

77TH SEASON OF

CONCERTS

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART | MAY 5, 2019





Photo by Matt Dine

PROGRAM

Poulenc Trio

James Austin Smith, oboe

Bryan Young, bassoon

Irina Kaplan Lande, piano

with guest artists Anton Lande, violin, and Kati Harrison, narrator

Celebrating The American Pre-Raphaelites: Radical Realists

An American View: Whitman and the American Pre-Raphaelites

May 5, 2019 | 3:30

West Building, West Garden Court

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)

Trio in E-flat Major, op. 38 (1803)

Adagio; Allegro con brio

Adagio cantabile

Tempo di menuetto

Andante con moto; Alla marcia; Presto

Tom Benjamin (b. 1940)

Three Pieces with Whitman (2003)

Valse triste / Valse oubliée

Lament

Perpetuum mobile

Intermission

Amy Beach (1867–1944)

Romance for Violin and Piano, op. 23 (1893)

Mazurka for Violin and Piano, op. 40, no. 3 (1898)

William Grant Still (1895–1978)

Vignettes (1962)

Winnebago Moccasin Game

Carmela

Inca Melody

Clinch Mountain

Héla Grandpere

Garde Piti Mulet Lá

André Previn (1929–2019)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano (1994)

Lively

Slow

Jaunty

THE MUSICIANS

Poulenc Trio

The Poulenc Trio is engaged in several exciting collaborations, including a new commission from the Barlow Endowment for composer Viet Cuong, scheduled to premiere in 2020. Other recent collaborations include *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. *Trains* is also included on the trio's latest album from Delos. The group's prior album, *Creation*, debuted in the fourth place of Apple Music's Classical A-List and garnered high praise from the *American Record Guide* for technique and expressive range. The recording also features a pairing with poet and Guggenheim Fellow Lia Purpura, with a reading of her poems set against Alfred Schnittke's *Suite in the Old Style*.

Since its founding in 2003, the Poulenc Trio has performed in forty-six states in the United States and at music festivals throughout 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 and premiered two new works with violinist Hilary Hahn.

The *New York Times* has praised the trio for its “elegant rendition” of Piazzolla's tangos. The *Washington Post* said the trio “does its namesake proud” in “an intriguing and beautifully played program” with “convincing elegance, near effortless lightness and grace.” A recent performance in Florida—for which the *Palm Beach Post* praised the group's “polished loveliness,” and the *Palm Beach Daily News* said the “potent combination” of oboe, bassoon, and piano had “captured the magic of chamber music”—is regularly rebroadcast on American Public Media's nationally syndicated radio program. The trio has garnered positive attention in recent, full-length profiles by *Chamber Music Magazine* and by the *Double Reed Journal*. The group has been called “virtuosos of classical and contemporary chamber music” in a profile for Russian television.

The Poulenc Trio has a strong commitment to commissioning, performing, and recording new works from living composers. Since its founding, the group has greatly expanded the repertoire available for the oboe, bassoon, and piano, with twenty-two new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for trio and full orchestra. The trio has also made a commitment to explore and promote music that reflects its members' African, Asian, Eastern European, and Jewish heritages.

Recent concerts have featured works by Afro-Cuban jazz great Paquito D'Rivera, Mexican-American composer Carlos Medina, Russian-American composer Nataliya Medvedovskaya, and Russian-born Jakov Jakoulov's *Yiddish Lexicon*, an exploration of Jewish culture.

The Poulenc 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 of Art in Washington, DC, Baltimore's Walters Art Museum and the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia. Guest artist collaborators have included violinist Hilary Hahn, the Thibaud Trio of Berlin, soprano Hyunah Yu, and clarinetists Alexander Fiterstein, Anthony McGill, and David Shifrin.

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

Anton Lande

Hailed as “a brilliant young violinist” and praised for his “upfront emotionalism of the Russian tradition,” Anton Lande is a graduate of the Johns Hopkins University and the Peabody Conservatory, where he majored in both violin performance and economics. Lande began his violin education at age six and studied with the renowned Victor Danchenko, a pupil of David Oistrakh and a former professor at the Curtis Institute.

