



P R E S E N T S

Poulenc Trio



Photo: Christina Bianco (Unison Media)

Alexander Vvedenskiy, *oboe*

Bryan Young, *bassoon*

Irina Kaplan Lande, *piano*

Sunday, September 26, 2021
3:00 p.m.

John H. Williams Theatre
Tulsa Performing Arts Center

The Poulenc Trio's concert weekend is generously underwritten by Amanda and Kenneth Lawrence.

Poulenc Trio

The Poulenc Trio is the most active touring piano-wind chamber music ensemble in the world. Since its founding in 2003, the Poulenc Trio has performed in 45 U.S. states and at music festivals around the world, including the Ravello Festival in Italy, the San Miguel de Allende Festival in Mexico, and the White Nights Festival in Russia, where the group toured with and premiered two new works with violinist Hilary Hahn.

The Poulenc Trio's latest collaboration is *Trains of Thought: Animated*, a mixed-media project featuring a beautifully hand-animated film by artists Elizabeth and Alden Phelps, paired with a commissioned work by Viet Cuong, which premiered at the National Gallery.

The Trio's latest CD, *Creation*, reached No. 4 on Apple Music's iTunes Classical Music playlist and garnered high praise from the American Record Guide for the group's technique and expressive range. The CD also features poet and Guggenheim Fellow Lia Purpura reading her poems juxtaposed with the movements of Schnittke's *Suite in the Old Style*.

Coming collaborations include a new Music at the Museum residency with Chamber Music Raleigh and the North Carolina Museum of Art, featuring a new commissioned work by composer William Henry Curry, and a commission for Trio and Clarinet by GRAMMY-award winning composer and clarinetist Derek Bermel.

The Trio has a strong commitment to commissioning, performing, and recording new works from living composers. Since its founding, the Trio has greatly expanded the repertoire available for the oboe, bassoon, and piano,

with 22 new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for the trio and full orchestra.

The Trio is committed to exploring and promoting musics that reflect its members' African, Asian, Eastern European, and Jewish roots. Recent concerts have featured works by Afro-Cuban jazz great Paquito D'Rivera, Mexican-American composer Carlos Medina, Russian-American composer Nataliya Medvedovskaya, and *Yiddish Lexicon*, an exploration of Jewish culture by composer Jakov Jakoulov.

The Trio launched a pioneering concert series called Music at the Museum, in which musical performances are paired with museum exhibitions, with special appearances from guest artists and curators. As part of the series, the Trio has collaborated with the National Gallery, the Walters Art Museum and Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia. Guest artist collaborators have included the Thibaud Trio of Berlin, soprano Hyunah Yu, and clarinetists David Schiff, Alexander Fiterstein, and Anthony McGill.

The Trio is deeply engaged in musical and educational outreach programs, including Pizza and Poulenc, an informal performance and residency series for younger audiences around the United States. The Trio regularly conducts masterclasses, with recent engagements at the University of Ohio, San Francisco State University, Florida State University, and the University of Colima in Mexico.

For more information on the Trio and its activities, visit poulenc trio.org.

Program

Trio for Piano, Oboe, and Bassoon

Francis Poulenc
(French, 1899–1963)

Lent – Presto ("Slowly – Very quickly")
Andante con moto ("Moderately slowly, with motion")
Rondo: Très vif ("Rondo: Very lively")

Sonata for Oboe and Piano

Poulenc

Élégie: Paisiblement ("Elegy: Peacefully")
Scherzo: Très animé ("Scherzo: Very animated")
Déploration: Très calme ("Lamentation: Very calm")

Trains of Thought

Viet Cuong
(American, b. 1990)

INTERMISSION

Trio pathétique in D minor

Allegro moderato (“Moderately quickly”) –
Scherzo: Vivacissimo (“Scherzo: As quickly as possible”) –
Largo (“Slowly”) –
Allegro con spirito (“Quickly, with spirit”)

Mikhail Glinka
(Russian, 1804–1857)

