Tea, they launch The Music Bus tour, consisting of 11 days, four states, seven cities and nine events. "Actually, we are flying," Wolny admits. "The Music Jet tour didn't quite sound right."

It's all about the band, man

Jacobson founded The Music Bus as a way to bring classical music to the people. She partners with local musicians, students with arts management aspirations, and presenters in creating lively events in both conventional and nonconventional settings. "WindSync is a play on 'N Sync. Think boy band with babes." We definitely use the word 'band' to describe what we do," Jacobson says. "We base our marketing in a popular culture model. It just sounds different when you say you are in a band."

But don't think for a second they aren't about serious music. "We aim for consistent high integrity," Wolny says.

It's no wonder the quintet is pumped, they have just wrapped up "Wind in Tights," a world premiere of Garrett Schumann's The Ballad of Robin Hood at Duncan Recital Hall. They are not kidding about the tights.



Photo by Roman Ponomariov

Members of WindSync, from left: Garrett Hudson, flute; Freddie Blood, oboe; Nick Wolny, horn; Tracy Jacobson, bassoon; and Carlos Cordeiro, clarinet

WindSync is all about adding a touch of theater to their shows. Tights, blond wigs, rabbit ears, actual stage blocking, we are talking about a whole new approach.

Once they work out the details of stage movement they bring in a faculty member to help with direction.

"We have some limitations as far as movement due to our instruments," Wolny says. "But it's way better than if we played piano."

They even founded a new genre they call a "Quintopera." "We had to commission a theater piece because they don't exist yet," Hudson says.

Agile movers all, they experiment with each new piece to see just how much movement is possible while still having it be about the music. Cordeiro recently performed Karlheinz Stockhausen's highly physical *The Little Harlequin* during a Musiga concert. This is one fit group.

The response has been big. The interactive element appeals to audiences of all ages. Although Jacobson serves as the group's manager, the entire group takes responsibility for its image. They embrace social media with enthusiasm.

"Ours may be the only concert where you can keep your phone on. We put our program notes online so you can follow during the show," Jacobson says. YouTube has been another way to get the word out. So far, two of their pieces have collected 1,140 views. Take that classical music naysayers.

WindSync is emblematic of a new direction in classical music education, which includes entrepreneurship in the curriculum. "Groups who form before they leave school often have an easier shift into the professional world," says Janet Rarick, Artist Teacher of Woodwinds and Professional Development. "Then they have a musical and social safety net in place to carry them through, along with some real world experience promoting themselves."

Rarick, a mentor to the troupe, has spearheaded an effort at Shepherd to better prepare musicians for the professional transition. The website she developed, Navigating Musical Careers, is a model for looking at all the skills a musician needs to succeed, from injury prevention to business skills.

Rarick organized Shepherd Careers Forum '07, a groundbreaking conference on professional development in classical music. Nearly everyone in the group has taken Rarick's class. They are fully equipped to enter the world where music is not only an art but also a business.

The fact that there's only one full-time woodwind quintet in the United States is not an obstacle. Soon there will be two.

They embark on this adventure knowing full well there will be difficulties to manage. Right now they all live in Houston; that may change as members graduate or move on to other jobs. "I don't see geography as a problem," Jacobson says with her characteristic confidence. The troupe spent time with Dallas Brass and Project Trio to learn more about the process of forming a sustainable operation. They are all about gathering all the information they can from the considerable brain trust surrounding them at Rice.

Clearly, there exists some serious concerns on the age and size of classical music audiences. There is no one solution to issues surrounding diminishing opportunities. But we have to take notice when an institution, a teacher and a newly formed quintet charge full steam ahead. If you miss WindSync's launch, catch them on the other side of the tour on May 4 at 12:15 p.m. at Methodist Hospital.

Right now, the world is saying yes to WindSync — young, talented, determined, sure looks like the future to me.
WindSync's Peter and the Wolf
WindSync's Aires Tropicales

<http://houston.culturemap.com/newsdetail/04-23-10-dont-leave-it-to-justin-bieber-windsync-the-future-of-music/>



Photo by Nathan Simmons

WindSync members perform their "quintopera" arrangement of "Peter and the Wolf" at a Music for Autism Concert



Photo by Nathan Simmons

Garrett Hudson showing the flute to a child at a Music for Autism Concert in Houston



Photo by Nathan Simmons

Tracy Jacobson teaching a child how to play the bassoon at a Music for Autism concert