An alumnus of the Tanglewood Institute Quartet Program, Lande has performed at the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Kennedy Center, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Walters Art Museum, as well as in the Flagler Museum Series in Palm Beach, Florida, and the Saint Croix Candlelight Music Series in the Virgin Islands. Most recently, Lande obtained his master's degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Kati Harrison

Weekend host and operations director for Maryland's WBJC classical music station, Kati Harrison came full circle when she moved to Baltimore nineteen years ago. Born in Torreón Coahuila, Mexico, she lived on her father's ranches in the states of Durango and Veracruz until she was fifteen. Moving back and forth between the ranches, Harrison was homeschooled from Baltimore's online Calvert School. Little did she know that years later she would be working at WBJC Radio. Harrison holds a degree in theater and communications from Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi, where she studied acting, singing, film, and communications. Her radio career began as the mid-day classical music host at KEDT-FM in Corpus Christi, Texas. From there she became the afternoon drive-time classical music host at KBAQ-FM in Phoenix, Arizona. Harrison lives in Baltimore with her husband, Jonathan Palevsky, and their four cats.

PROGRAM NOTES

In his epic treatise on art and morality, English critic John Ruskin exhorted artists to “Paint the leaves as they grow! If you can paint one leaf, you can paint the world!” Ruskin's writings would inspire a group of American artists, the American Pre-Raphaelites, who took his words to heart, creating landscapes and portraits that celebrated nature in close-up detail. Ruskin admired the work of Walt Whitman, the groundbreaking American poet, born the same year as Ruskin, and who was also writing about the glories of the natural world, and about music.

In *An American View: Whitman and the American Pre-Raphaelites*, the Poulenc Trio explores the circles of inspiration that drove both Ruskin and Whitman, as well as the composers who influenced or were influenced by their work. The concert features composers who inspired Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites, Whitman's favorite work by Beethoven, and the world premiere pairing of music by Thomas Benjamin with Whitman's poems in celebration of Whitman's (and Ruskin's) 200th anniversary year.

To commemorate the recent passing of André Previn, the program includes a full performance of Previn's Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano.

Trio in E-flat Major, op. 38

Beethoven's Trio in E-flat Major, op. 38, is an arrangement of the opus 20 Septet (1799/1800), which was scored for clarinet, horn, bassoon, violin, viola, cello, and bass. Set in six movements, it can be considered a serenade in the sense of its style and grace. Generally regarded as the greatest of Beethoven's early chamber works, this was not the only transcription of it (though it was the only transcription Beethoven made himself).

This trio arrangement was published in 1805, but the date of its composition is not certain. However, since the Septet was published in 1802 and became instantly popular, it is likely that Beethoven fashioned the Trio in E-flat Major from it in about 1803. Beethoven made this trio arrangement for Dr. Johann Schmidt, his new physician and also a good violinist. Dr. Schmidt's daughter was a talented pianist, and father and daughter, along with a cellist friend, often played this music in Vienna, probably at private gatherings or at concerts in their home. Beethoven gave exclusive rights to the score to Dr. Schmidt for one year.

Beethoven's Septet is one of the final works Walt Whitman is known to have heard in performance. Whitman was an avid and enthusiastic concertgoer, considered himself a music critic of sorts, and as a journalist, wrote countless notes and reviews about pieces he heard and enjoyed. Towards the end of his life, and after a long illness, Whitman attended a concert at the opera house in Philadelphia, where according to

New Yorker music critic Alex Ross, he was particularly moved by a performance of Beethoven's Septet. About that performance, Whitman wrote, "this music is the one art form more pure than poetry."

Three Pieces with Whitman

Three Pieces with Whitman, originally composed by Tom Benjamin for the Poulenc Trio in 2003, is one of the earliest commissioned works for the trio. Today's performance is a new pairing that combines Benjamin's music, a study in shifting contrasts and moods, with poems by Whitman and read by Kati Harrison.

Tom Benjamin was born in Bennington, Vermont, in 1940. He received his degrees from Bard College, Brandeis, Harvard, and Eastman, studying composition with Carlos Surinach, Ernst Krenek, Arthur Berger, and Bernard Rogers. Benjamin has composed works for all media, including concertos for violin, piano, and viola, orchestral pieces, oratorios, cantatas, five operas, many song cycles, and a great deal of chamber and choral music. More than fifty of his chamber, choral, and keyboard works have been published.

Benjamin is the author of two books on counterpoint (Schirmer Books), and coauthor of three music theory texts (Wadsworth). He has won prizes in a wide variety of international composition contests and has received numerous grants, awards, and commissions, including from the National Endowment for the Arts, ASCAP, Meet-the-Composer, the National Music Theater Network, and the Barlow Foundation. He is a fellow of the MacDowell Colony, the Corporation of Yaddo, and the Virginia Center. Active as a performer and choral conductor, Benjamin taught for many years at the National Music Camp (Interlochen), at the University of Houston School of Music, and has recently retired from teaching theory and composition at the Peabody Conservatory, where he also served for some years as chair of the music theory department.