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano in G Major, Op. 168

Allegretto moderato (“Somewhat quickly”)
Allegro scherzando (“Quickly, like a scherzo”)
Molto adagio – *Allegro moderato* (“Very slowly – Moderately quickly”)

Camille Saint-Saëns
(French, 1835–1921)

Fantaisie concertante on themes from Rossini’s *L’Italiana in Algeri*

Charles Triébert
(French, 1810–1867)
Eugène Jancourt
(French, 1815–1901)

About the Program

by Jason S. Heilman, Ph.D., © 2021

Francis Poulenc

Born January 7, 1899, in Paris, France
Died January 30, 1963, in Paris

One of the most prominent French composers during the tempestuous years between the World Wars, Francis Poulenc was a study in contradictions. Born into a bourgeois family, his parents encouraged his musical pursuits, but forbade him from pursuing a career in it. For this reason, Poulenc never studied at the Paris Conservatoire; instead, he was largely self-taught, with only occasional lessons from “outsider” composers like Charles Koechlin. He carefully analyzed the works of the classical masters, particularly Bach, Mozart, and Schubert, but his own music often seemed to satirize the neoclassical style that was in vogue during his early career. He was openly gay as early as the 1930s but remained a devout Catholic, and even wrote several liturgical pieces. He composed fluently, but was often plagued by bouts of depression that left him creatively fallow for months. One contemporaneous critic summed him up by noting: “In Poulenc there is something of the monk and something of the rascal.”

Trio for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon 1926; 13 minutes

In 1920, when he was only 21 years old, a Parisian newspaper named Poulenc as part of a group, alongside Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, and Germaine Tailleferre, of up-and-coming composers to watch. Although *Les Six*, as they were soon known, only collaborated on one project, the exposure raised Poulenc’s profile considerably. He soon earned

fame in his own right for his one-act ballet *Les biches* (“The Does”), which was staged at the Ballets Russes in 1924, and for his early chamber works for wind instruments, including his 1922 Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, and his 1926 Trio for what was then the novel combination of oboe, bassoon, and piano. Dedicated to Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, Poulenc’s colorful Trio opens with a slow introduction that seems to recall a stately French baroque overture. This soon segues into a sprightly *presto* main section, which alternates between leaping rhythms and flowing, sometimes languid melodies. Many commentators have heard a rustic quality in the *andante con moto* second movement, but its graceful lines in the oboe and bassoon soaring over a piano accompaniment have an almost operatic quality. The three instruments reach an equal footing in the *très vif* finale, which unfolds like a classical rondo, with its recurring theme of bouncing rhythms and fanfares interrupted by contrasting episodes as the movement races to its conclusion.

Sonata for Oboe and Piano 1962; 14 minutes

Three decades later, after completing his spiritually personal 1956 opera *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Poulenc refocused his attentions on more intimate music, all written in a neoclassical style that stood in stark contrast to the reigning atonal aesthetic of the time. Most notable among these late works was a series of sonatas for flute (1957), bassoon (1957, now lost), clarinet (1962), and his final completed composition, his Sonata for Oboe and Piano. Dedicated to the memory of Sergei Prokofiev (1891–

1953), the Oboe Sonata reverses the expected order of movements, opening with a piercing cry in the oboe that soon settles into a gentle, almost wistful elegy, which occasionally veers into brooding anguish but always comes back. This is followed by an animated scherzo movement, whose rollicking rhythms are briefly interrupted by an expressive central episode. Poulenc likened the finale to the act of lamenting a departed friend, giving it an almost liturgical character that imparts a sense of calm. It would ultimately be Poulenc's own epitaph; he suffered a sudden and fatal heart attack just a few weeks after completing the score.

Viet Cuong

Born in 1990 in California, U.S.A.

