



Colonel Jason K. Fettig, Director

CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
Sunday, May 22, 2022 at 2:00 P.M.
John Philip Sousa Band Hall
Marine Barracks Annex
Washington, DC

Victor Bruns (1904–96)

Trio for Two Bassoons and Contrabassoon, Opus 97 (1992)

Allegro leggiero
Andante tranquillo
Allegro scherzando
Allegro giocoso

MGySgt Christopher McFarlane and SSgt Matthew Gregoire, bassoon
SSgt Stephen Rudman, contrabassoon

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)
arranged by Raaf Hekkema

Le Tombeau de Couperin

Prelude
Menuet
Toccata

GySgt Trevor Mowry, oboe
MSgt Steven Temme, saxophone
SSgt Lewis Gilmore, clarinet
GySgt Shannon Kiewitt, bass clarinet
MGySgt Christopher McFarlane, bassoon

André Previn (1929–2019)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (1994)

Lively
Slow
Jaunty

GySgt Tessa Gross, oboe
SSgt Stephen Rudman, bassoon
MSgt AnnaMaria Mottola, piano

INTERMISSION

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)
arranged for bassoon by Cornelia Sommer

Sonata for Flute and Piano (1957)

Allegro malinconico
Cantilena
Presto giocoso

SSgt Matthew Gregoire, bassoon
SSgt Christopher Schmitt, piano

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

Mládí (Youth)

Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Vivace
Allegro animato

GySgt Kara Santos, flute
GySgt Trevor Mowry, oboe
SSgt Parker Gaims, clarinet
SSgt Zachary Gauvain, bass clarinet
SSgt Matthew Gregoire, bassoon
SSgt Brigitte Knox, horn

PROGRAM NOTES

Trio for Two Bassoons and Contrabassoon, Opus 97 (1992)

Victor Bruns (1904–96)

Victor Bruns was a prominent twentieth-century bassoonist and composer whose musical career flourished, despite his having to overcome the misfortunes of World War II. Bruns began his career playing bassoon with the Leningrad Opera in 1927, but due to his German citizenship, he was expelled from the Soviet Union because of anti-German sentiment in the pre-war era. After being drafted by the German Army and subsequently captured by the Soviet Army at the end of the war, he returned to a performing career with the Staatskapelle Berlin from 1946 to 1967. The Staatskapelle Berlin additionally premièred many of Bruns' compositions, which included several bassoon concertos, cello concertos, and ballets.

As an expert on the bassoon, Bruns utilized the instrument's variety of colors, registers, and articulations in his Trio for Two Bassoons and Contrabassoon, Opus 97. The first movement is a light and bouncy Allegro leggiero, which is contrasted by the dissonance and chromaticism of the lumbering second movement. The third movement begins with a dance-like feel, only to spiral into a rapid frenzy near the end. The final movement returns to the same tempo and liveliness as the first, with a short, waltz-like tangent in the middle.

Le Tombeau de Couperin

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

arranged by Raaf Hekkema

One of the most prominent French composers of his time, Maurice Ravel possessed a mastery of orchestral color and usage of modern harmonic language that led him to be labeled an Impressionist composer, alongside the likes of Claude Debussy. However, Ravel looked to the past just as intently as he did to the present in search of inspiration for his works. The neoclassical synthesis of old and new is brilliantly exhibited in his composition *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. Originally for solo piano, the work and its movements were given titles that paid homage to French Baroque composer François Couperin and the keyboard suites that were prevalent during the era. The tempos, ornamental flourishes, and overarching compositional structures of the work adhere to Baroque norms, but the melodic inventiveness, piquant harmonies, and a certain introspectiveness are Ravel at his most modern.

Le Tombeau de Couperin was composed during World War I, while the composer was serving as a truck driver with the French 13th Artillery Regiment, and each movement was dedicated to a friend of his who perished in the conflict. The piece has been transcribed numerous times for a variety of different instruments, most notably by Ravel himself, who orchestrated four out of the six movements for small orchestra. This performance features three out of the six movements, all of which have been transcribed for reed quintet by Raaf Hekkema, saxophonist of the Calefax Reed Quintet. The Prelude features flowing, legato waves of sound, winding through the ensemble like ripples in water or tendrils of smoke. This effect is punctuated by accented ornaments that abounded in French Baroque music. The Menuet is perhaps nearer to

the Baroque style than any other movement in the work, both in its form and in the elegant simplicity of its melodies. The harmonic underpinnings give a modern freshness to what might otherwise have been an old-fashioned minuet. Finally, the Toccata is a movement of incredibly propulsive energy. Its relentlessly fast tempo and staccato articulations require nimble and efficient technique, for all instruments involved. It serves as a buoyant finale to Ravel's neoclassical masterpiece.

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (1994)

André Previn (1929–2019)

André Previn was born in Berlin to a Jewish family, and from an early age, he showed immense promise as a pianist. He enrolled in the Berlin Conservatory but was expelled in 1938, due to his Judaic faith. His family then moved to Paris, where Previn enrolled in the Paris Conservatory. In October 1938, the family was granted American visas and finally settled in Los Angeles. It was there that Previn developed an interest in jazz music and began a career as an arranger and orchestrator for MGM Studios.

Previn is perhaps best remembered as a conductor—a passion he fostered during his time stationed with the Sixth Army Band at the Presidio of San Francisco. For two years, he studied privately with the conductor of the San Francisco Symphony, Pierre Monteux. In 1967, Previn was appointed to his first position as a music director for the Houston Symphony. He went on to direct the London Symphony Orchestra and the Pittsburgh Symphony and, despite a somewhat rocky tenure with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, later led the Oslo Philharmonic and the NHK Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo.

