

# Tonnerre de Brass



Lyrebird Brass

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## Deux essais (Lucie Vellère)

1. Andantino
2. Allegro

## Trio de cuivres; pour un colloque (Georges Barboteu)

3. Lent
4. Allegro vivace

## Sonatine op.26 (Marius Flothuis)

5. Allegro giojoso
6. Moderato
7. Comodo
8. Vivace

## Capriccio op.37 (Frits Celis)

9. Allegro con spirito
10. Grave
11. Allegro giocoso

## Suite (Mathieu Debaar)

12. Prélude
13. Cuivrieres
14. Scherzetto
15. Héroïque
16. Appels
17. Thrène
18. Fugato

## Deuxième trio (Arthur Meulemans)

19. Poco allegro
20. Piu lento
21. Allegro ritmico



Recorded June 18-20, 2019 in Prudence Myer Auditorium at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music Ian Potter Southbank Centre, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Recorded and mastered by Haig Burnell. Edited by Don Immel and Haig Burnell.

Produced by Don Immel, Carla Blackwood, Joel Brennan and Haig Burnell.

Photography by Mark Weimels, except cover image by Marius Badstuber.



# Lyrebird Brass

Lyrebird Brass is a collective of artists dedicated to performing the finest brass chamber music, with a mission to engage audiences through exceptional artistry and accessible programming. The members of Lyrebird Brass have each developed an international reputation performing in many of the world's premier ensembles, bringing a unique musical flavour to the group. They aim to expand the brass repertoire through new commissions with an emphasis on works by composers from underrepresented demographics.

The group's name pays homage to a unique songbird native to the ensemble's hometown of Melbourne, Australia. Known for singing hours each day in a combination of mimicked noises and their own distinctive song, Lyrebirds are even able to vocalise multiple melodies simultaneously. The name is also a reference to Éditions de l'Oiseau-Lyre (Lyrebird Press), a part of Louise Hanson-Dyer's legacy which has long benefited the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music where the ensemble currently teaches.





Carla Blackwood - Horn  
Don Immel - Trombone  
Joel Brennan - Trumpet

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[lyrebirdbrass.com](http://lyrebirdbrass.com)

# About the Project

Musicians around the world are familiar with the impressive canon of literature written to support the Paris Conservatoire concours curriculum. In the mid 19th century, Belgian conservatories developed similar curricula, and engaged regional composers to write new music for their students and staff. Far less is known about this repertoire, and much of it remains unpublished and unrecorded.

In 2018, I visited the conservatory libraries of Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Liège hoping to uncover a few pieces for my instrument. I returned home to Melbourne with over 4000 pictures of manuscripts and out-of-print scores featuring the trombone. I organized the pieces by genre (with piano, in chamber settings, etc.) and began engaging friends and colleagues to read through the repertoire.

This album features six original works for horn, trumpet, and trombone chosen from a sizeable list of rediscovered brass chamber music. To our knowledge, *Tonnerre de Brass* presents the premiere commercial recording of each work. At the time of release, most of these pieces had little or no digital footprint on the internet and some had no record of performances at all.

Although all composed in the 20th century and within a relatively small geographic area, the composers are a remarkably disparate group and thus this collection of music is stylistically diverse. Of particular note is the opening piece *Deux Essais* by Lucie Vellère. This beautifully lyrical brass trio exploits the versatility of the three instruments, moving from warm, velvety textures in the first movement to frenetic, bouncy passages in the second. Lyrebird Brass think it is an absolutely lovely piece and have been eager to share it with the world. But the other works are also uniquely special. The multi-movement pieces by Marius Flothuis and Mathieu Debaar are tuneful, approachable and light, while those by Arthur Meulemans and Georges Barboteu are more complex, with numerous soloistic passages for each performer. Finally, the *Capriccio* by Frits Celis is incredibly difficult; with the extreme tempos and complicated time signatures it is undoubtedly the most virtuosic on the album. Altogether, this is a collection of music that deserves to be heard, shared, and performed. – **Don Immel**

# About the Composers

Brussels composer **Lucie Vellère** (1896-1966) began piano studies with her father at the age of six. She later studied violin with Emile Chaumont, harmony with Paul Miry, and eventually composition with Joseph Jongen, then Director of the Brussels Conservatory. Vellère composed independently of modernist musical styles of the time, and her more traditional approach received several awards including first prize in the 1935 Musique Belge competition, the Brabant prize of 1957, and first prize in the 1956 National Council of Women of the USA competition. Although her musical career was secondary to a profession as a pharmacist, she wrote over one hundred works for solo instruments, chamber music ensembles, orchestra, as well as vocal and choral music. *Deux Essais* may be her final completed composition.

