



Saturday February 24th, 2024, 7.30pm  
Clare Hall Dining Hall

Gabriel Cano, Flute  
Guillaume Moix, piano

- Poulenc: Flute Sonata FP 164
- Martin: Ballade for flute and piano
- Fauré: Fantaisie opus 79
- Sancan: Sonatine
- interval*
- Schumann: three Romances for oboe and piano, opus 94
- Reinecke: Sonate "undine", opus 167

The *Sonate pour flûte et piano* by Francis Poulenc, is a three-movement work for flute and piano, written in 1957.

The sonata was commissioned by the American Library of Congress and is dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, an American patron of chamber music. Poulenc preferred composing for woodwinds above strings. He premiered the piece with the flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal in June 1957 at the Strasbourg Music Festival. The work was an immediate success, and was quickly taken up in the US, Britain and elsewhere and has been recorded many times. Critics have noted Poulenc's characteristic "trademark bittersweet grace, wit, irony and sentiment" in the piece. In 1976, thirteen years after Poulenc's death, the composer Lennox Berkeley made a well-regarded orchestrated version of the work that has also been recorded.

The flute sonata became one of Poulenc's best-known works and is a prominent feature in 20th-century flute repertoire. It has a claim to be the most played of any work for flute and piano.

Poulenc began to think of writing a flute sonata in 1952, but he was occupied with his Sonata for Two Pianos and then his opera, *Dialogues des Carmélites*. In April 1956, when he was still working on the opera, he was approached by Harold Spivacke of the American Library of Congress with a request to write a piece for two pianos or alternatively a chamber piece for up to six instruments. Poulenc was too busy to accept, but Spivacke persisted. Poulenc told him, "Much more at home with wind instruments than strings, I admit I am tempted by this combination", as he had always preferred winds – with their similarities to the human voice – to stringed instruments. In August he agreed to go ahead. The sonata was commissioned in memory of a musical benefactor, Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, to whom Poulenc dedicated the work.

Poulenc spent the winter of 1956–57 in Cannes, where he composed the sonata between December and March. When he had completed the first two of the three movements, he wrote to his friend Pierre Bernac:

In working on this Flute Sonata I have the feeling of going back a long way, but with a more settled technique. It's a sonata of Debussyan dimensions. It's the French sense of balance [la mesure française]. Finding the form for your language is the most difficult thing. It's what Webern has in the highest degree ... and what Boulez has not yet found.

On 18 June 1957, the public premiere was given at the Strasbourg Music Festival by the flautist Jean-Pierre Rampal, for whom it had been written, with the composer at the piano. Le Figaro said of the work, "The music burst forth from the heart, without formality, and 'sang', in every sense". Another critic stated that the sonata was "the best of Poulenc, and even a little better".

This *Ballade* by Swiss composer Frank Martin was written originally for flute and piano at the beginning of 1939 at the request of the Geneva international competition of musical performance, intended as a compulsory piece for the flute. The commission was first and foremost to compose a piece that would show all the qualities of the flute players competing at this event, especially the technical aspects of the flute. Frank Martin did not want to expose only instrumental difficulties but chose to write true music, which would allow the young flautists to prove their qualities of musicianship and artistry. Even the part of the piano accompaniment is interesting and needs a good pianist to realise all the rich musical content. As far as the form is concerned, like the other *Ballades* by Frank Martin, it is quite rhapsodic and epic in character.

The version of the work for flute, string orchestra and piano was arranged by Frank Martin in 1941.

(Maria Martin, 1975 - In: Record booklet Pathé Marconi (EMI) 2 C 069-2688)

The *Fantasia* by Gabriel Fauré was commissioned by and dedicated to Paul Taffanel in 1898 for the "Concours de flute", a flute competition held by the Conservatoire de Paris.

Taffanel, who took over a flute class in 1893, regularly commissioned new compositions for the annual competition, and over time amassed a whole repertoire of technically challenging pieces suitable for the Conservatoire's requirements. Joachim Andersen, who composed the piece in 1895, received the following instructions: "The piece should be short: 5 or 6 minutes at most. I will leave the form of it entirely up to you; whether an Andante followed by an Allegro, or a single movement, but it needs to contain the wherewithal to test the examinees on matters of phrasing, expression, tone control, and virtuosity. The accompaniment should be for piano."