Trains of Thought

2017; 12 minutes

Writing music that's been described as "alluring," "wildly inventive," and "unexpected and whimsical," award-winning American composer Viet Cuong has had works performed by such groups as the New York Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Atlanta Symphony, as well as Eighth Blackbird, Alarm Will Sound, and the PRISM Quartet. The son of Vietnamese immigrants, Cuong was born in California but grew up in Marietta, Georgia. He holds degrees from the Peabody Conservatory, Princeton University, and the Curtis Institute of Music, and counts composers Jennifer Higdon, Steve Mackey, and Kevin Puts among his mentors. Currently, Cuong is a visiting assistant professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the Young American Composer-in-Residence with the California Symphony.

The Poulenc Trio invited Cuong to compose what became *Trains of Thought* in 2012, while he was still a student at the Peabody Conservatory, and they premiered the piece five years later at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with an animated film by multimedia artists Elizabeth and Alden Phelps. The piece uses barely perceptible shifts in certain pitches to create a kind of reality-distorting effect; this is very much in keeping with the dual meaning of the title, as Cuong observes:

"My goal in writing *Trains of Thought* was to aurally bring life to the mind's stream of consciousness. Ideas are usually interconnected in the mind through a cohesive sequence of events, but their journeys and destinations can be unpredictable. In this way, the piece deals with the listener's expectations and attempts to convincingly manipulate them. As the mind deviates from and returns to an original idea, the idea's return is often informed by its travels. References to the exciting kinetic energy of an actual locomotive can be heard."

Mikhail Glinka

Born June 1, 1804, in Novospasskoye, Russia

Died February 13, 1857, in Berlin, Germany

Trio pathétique in D minor

1832; 16 minutes

As the first Russian composer to earn acclaim beyond his native homeland, Mikhail Glinka helped to define that country's distinctive musical style, serving as an inspiration for composers from Tchaikovsky to Stravinsky and beyond. Yet his own influences were a bit farther from home. Born near Russia's western border into an affluent family of Polish-Lithuanian descent, Glinka studied music as a child, learning the classic works of Haydn and Beethoven alongside the local folk music. At the time, however, opportunities for formal musical training in Russia were rare, so Glinka received a general education in Saint Petersburg and took a job as a low-level civil servant. But music remained an important part of his life, and like his contemporary Franz Schubert, he continued to write songs for salon concerts in his spare time.

Things changed in 1830, when Glinka was invited to tour Europe as the piano accompanist for a Russian tenor. The tour ended in Milan, where Glinka, now fully enamored of the musical life, would stay for three years, taking lessons at the conservatory and becoming acquainted with many of the leading *bel canto* opera composers of the day. Yet rather than writing operas of his own during this time, Glinka focused on chamber music, which was still largely unknown in his home country. He wrote his only piano trio, the *Trio Pathétique* in D minor, in Milan for a distinctive ensemble of clarinet, bassoon, and piano, but it was later published for a more standard trio of violin, cello, and piano (the oboe substitution is a more recent alternative). Like many of the compositions from his Italian sojourn, the Trio is not outwardly Russian; rather, it takes its stylistic cues from *bel canto* opera, and indeed could even be heard as a wordless opera playing out in miniature. The romantic aspirations and melodramatic title of the piece are exemplified by the motto that the 28-year-old composer inscribed into the score: "I have known love only through the sorrow it causes."

Despite that bit of gloom, the *Trio Pathétique* opens amiably, with a bold declamation that settles into a sprightly *allegro moderato* first movement that has the woodwind instruments trading lyrical solos over a bouncing piano accompaniment. This mood continues into the scherzo second movement, with a *vivacissimo* main theme that is briefly interrupted by a lilting contrasting episode. A plaintive transition leads directly into the *largo* third movement, where the woodwinds each get to "sing" impassioned operatic melodies over the piano's gentle arpeggios. After a brief pause, the *allegro con spirito* finale blends the boisterousness and the pathos of the previous movements into a swift coda to bring down the curtain on this chamber opera.