In addition to his prominent career as a conductor, Previn produced an impressive collection of works, including two operas, more than a dozen concertos, several songs, solo piano works, and many celebrated works for chamber ensembles, including his Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. Written in 1994 and premièred in New York in 1999, the work recalled an earlier French masterwork of the same instrumentation by Francis Poulenc.

To open, the double reeds charge ahead, invoking the first movement's title, *Lively*. The bassoon introduces a touching melodic line answered by the oboe, which is later echoed by the piano while the reeds supply playful interjections. These moods continue to interchange and impose upon one another until the abrupt end.

The piano introduces *Slow*, the second movement, and is answered by the double reeds with a ponderous, descending theme that is repeated throughout the movement. Stormy and haunting fragments are passed among the trio as the reeds slowly gain confidence, building to a satisfying unison and subsequent lyrical passages that subtly recollect Previn's affinity for jazz. This sunny mood doesn't last, as improvisatory solo lines in the reeds return to the questioning beginning theme.

The finale, *Jaunty*, begins with a playful and rhythmic theme that serves as the foundation of this movement. The reeds continue to clarify the theme, while the piano interjects with energetic, jazzy statements. Mood changes are sudden and abundant here; gorgeous melodic solos suddenly break down into a joyful ragtime, the piano takes the lead with a sentimental melody as the winds interject from the sidelines, then it's off to the races once more for the trio's electrifying conclusion.

Sonata for Flute and Piano (1957)

Francis Poulenc (1899–1963)

arranged for bassoon by Cornelia Sommer

Despite a lack of formal musical training, Francis Poulenc enjoyed success as both a pianist and a composer from a young age. In 1916, he began studying with pianist Ricardo Viñes, a tutor who became a father figure to Poulenc after his parents' deaths.

Viñes introduced Poulenc to the young composer Georges Auric, as well as to his eccentric mentor, composer Erik Satie. Along with Auric, Poulenc became part of a neoclassical reactionary movement—alongside composers Darius Milhaud, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, and Germaine Tailleferre—and the collection of talented composers became known colloquially as *Les Six*. Around the same time, Poulenc met both Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel, for whom he had only the utmost respect. (It was Ravel who encouraged Poulenc to take formal composition lessons, a suggestion the younger composer took to heart). These connections allowed Poulenc to achieve widespread acclaim that spanned continental Europe, Britain, and eventually the United States.

Poulenc originally had the idea to write a sonata for flute and piano in the fall of 1952. In a letter to his friend, baritone Pierre Bernac, he described conceiving the idea suddenly, while composing his Sonata for Two Pianos. The Sonata for Flute and Piano was put on hold while other projects took precedence, primarily the opera *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Poulenc continued to refer to the sonata in letters to his editor over the four years after its inception, but it wasn't until late 1956 that he decided to finish it on a commission by the Coolidge Foundation at the Library of Congress. The work was completed in June 1957, and premiered later the same month in Strasbourg, France, by flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal with the composer at the piano.

The standard repertoire for bassoon is often criticized for its shortage of “major” works, especially by composers who wrote for other solo wind instruments during the twentieth century. Poulenc reputedly had planned to write a solo piece for bassoon, but he died suddenly in 1963 never having done so. This arrangement was transcribed by bassoonist Cornelia Sommer to envision what a bassoon sonata by the composer may have sounded like. The arrangement makes excellent use of Poulenc's humorous, lighthearted passages, brooding melodies, and witty articulated remarks.

Mládí (Youth)

Leoš Janáček (1854–1928)

Nearly all of the seventy-four years of Leoš Janáček's life had elapsed before he began to earn a reputation as a serious composer worthy of comparison to fellow Czech nationalists Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana. Although Dvořák enjoyed greater recognition, Janáček did much more to weave the musical traditions of his native country into the styles evolving in the early twentieth century. This credit, however, is owed in part to the fact that he did not develop his mature style until relatively late in life, and nearly all of his major works were completed after 1900. Known mostly for his operatic contributions, Janáček's music was similar to that of Béla Bartók in their almost literal use of native folksong. Yet rather than exploit the “exotic” quality of Czech folk music (as had his predecessors Dvořák and Smetana), Janáček endeavored to employ it as the foundation for unique tonality and rhythmic development. To this end, he formulated the concept of “speech-melody” aimed at creating a more “realistic” vocal

line that was based on the natural rhythms and pitch inflections of spoken language. This concept carried over into all of Janáček's late compositions, including the purely instrumental *Mládí* (*Youth*) of 1924. The work was conceived during a particularly prolific time for the composer, from which sprang the majority of his greatest achievements.

From its opening bars, *Mládí* immediately reveals the youthful spirit in which it was conceived: an opening minor third motive that effectively captured the somewhat jeering “nyah-nyah” sung by young children. This motive permeates the work, evolving and ever developing, as would the playful banter of youths. The second movement interposes episodes of plainchant with sections of lively agitation, harkening back to the composer's own vivid memories as a monastic choirboy in Brno. Recast from an earlier work for piccolo and piano titled March of the Blue Birds, the third movement refers to the blue uniforms worn by the choristers, while vaguely recalling the ominous presence of occupying Prussian soldiers. The ebullient finale bustles with seemingly endless rhythmic energy, bringing *Mládí* to its joyous conclusion.