

Philip Sparke
(b.1951)

*Slavonica! Three Slavonic Dances for
Woodwind Ensemble (2017)*

WORLD PREMIERE

1. *Lento assai*
2. *Grazioso*
3. *Moderato*

Philip Sparke is noted for his wind music, a passion that was nurtured and celebrated while he studied at the Royal College of Music composing music for both the college wind orchestra and the brass band he formed as a student. This drive to compose for winds saw him awarded the Iles Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians in 2000; he subsequently won the National Band Association competition for composition in 2005 and again in 2016 for *Music of the Spheres* and *A Colour Symphony*. From his early days in the 1970s to date Philip has created a formidable body of work that has redefined the musical possibilities of the brass and wind ensemble, a contribution celebrated by his award of the BUMA International Brass Award in 2011 for his contributions to Brass music.

Slavonica!, commissioned by the Bloomsbury Music Group, is a further



addition to Philip's impressive catalogue. It also marks an ongoing commitment of the group to original composition and the necessity of supporting contemporary composers. The group has premiered many new works - Christopher Hussey, *Twisted Skyscape* (2008) Alan Bullard, *Journey Through Time* (2010); Jeffrey Wilson, *Postcards (Play, Sing, Dance)* (2012) Christopher Hussey, *Dreamtide* (2012) and the artistic director of the group himself, Shea Lolin, *Lux Aeterna* (2014) - amongst others.

From the opening *lento assai* we are invited to drift into the musical world of Bohemia as the ebb and flow of graceful rhythms shift into a *presto* of increasing gusto. The *grazioso* moves between *accelerando* and *ritardando* passages exploring the light and shade of the dance and onto the concluding *moderato*; the bouncing rhythms and staccato punctuation presage a delightful *cadenza* and as the tempo builds the exuberance of the dance is drawn to a close - we leave the ballroom tired but nonetheless thrilled!

Philip Sparke writes:

I'd like to wish Shea Lolin and the Bloomsbury Wind Ensemble all the best for this concert. It was an immensely enjoyable task writing Slavonica! for the group and I'm sure tonight's intriguing programme will capture the infectiousness that characterises music from this lovely part of the world.