Brass Chamber Music: Victor Ewald’s Brass Quintet No. 2, Op. 6

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Victor Ewald, like his fellow Russian composers of the day, did not make his main living as a composer. Ewald worked as a civil engineer, and by most measures was successful. His current fame, though, is not due to his engineering career, respectable though it might be.

Ewald attended the St. Petersburg Conservatory, and performed as a cellist for many years, working and composing alongside such Russian composers as Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov and Alexander Borodin, absorbing and creating what was later deemed Russian nationalistic music. Ewald’s four brass quintets would turn out to be some of the most influential works for chamber brass. His second, Opus 6 Quintet in E Flat Major, was written in 1890.

This quintet, unlike Ewald’s more famous Opus 5 Quintet in B Flat Minor, is optimistic and cheerful in tone. It shows Ewald’s inspired part writing, as each instrument in the quintet is important both melodically and harmonically. His music generates a full, expressive sound rarely matched by other brass composers.

In this presentation, we will present a short overview of Ewald’s life and compositional legacy and then perform excerpts from Ewald’s Opus 6 Quintet in E Flat Major.