



P R E S E N T S

McGill/McHale Trio



Demarre McGill,
flute

Anthony McGill,
clarinet

Michael McHale,
piano

Saturday, March 7, 2020
7:30 p.m.

Kathleen P. Westby Pavilion
Tulsa Performing Arts Center

Salon Concert

Tarantelle in A Minor for Flute, Clarinet, and Piano, Op. 6

Camille Saint-Saëns
(French, 1835–1921)

Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14

Sergei Rachmaninoff
(Russian, 1873–1943; arr. McHale)

Four Waltzes for Flute, Clarinet, and Piano, Op. 97c
Spring Waltz – Waltz-Joke – Waltz – Barrel-Organ Waltz

Dmitri Shostakovich
(Russian, 1906–1975; arr. Atovmian)

The Beardless Boy, for Solo Piano

Philip Hammond
(Irish, b. 1951)

The Lamentation of Owen O’Neil

Hammond (arr. McHale)

The Lark in the Clear Air

Irish Traditional (arr. McHale)

Portraits of Langston
In six movements

Valerie Coleman
(American, b. 1970)

The McGill/McHale Trio’s concert weekend is underwritten by Pam and Terry Carter

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the Oklahoma Arts Council and Arts Alliance Tulsa.



About the Program

by Jason S. Heilman, Ph.D., © 2020

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born October 9, 1835, in Paris, France

Died December 16, 1921, in Algiers, Algeria

Tarantelle in A Minor, Op. 6

Composed in 1857; 7 minutes

Though he went on to enjoy a distinguished eight-decade musical career, Camille Saint-Saëns initially rose to prominence in his native Paris as a child prodigy. He composed his first piece at age three, and by the time he was 10, he could reportedly perform any of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas from memory. He was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire at 13 to study organ and composition, and by the time he left, in 1853, Saint-Saëns could count such luminaries as Gioachino Rossini and Franz Liszt among his many admirers. His precocious talent even inspired the acerbic Hector Berlioz to quip: "He knows everything, but lacks inexperience."

It was Rossini who ultimately gave the greatest boost to Saint-Saëns's budding compositional career. By this time, Rossini was enjoying his early retirement in Paris – a decision that had stunned his legion of fans more than 20 years earlier. When, in 1857, Rossini announced he had written a new work for flute, clarinet, and piano, he had no trouble recruiting the best musicians in Paris to premiere it at his lavish home. The piece was inspired by the *tarantella*, a frenetic Southern Italian folk dance that, according to legend, could save the dancer's life from the bite of a poisonous spider. This brief *Tarantelle*, which unfolds as a lively dance interrupted by a flowing central episode, was enthusiastically received at its premiere, whereupon the mischievous Rossini announced that it had actually been composed by a 21-year-old Camille Saint-Saëns! The young man was suddenly marked as a composer to watch; he would go on to create an orchestral version of the *Tarantelle* in 1879.

Sergei Rachmaninoff

Born April 1, 1873, in Oleg, Novgorod, Russia

Died March 28, 1943, in Beverly Hills, California, U.S.A.

Vocalise, Op. 34, No. 14

Composed in 1912; arr. Michael McHale; 6 minutes

Although Sergei Rachmaninoff was only nine years older than Igor Stravinsky, he seemed to occupy a completely different musical world. While Stravinsky embraced and even defined many of the leading trends of the new century – from primitivism to neoclassicism and beyond – Rachmaninoff remained steadfast in his dedication to the Russian romanticism he had learned from Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and particularly Pyotr Tchaikovsky. This was largely due to Rachmaninoff's principal vocation as a concert pianist who composed mainly to highlight his own lyrical gifts at the keyboard. He nearly gave up composing altogether after the disastrous premiere of his First Symphony in 1897, but Rachmaninoff finally established himself with the triumphs of his Second Piano

Concerto in 1901 and his Second Symphony in 1908 – two pieces characterized by their unmistakable lyricism. Buoyed by this success, in 1912, he composed a set of 14 songs for the Russian soprano Antonina Nezhdanova, the last of which was a wordless vocalise that soon became one of his most enduring melodies. Rachmaninoff's *Vocalise* has since been adapted countless times for solo instruments and ensembles by everyone from Jascha Heifetz to Bobby McFerrin to Guns N' Roses guitarist Slash. Michael McHale's arrangement has the flute and the clarinet sharing the poignant melody in turns.

Dmitri Shostakovich

Born September 25, 1906, in Saint Petersburg, Russia

Died August 9, 1975, in Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Four Waltzes for Flute, Clarinet, and Piano, Op. 97c

Arranged in 1955 by Lev Atovmian; 10 minutes

The artists who endured Joseph Stalin's brutal regime were totally exposed to the whims of the capricious dictator – and Dmitri Shostakovich was no exception. After enduring a public censure for his "muddled" 1934 opera, *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*, Shostakovich attempted to make amends with his epic Fifth Symphony in 1937. That helped him return to Stalin's good graces, but he suddenly found himself saddled with a new job: composing music for the Soviet film industry. In total, Shostakovich scored some 34 films, the majority of which were produced between his 1936 denunciation and Stalin's death in 1953. While much of this music was merely formulaic, veering between sanctimonious bombast and cloying schmaltz, the composer often found novel ways to re-use his favorite excerpts in the concert hall.

In 1955, with the help of his friend and arranger Lev Atovmian (1901–1973), Shostakovich recast three waltzes from his film scores, plus one from an earlier ballet, for various combinations of flute, clarinet, and piano. The first of these, the *Spring Waltz (allegretto)* for clarinet and piano, came from the 1948 biographical film *Michurin*. This is followed by the *Waltz-Joke (allegretto scherzando)* for flute and piano from Shostakovich's satirical ballet *The Bolt*, which had been banned after its 1931 premiere. The three instruments come together for the third *Waltz (tempo di valse)*, which was originally featured in the 1937 film *The Return of Maxim*. The suite concludes with the *Barrel-Organ Waltz (allegretto)* for piccolo, clarinet, and piano, from Shostakovich's score to the 1955 historical drama *The Gadfly*.