Fauré strictly adhered to the instructions, and received Taffanel's help in creating the flute part, thanking him in a letter dated to June 1898: "Forgive me for not having thanked you immediately: I have been constantly busy here. Your revision is perfect and I beg you to make as many changes you want, and not to worry at all. I will be extremely grateful." As the autograph has been lost, it is unclear how much Taffanel changed.

The *Fantaisie*, together with a smaller sight-reading piece titled *Morceau de lecture*, were given an eightfold premiere at the competition on 28 July 1898, namely by all of Taffanel's students. The first prize was awarded to Gaston Blanquart.

Pierre Sancan (24 October 1916 – 20 October 2008) was a French composer, pianist, teacher and conductor. Along with Olivier Messiaen and Henri Dutilleul, he was a major figure among French musicians in the mid-twentieth-century transition between modern and contemporary eras; but outside France his name is almost unknown. Born in Mazamet in the south of France, Sancan began his musical studies in Morocco and Toulouse before entering the Conservatoire de Paris where he studied with Jean Gallon, and where he took conducting with Charles Munch and Roger Désormière, piano with Yves Nat, and composition with Henri Busser. In 1943, he won the Conservatoire's Prix de Rome for composition, with his cantata *La Légende d'Icare*, but did not assume a regular teaching

post there until 1956 when his former master Yves Nat retired. As a piano teacher, Sancan helped to train such luminaries as Olivier Cazal, Michel Béroff, Selman Ada, Abdel Rahman El Bacha, Emile Naoumoff, Géry Moutier, Jean-Bernard Pommier, Daniel Varsano, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, Jacques Rouvier, Kristin Merscher, Eric Larsen, Jean-Marc Savelli, and Jean-Philippe Collard. Sancan held this job until his own retirement in 1985. He lived another 23 years, to the age of 92, but his later years were compromised by Alzheimer's disease.

In 1946, Sancan wrote his *Sonatine for flute and piano* as a test piece for flute students at the Paris Conservatoire. It was dedicated to his colleague, distinguished flautist Gaston Crunelle, whose distinguished pupils included Jean-Pierre Rampal and James Galway. The form of the work is more or less traditional, consisting of three brief, contrasting sections. The first of these opens in a flowing triplet rhythm with Debussyan harmonies. Dramatic arpeggios and gestures from the pianist introduce the second section, the mood then changing to a gently romantic feeling like that typically depicting woodland imagery. A flute cadenza is then followed by the final triplet rhythm movement, with its reminiscence of the opening of the work, before the flute resumes the rapid figuration of the last movement, bringing the sonatina to a brilliant conclusion.

The *Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, Op. 94* (German: *Drei Romanzen*) is a composition by Robert Schumann, his only composition for oboe. It was composed in December 1849. The work consists of three short pieces in A-B-A form, and it was written during what was speculated to be one of Schumann's manic episodes.

The Romances were written in December 1849, one of the most productive years of Schumann's entire career. Previously that year, Schumann had written two other works for wind instruments and piano: the *Adagio and Allegro*, op. 70, for French Horn and piano, and the *Fantasy Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*, op. 73. According to Schumann himself, the pieces were written on December 7, 11, and 12th in Dresden. Unlike many other oboe works at the time, the pieces were not the result of a commission by a prominent soloist of the day. Schumann gave the pieces to his wife Clara Schumann, whom he once described as his own "right hand," as a Christmas present, calling them his "hundredth opusculum." Schumann's mental health was quickly deteriorating during the time of the pieces' writing; shortly afterward, he moved from Dresden to Düsseldorf, where he was admitted to and eventually died in an asylum.

The three romances are marked in German:

- Nicht schnell (not fast)
- Einfach, innig (simple, heartfelt)
- Nicht schnell

The three romances are simple, relatively easy to play, and not virtuosic. However, they also require a good amount of breath control. All three are in "song form," or A-B-A.

The first romance consists of an introductory piano phrase followed by the central theme played by the oboe. The piano has a layered accompaniment. After a faster-paced main section, the movement ends softly after returning to the central theme. The second romance, which is in A Major, is primarily a traditional duet between the two instruments with a tense B section that changes tempo twice. It begins with a soft, straightforward oboe presence and a matching piano passage. The 1st tempo change introduces a more attacking and rugged theme. The last tempo change reintroduces the central theme until the end of the romance. Described as "the most rugged and colorful-sounding romance" and reminiscent of Brahms, the final fantasy is the liveliest of the set. There are many mood

changes throughout the piece, with the A section being excited and the B section being reserved.

