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Frisson Winds with Marika Bournaki

MARIKA BOURNAKI piano
ANNA URREY, flute
TOM GALLANT, oboe
BIXBY KENNEDY, clarinet
REMY TAGHAVI, bassoon
ERIC HUCKINS, horn

2:30 pm, Sunday, February 27, 2022
Faye Spanos Concert Hall
University of the Pacific

ALBERT ROUSSEL **DIVERTISSEMENT FOR WINDS AND PIANO, OP. 6** (1906)
(1869-1937)

PAUL DE WAILLY **AUBADE FOR FLUTE, OBOE AND B \flat CLARINET** (1901)
(1854-1933)

FRANCIS POULENC **SEXTET FOR PIANO AND WINDS, FP 100** (1931-32/1939)
(1899-1963) Allegro vivace: Très Vite et emporte
Divertissement: Andantino
Finale: Prestissimo

— INTERMISSION —

IGOR STRAVINSKY **THREE PIECES FOR SOLO CLARINET** (1918-19)
(1882-1971) I. Sempre piano e molto tranquillo, MM = 52
II. MM = 168
III. MM = 160

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN **QUINTET FOR PIANO & WINDS IN E \flat , OP. 16** (1796)
(1770-1827) Grave—Allegro, ma non troppo
Andante cantabile
Rondo: Allegro, ma non troppo

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ARTIST PROFILE



Adventure chasers take note.
Frisson defined: "a shiver or thrill";
"a sudden burst of excitement"

The Frisson Ensemble describes itself as "explosive" and implies, by its name, the provision of intense emotion and unexpected delight. Frisson showcases a myriad of rarely-performed masterworks, and the group expands and contracts into a variety of ensembles, including quintets, sextets, nonets, and a small chamber orchestra. The ensemble performs in over 25 cities annually including appearances in such diverse venues as the Morgan Library and Museum in New York City, for the Da Camera Society in Los Angeles and at the Bermuda Festival.

From New York City, Frisson Ensemble features the best and brightest of classical music's rising stars. Frisson is made up of master musicians, young graduates of the top music schools in the United States (Julliard, Curtis, Yale, etc.). Their skills and repertoire knowledge and their underlying bond of friendship are such that they can interact with one another in a variety of combinations. An almost extraordinary ability to anticipate as well as support the other musicians makes for perfect teamwork. As an ensemble, in the true sense of the word, their touch is light, and their musicianship is described as perfect.

The Frisson repertoire is similarly flexible, sometimes broodingly classical (think Beethoven, Brahms, and Barber), at other times broadly popular (from Celtic tunes to film scores). It prides itself on featuring "rarely performed masterworks." The ensemble was formed in 2017 and has been touring widely throughout the United States and Bermuda since then.

The Ensemble operates under the leadership of Thomas Gallant, oboe and Artistic Director and Caeli Smith, viola and Associate Director.

Roussel: *Divertissement*

Albert Roussel was born in the French town of Tourcoing. His earliest interest was not in music but mathematics, which he studied in preparation for entering the Naval Academy. Roussel did not begin to study music seriously until he was an adult after serving in the French navy for several years. These travels affected him artistically, as many of his musical works would reflect his interest in far-off, exotic places. After leaving the navy he studied at the Schola Cantorum in Paris with Vincent d'Indy. While studying, Roussel also taught counterpoint; among his many well-known students were Erik Satie, Edgar Varese and Bohuslav Martinů. Later, Martinů dedicated his *Serenade for Chamber Orchestra* to Roussel. Roussel's early compositions were heavily influenced by the impressionist works of Debussy, Ravel and d'Indy, but later he turned to neoclassicism.

His *Divertissement* dates from 1906. He was at the premiere of a similar work by d'Indy, and this probably influenced him. The *Divertissement* does not show an impressionistic influence like his other early works but is considerably more daring: the introductory measures anticipate Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. The work consists of four sections which flow into each other by means of decelerating and accelerating passages. Every one of the delightfully treated instruments is given significant opportunity to shine.

De Wailly: *Aubade*

An aubade is a morning love song (contrast with a serenade intended for evening) or poem about lovers saying farewell at dawn. In the strictest sense, an aubade was a song sung by a departing lover to a sleeping woman. The custom of aubades goes back at least to the troubadours of the Provençal schools of courtly love in the High Middle Ages. Later, the focus of the aubade altered from the genre's original

specialized courtly-love context into the more generalized theme of a song or instrumental composition regarding, accompanying, or suggesting daybreak. In this reformulated context, various prominent French composers at the turn of the 20th century wrote aubades, including Ravel, Chabrier, Satie, Poulenc, and Paul de Wailly.

Paul de Wailly grew up in Château de Bagatelle in Abbeville, France. He started composing at the age of 17 and became a student of César Franck at the Paris Conservatoire. At the beginning of the 20th century, de Wailly held regular concerts at Château de Bagatelle. In 1921, along with Albert Laurent, he founded the "Society of Friends of Music" in Abbeville to present lectures and organize concerts.

De Wailly wrote orchestral, chamber, vocal and organ works. Most of his compositions display characteristics of the late romantic tradition of César Franck. Firmly devoted to absolute music in the classical style, he opposed contemporary trends at the beginning of the 20th century. However, he still maintained friendships with modern composers, including Erik Satie, whom he supported for a time. Apart from performances at the *Société Nationale de Musique*, his music did not achieve great success beyond his small circle of friends. However, the *Aubade* for flute, oboe, and clarinet was given a positive reception when it was premiered by the *Société moderne d'instruments à vent* in Paris on March 7, 1902.

The *Aubade* is in three sections, with a slow and quasi-romantic middle part between two lively and dramatic sections.