Philip Hammond

Born in 1951 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, U.K.

The Beardless Boy

Composed in 2011; 3 minutes

The Lamentation of Owen O'Neil

Composed in 2011; arr. Michael McHale; 3 minutes

As a composer, pianist, media presenter, and arts

advocate, Philip Hammond has contributed immensely to the culture of his native Northern Ireland. Born in Belfast, he studied music at Queen's University Belfast, where he earned his bachelor's, master's, and eventually a doctorate. In 1974, Hammond started teaching at the preparatory school where he had once been a student, while at the same time launching his career as a composer. In 1988, he became a director of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and spent the next 20 years nurturing and promoting music and art there in the wake of the Troubles. Since his retirement in 2009, Hammond has been featured regularly by the BBC and the Irish RTÉ broadcasters, and he has continued to compose. Some of his more recent works include his *Requiem for the Lost Souls of the Titanic*, commemorating the centennial of the ship's sinking in 2012, and his 2014 Piano Concerto for pianist Michael McHale.

In 2011, Hammond released a set of 21 Irish folksong arrangements for solo piano that he called *Miniatures & Modulations*. He was inspired by an extensive collection of bardic songs titled *The Ancient Music of Ireland*, which had been painstakingly transcribed during the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival by a 19-year-old musician named Edward Bunting. Hammond's arrangements retained the traditional melodies but recast them pianistically in his own style – or as the composer put it, “Bunting wrote the ‘Miniatures’ and then I wrote the ‘Modulations.’” The last of the 21 *Miniatures & Modulations*, “The Beardless Boy,” is an up-tempo jig given a virtuosic new setting by Hammond. Inspired by the tragic 17th-century Irish rebel, “The Lamentation of Owen O’Neil” strikes a more elegiac tone. Parallel to its appearance in his piano suite, Hammond created a version for two flutes and piano for Sir James Galway, Lady Jeanne Galway, and Michael McHale, who went on to adapt the piece for flute, clarinet, and piano in 2016.

The Lark in the Clear Air

Irish traditional; arr. Michael McHale; 4 minutes

It was sometime in the mid-19th century that the Belfast-born lawyer and poet Sir Samuel Ferguson (1810–1886) was inspired to write a new set of English lyrics for an ancient Irish folk melody. The wistful tune has since been identified variously as *An tailiur* (“The Tailor”), *Caisleán Uí Néill* (“Castle O’Niell”), or *Caitlin Ní Uallacháin* (“Kathleen Ni Houlihan”), but it is now much better known by Ferguson’s title, “The Lark in the Clear Air.” His lyrics, which celebrate the joy of love in bloom, begin:

*Dear thoughts are in my mind
And my soul soars enchanted,
As I hear the sweet lark sing
In the clear air of the day.*

Valerie Coleman

Born in 1970 in Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A.

Portrait of Langston

Composed in 2007; 21 minutes

Flutist and composer Valerie Coleman has emerged in recent years as a unique and compelling voice in

contemporary chamber music. Born and raised in the West End of Louisville, Kentucky – the same neighborhood that had been home to boxer Mohammed Ali – Coleman began her musical studies at age 11. By 14, she had written three symphonies and was performing as a flutist in her local youth orchestra. Coleman went on to study music at Boston University and at Mannes College in New York before co-founding the Grammy-nominated wind quintet Imani Winds in 1997.

It was soon after forming Imani Winds that Coleman began composing professionally. One of her initial works, her 2001 wind quintet *Umoja*, was hailed as one of the “101 Great American Ensemble Works” by *Chamber Music America* in 2005. Since then, Coleman’s musical catalog has continued to grow, encompassing her *Afro-Cuban Concerto* (2001) and *Red Clay and Mississippi Delta* (2009) for wind quintet, her Nonet for winds and strings (2004), her chamber ballet *Portraits of Josephine* (2006), and, more recently, *Phenomenal Women* (2018), a concerto for wind quintet and orchestra. In 2017, Coleman was named one of the “Top 35 Female Composers in Classical Music” by *Washington Post* music critic Anne Midgette. After stepping down from Imani Winds, she joined the faculty of the University of Miami’s Frost School of Music in 2018 as Assistant Professor of Performance, Chamber Music, and Entrepreneurship.

Composed in 2007 on a commission from the Flute/Clarinet Duos Consortium, Coleman’s *Portraits of Langston* for flute, clarinet, and piano (with an optional narrator) presents a series of musical sketches inspired by the vivid imagery and rhythmic language of the great American poet and social activist, Langston Hughes (1902–1967). Drawing on a wide variety of musical styles, Coleman gives each movement a unique sound appropriate to the source material, as she describes:

“Portraits of Langston is a suite in six short movements and is my take on Hughes’s poetic memories of Harlem and Europe (mainly Paris). These movements can be performed separately or in its entirety. I chose Langston not because of who he is in literature, but because he was, in fact, an ‘eye-witness’ to legends born. His poems are so descriptive of the era, with references to particular settings and individuals that influenced him: Josephine Baker, Helen Keller, the nightlife/music of Harlem jazz clubs and Parisian cabarets. The imagery that Hughes provides gives me quite a historical palette that inspires me to illustrate a work truly unique to duo repertoire. Stylistically, this work incorporates many different elements that are translated into woodwind technique: the stride piano technique, big band swing, cabaret music, mambo, African drumming, and even traditional spirituals.”

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