**Georges Barboteu** (1924 - 2006) was born in French-occupied Algiers. Gaining entry to the Paris Conservatory horn studio in 1939, World War II delayed his studies for nearly a decade but he eventually received the premier prize in the 1951 concours. A consummate musician, Barboteu won first prize at the prestigious Geneva International Competition, performed with the top orchestras in Paris, composed many of his own works, and even recorded with Duke

Ellington. He was Professor of Horn at the Paris Conservatory from 1969-1989, composing *Trio pour un colloque* for the 1976 International Brass Colloquium in Montreux. Performers of the premiere were Pierre Thibaud on trumpet, Raymond Katarzynski on trombone, and the composer on horn.

**Marius Flothuis** (1914 - 2001) was born in Amsterdam, learning piano at a young age and taking early interest in French composers such as Debussy and Ravel. His career included stints as music librarian, music critic, artistic director of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and eventually as professor of musicology at the University of Utrecht. Flothuis was deeply affected by, and increasingly rebellious towards, the fascist uprising leading to the Second World War. Resistance activities eventually led to his deportation to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where he is known to have witnessed unimaginable atrocities. This *Sonatina* was written for a Belgian horn player with whom he shared imprisonment. Flothuis wrote: "The first and second movements were written during the last week of our stay in the concentration camp... the two others immediately after the liberation; ... I don't think there is any connection between the character of the music and the circumstances in which it was written. I tried to write something very simple, something that should be a pleasure to play and to hear. I inserted a tune which was sung by a blackbird thus accompanying our happy feelings after the liberation."

**Frits Celis** (b. 1929) was born in Antwerp and remains a celebrated Flemish conductor and composer. He was the first recipient of the Benoit Prize, awarded in recognition for a career of contributions to the performance and creation of Flemish music. Celis studied at the Conservatoires of both Antwerp and Brussels, achieving final diplomas in solfege, harmony, counterpoint, fugue, music history, harp, and orchestral conducting. In 1959 Celis became chief conductor and music director of the Royal Flemish Opera, holding both positions until 1981. His compositional output increased significantly after 1985 as he focused less on his conducting career. As a composer, Celis is known for his songs, choral works, chamber music, and orchestral works, the styles of which have evolved from a clearly tonal harmonic language, to expressionism and serialism, and finally towards free atonality. Throughout his output, there remains a sense of romantic, melodic direction. *The Capriccio* op. 37 was written in 1992 for the Belgian Brass Trio.

Prolific composer, conductor and educator **Arthur Meulemans** (1884 - 1966) was born in the Flemish Brabant province of Belgium. Best known for his orchestral works, he also composed over 40 concerti, as well as songs and chamber music. Meulemans wrote numerous works for brass including two trios, *a Concerto for Grand Organ, Trumpet, Horn and Trombone*, dozens of works for brass band, and numerous pieces for brass soloists with piano or orchestral accompaniment. Although this *Deuxième trio* was written more

than a quarter of a century after the first (1933 and 1960 respectively), the compositional style remains remarkably unchanged. Meulemans was a leading figure in Flemish music, and while his compositions are clearly influenced by French impressionist styles, his output is also inspired by music of his Flemish region.

**Mathieu Debaar** (1896 - 1954) was born in the Wallonia region of Southern Belgium. He first studied music at the Verviers Conservatory and later at the Liège Conservatory where his focuses included violin, oboe, harmony, and chamber music. An ambitious artist and teacher, Debaar was appointed Professor at the Verviers Conservatory in 1923, teaching violin and solfege. An active violin soloist, orchestral performer, and chamber musician, Debaar led his own string quartet from the First World War until after the second. Eventually his chamber music concerts were presented for the purpose of engaging disillusioned, post-war young people towards an appreciation of the musical arts. Although Debaar was not an established composer, he wrote a variety of works for small string and wind chamber ensembles, and numerous pieces intended for Belgian Conservatory concours. The seven short pieces in *Suite for Brass Trio* are characteristically tonal and lighthearted.