Poulenc: *Sextet*

The first piece to bring Francis Poulenc recognition was *Rapsodie Nègre* (FP 3) in 1917, which was a setting of nonsense gibberish poems for flute, clarinet, string quartet, baritone,

and piano. That same year, Poulenc and five other composers, who later became known as Les Six, rose to the defense of Erik Satie regarding the Paris sensation his score for the ballet *Parade* had caused. By supporting Satie, Poulenc showed his rejection of the Romantic and Impressionist styles and simultaneously his support for music that advanced beyond tradition. He championed a basic approach freely laced with startling, amusing, and stimulating effects.

Many critics failed to take him seriously and considered his music witty and humorous but lacking in substance. Musicologist David Brew, who shared this view, wrote, "When he [Poulenc] has nothing to say, he says it." But music history has vindicated Poulenc; he is considered the most creative figure of Les Six.

The three-part *Sextet* for Piano and Winds is about as resolutely upbeat and satirical as anything he ever wrote. The first movement is filled with a distinguishing contrast of jazziness and songfulness, the latter exemplified midway by a probable reference to "come to me, my melancholy baby," which returns in the last movement. Reversing the first movement's order of moods, the second begins and ends melodiously. There is a hilarious respite midway, and a startlingly pensive conclusion. The finale is part ragtime clowning and part stinging mockery of the neoclassicism of the time.

Poulenc significantly reworked the piece in 1939 because he was disappointed with the initial work. He told composer and conductor Nadia Boulanger, "There were some good ideas in [the original] but the whole thing was badly put together. With the proportions altered, better balanced, it comes over very clearly."

Stravinsky: *Three Pieces*

It was during a trip to Switzerland during World War I that Stravinsky, the leader of the 20th century neo-classical movement, composed these three pieces for solo clarinet. They were written for Swiss amateur clarinetist and philanthropist Werner Rheinart in appreciation for his support of the original production of Stravinsky's important theater/chamber work *L'histoire du soldat* (The Soldier's Tale). It was one of the first works for a solitary wind instrument and served as the example for many successive such works. All three pieces are written in irregular meter notations and are expected to be performed on the A clarinet for movements 1 and 2 and on B-flat clarinet for the final movement.

The first little piece of a meager thirty measures, played always quiet and very much at peace, suggests exactly that mood despite three consecutive measures in the same meter occurring only once. The second movement contrasts perfectly with the first, employing all the practical notes on the instrument, played very quickly and without any apparent regulation. Think of it as a dialogue between the clear and insistent high register and the more persuasive and flexible qualities of the low register. A very busy and regular last movement, all in the same register of the instrument, at the same tempo and the same dynamic marking, is headed "loud from beginning to end." The conclusion of this piece is a combination of a fast dance with always-changing pulse and a ragtime of continual motion.

Beethoven: *Quintet Op. 16*

"To be accurate, there is only a mass of learning here, without good method, obstinacy which fails to interest us, a striving for strange modulations, a heaping up of difficulties on difficulties until one loses all patience or enjoyment."

—*Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, 1798

Beethoven was twenty-six when he wrote the Piano Quintet in E-flat and received this criticism. His salient unorthodoxies were completely mystifying to the narrow-minded professional musicians and critics, who were at a loss to even discuss them, and so complained vaguely about stylistic improprieties. One critic complained of the harshness of his piano modulations, proving that he should continue to play the instrument and not write for it.

Beethoven needed no advice, good or bad, and was not disturbed by these scribblers. What did bother him was to be held up before the world as merely out of step with everybody else. He wrote to Hoffmeister, a German composer and music publisher: "As regards the Leipzig oxen, let them talk; they will certainly never make anybody immortal by their twaddle, nor will they rob of immortality those whom Apollo has favored." He may not have hit it off with the critics, but he was the rage of the Viennese gentry who exhibited him in performance at the soirées in their elegant palaces.

Among the works with which Beethoven sought to establish his reputation as a composer was a series of pieces for wind instruments. Like Mozart's masterpiece (K.452, 1784), the quintet for piano and winds was written in the same key of E-flat major, scored for piano, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon, and given the same three-movement structure. He also arranged it for piano and string trio using the same opus number, tempo markings, and overall timing four years later when he planned for its publication, likely to boost sales in the expanding sheet music market. There were many amateur piano and string groups active in Vienna at that time. It was also arranged for string quartet, but not with the composer's consent. The first performance was given in April of 1797 where Beethoven, of course, took the principal part, probably

as a way for him to demonstrate his improvisational skill.

Before arriving in Vienna, he had written a good deal of wind music in Bonn, mostly as background music for social events. But this style of music was dying out as the Revolution had exhausted many of the noble patrons' finances, and Beethoven had intentions of a career as a pianist and composer.

The first movement opens with a fanfare in unison followed by a pompous dialog between piano and winds then followed by relaxed charm in the development. Listen for a "false" recapitulation followed by the "real" one interrupted by a cadenza.

The melodious Andante theme is introduced by the piano and picked up by the other instruments. After several contrasting episodes, the theme returns with increased ornamentation.

The finale is rollicking good humor. The main theme returns as a refrain followed by development of the main theme. Listen for a short piano cadenza that Beethoven jestingly extended at the premier of the quintet to the delight of the audience and distress of the accompanying wind players.

Within a half dozen years of writing this quintet, his youthful buoyancy would crack under the loss of hearing and the unprecedented deepening of his art.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer



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2:30 PM Sunday, February 27, 2022

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2:30 PM Sunday, April 10, 2022

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- Concert programs are subject to change without notice.
- Seating is unreserved. Please wear a mask and practice social distancing.
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