Camille Saint-Saëns

Born October 9, 1835, in Paris, France

Died December 16, 1921, in Algiers, Algeria

Sonata for Bassoon and Piano in G major, Op. 168
1921; 12 minutes

By the early 1920s, the one-time child prodigy Camille Saint-Saëns had become France's most celebrated composer. His musical *oeuvre* encompassed virtually every genre, including five symphonies and twelve operas, plus nearly forty chamber pieces and dozens of vocal and keyboard works. He had even written what is considered the very first original film scores for the 1908 silent movie *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*. For most people, such success would have been enough, but the renaissance man Saint-Saëns had also engaged in an impressive variety of side pursuits, from amateur astronomy to acoustics and even a foray into the occult. He wrote several books, including a volume of poetry, a play, and a series of travelogues chronicling his visits to more than twenty countries under the pen name "Sannois."

But he always returned to composition, and in a 1921 letter to a friend, the 84-year-old Saint-Saëns wrote: "At the moment I am concentrating my last reserves on giving rarely considered instruments the chance to be heard." The instruments he meant were the woodwinds, and Saint-Saëns had decided to leave them an entire set of sonatas as a kind of parting gift. He had just finished sonatas for the oboe and the clarinet before turning to the bassoon for what would be his last completed work. Written in what was by 1921 a decidedly old-fashioned style, the G-major Sonata for Bassoon and Piano opens with an *allegretto moderato* movement that has the bassoon intoning a lyrical, almost nostalgic melody over an undulating piano accompaniment. The livelier *allegro scherzando* second movement has both instruments alternating between brilliantly leaping and smoothly legato music. The finale begins pensively, with the bassoon playing a lilting *molto adagio* tune over march-like piano chords. This mood persists right up to the sudden *allegro moderato* coda, which ends the sonata in a jocular vein.

Charles Triébert

Born October 31, 1810, in Paris, France

Died July 18, 1867, in Paris

Eugène Jancourt

Born December 15, 1815, in Château-Thierry, France

Died January 29, 1901, in Boulogne-ser-Seine

Fantaisie concertante on themes from Rossini's
L'Italiana in Algeri

ca. 1850; 10 minutes

In a career spanning a mere two decades, Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) breathed new life into Italian opera. The astounding 39 operas he composed before his sudden retirement at age 37 helped reestablish Italy as the center of the operatic world while setting the stage for the wildly popular *bel canto* style that followed. One of Rossini's greatest successes, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, or "The Italian Girl in Algiers," was a *dramma giocoso* (we might call it a "dramedy") that took Europe by storm after its premiere in Venice in 1813. Drawing heavily on the same stereotypes that were popular in Mozart's day, *L'Italiana in Algeri* tells the story of an Italian woman named Isabella, who is forced into the harem of the Ottoman Bey in Algeria. After learning that her beloved Lindoro is being held in the same palace, Isabella uses her wits — and the Bey's unhealthy obsession with Italian girls — to obtain their release through a series of palace intrigues. Rossini portrays the seriousness and the comedy of this story through some of the most colorful and tuneful music in all of opera.

To be a leading woodwind player in mid-19th century Paris meant being not only a virtuoso performer, but also a composer and even an instrument maker. Oboist Charles Triébert and bassoonist Eugène Jancourt excelled in all of these categories, performing with the orchestras of the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire and the Théâtre des Italiens, making groundbreaking mechanical improvements to the key systems of their respective instruments, composing technical exercises and solo works that remain foundational to this day, and eventually teaching at the Paris Conservatoire. As frequent recital partners, Triébert and Jancourt even collaborated to compose a series of duo fantasias based on potpourris of melodies from popular Italian operas, including Rossini's *Semiramide* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*.

Chamber Music Tulsa

Chamber Music Tulsa's mission is to present world-class chamber music through concert and educational experiences to inform, inspire, and enrich the community. Our vision is to distinguish Tulsa as a preeminent chamber music center through programming that encourages community interaction, attracts diverse audiences, and transforms lives. For more information on our upcoming concerts and outreach activities, please visit www.chambermusictulsa.org.