Carl Reinecke's *Sonata in E minor* is based on the German romantic tale by Friedrich de la Motte Fouque. The tale depicts Undine, a water spirit, who longs for an immortal soul which can only be obtained through true love with a mortal man.

The first movement portrays Undine in her underwater world with flute melodies that give off watery sounds. She leaves the water kingdom in search of love with a mortal man and is discovered as a child by a fisherman and his wife who have recently lost their own daughter, who then decide to raise Undine as their own.

The second movement paints a picture of Undine's cheeky nature as she is growing up, which is depicted through the piano and flute melodic lines that chase each other. The piano's proud folk-like solo section represents the knight Huldebrand who seeks shelter at the fisherman's house from a raging storm. He then falls in love with Undine.

The third movement represents the couples' happy marriage. They then both befriend Bertalda, who is revealed to be the true daughter of the fisherman and his wife. The peacefulness is interrupted when a fountain is uncovered and Undine's uncle, a water spirit, rushes out and beckons to Undine not to continue this relationship with a mortal. All is stilled suddenly by the dropping of a boulder over the fountain.

In the fourth movement, all three good friends take a trip on the Danube, which rouses the anger of the water spirits. Huldebrand states he wishes he never married Undine, for his life is constantly in danger from spirits. In shock, Undine falls overboard and sinks to the bottom. Thinking she is dead, Huldebrand makes plans to marry Bertalda. On the night of Huldebrand's wedding Undine returns as a spirit and kills him with a kiss.

### **Artists biographies:**

#### **Gabriel Cano, flute**

Born in Venezuela, Gabriel Cano began his musical education at the age of 6 in the program El Sistema. He then continued his studies at the Conservatoire Supérieur de Paris – CNR - and later at the Berlin University of the Arts. As a chamber musician and as principal flautist of the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela with conductor Gustavo Dudamel, Gabriel Cano has performed at numerous festivals and concert halls such as Teresa Carreno Theater (Caracas), Lucerne Festival KKL, Zurich Opera House, Teatro alla Scala (Milan), Salle Pleyel (Paris), Wiener Konzerthaus, Grosses Festspielhaus (Salzburg), Musikverein (Vienna), Berlin Philharmonie, Marinsky Theatre (Saint Petersburg), Tchaikovsky Concert Hall (Moscow), Concertgebouw (Amsterdam), Royal Festival Hall (London), Walt Disney Concert Hall (Los Angeles), Chicago Symphony Center, Kennedy Center (Washington), Carnegie Hall (New York), among others. He has performed under the baton of many world-famous conductors, such as Claudio Abbado, Sir Simon Rattle, Giuseppe Sinopoli, Daniel Barenboim, Frühbeck de Burgos, among others. As principal flautist in the Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra, he has recorded 4 CDs for Deutsche Grammophon. Gabriel Cano, winner of the Vienna Music Competition 2019, currently lives in Berlin.

#### **Guillaume Moix, piano**

Born in 1986, the Swiss pianist Guillaume Moix develops a passion for music from a very young age. After having received a teaching diploma from the Conservatoire Supérieur et Académie Tibor Varga in Sion, he then continues his studies in the Hochschule der Kunste

in Zürich, where he obtains, with distinction, the Master de Concert and the Master de Soliste, under the tuition of Homero Francesch. He also studies Lied accompaniment with Hartmut Höll, himself pianist for Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau. During that time he attends numerous masterclasses in Switzerland and abroad. Guillaume Moix plays solo recitals and concertos in Europe and South America. Sought after for his skills as an accompanist, he recently performed in such venues as the Carnegie Hall in New York, the Musikverein and Konzerthaus in Vienna or the Berlin Philharmonie, together with prestigious soloists. With a strong interest in chamber music, he forms a duo with flautist Gabriel Cano as well as cellist Romana Kaiser, with whom he issued a CD of works by Granados, Barber, Pärt and Schumann. He is artistic director in the festival Schubertiade de Sion since 2018 and resides in Lausanne.

### **Forthcoming concerts:**

March 2nd, 7.30pm, Clare Hall Dining Hall, Fitzwilliam String Quartet, with Geoffrey Howard, speaker

-Beethoven: String Quartet in F major, opus 135

-Haydn: 7 Last words of Christ

March 16th, 7.30pm, Clare Chapel, Continuum Choir, Harry Guthrie, direction

-“Lent on the Iberian Peninsula”, music by Morales, Victoria, Guerrero, Vivanco and more.