Romance for Violin and Piano and Mazurka for Violin and Piano

Amy Marcy Cheney Beach was an American composer and pianist and the first successful American female composer of large-scale art music. Her "Gaelic" Symphony, which the Boston Symphony Orchestra premiered in 1896, was the first symphony composed and published by an American woman. She was one of the first American composers to succeed without the benefit of European training, and one of the most respected and acclaimed American composers of her era. As a pianist performing in the United States and in Germany, she was acclaimed for her concerts that featured her own music.

Beach also wrote for journals, newspapers, and other publications on musical topics, such as "To the Girl Who Wants to Compose," and "Emotion Versus Intellect in Music." She gave advice in person and in print to young musicians and composers—especially female composers. In 1915, she wrote *Music's Ten Commandments as Given for Young Composers*, which expressed many of her self-teaching principles.

Beach composed her *Romance for Violin and Piano*, op. 23, to commemorate the opening of the Women's Musical Congress, held in Chicago, July 5–7, 1893. She both dedicated and premiered the work with violinist Maud Powell, a prominent musician in her own right, who had helped organize the event. Powell spoke before the assembly of 1,500 attendees on "Women and the Violin," encouraging young girls and women to study the violin seriously despite the professional barriers facing them.

Beach's *Romance* utilizes a romantic idiom that was fashionable among her American colleagues at the time, including Arthur Foote (1853–1937), George Chadwick (1854–1931), Edward MacDowell (1860–1908), and Horatio Parker (1863–1919). Many of these musicians trained in Germany and show the influence of Brahms and Joachim Raaf (1822–1882), who taught some young American composers. While that influence has often been criticized for being too "Germanic," the music of Foote, Chadwick, and Beach show the flowering of a new and truly American character—pioneering precursors to the music of Charles Ives and Aaron Copland.

In a letter dated December 6, 1893, Powell thanked Beach for the "dainty, artistic edition" of the "charming *Romanza*," which she had received the day before and continued to perform that season. She wrote: "Our meeting in Chicago and the pleasure of playing together made a most delightful episode in my summer's experience. I trust it soon may be repeated."

Following their "delightful" visit in the spring of 1898, Beach sent Powell manuscript copies of her latest violin pieces, which included the opus 40, "Mazurka." (The full work was titled *Three Compositions for Violin and Piano*, op. 40, "La captive," "Berceuse," "Mazurka.") Powell first performed the "Mazurka" for a New England Society concert in Brooklyn, New York, on May 8, 1898.

Vignettes

William Grant Still was a gifted conductor and composer, and the first African American to have major productions of both a symphony (*Afro-American Symphony*, 1931) and an opera (*Troubled Island*, 1949). In 1936, Still became the first African American to conduct a noted American orchestra when he led the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl.

Still was born in 1895. In 1911, he enrolled in Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he began to study medicine. He left the college before graduating and turned his attention to music, studying composition at Ohio's Oberlin Conservatory of Music. He also spent time learning from George Whitefield Chadwick at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston; later, he was instructed by Edgar Varèse.

Still gained practical experience arranging band music for Paul Whiteman, W.C. Handy, and Artie Shaw. His notable early orchestral compositions include *Darker America* (1924) and *From the Black Belt* (1926). He was honored with Guggenheim fellowships in both 1934 and 1935.

Many of Still's musical creations melded jazz with more traditional orchestral melodies. They also incorporated his passionate interest in African music, as well as his societal concerns about African Americans in the United States. Much of Still's music, like these *Vignettes*, written in 1962, explores nontraditional American music, including music by Native Americans. Walt Whitman was also fascinated by Native American culture. Considering that the genocide of the American Indians formed the backdrop of much of Whitman's life, he only wrote sparingly, and sometimes conflictingly about Native Americans, as evident in his 1876 poem "From Far Dakota's Cañons." Still's *Vignettes* explore themes and familiar refrains referencing depictions (sometimes Euro-centric depictions) of African, Native American, and Creole music.

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

In memory of André Previn's recent passing (March 2019), we present his Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano. In relation to the Pre-Raphaelites, Previn's Trio references Aaron Copland's searching evocation of the American plains, with open chords in the piano, and wind melodies tinged with hints of jazz.

André Previn was born to a Jewish family in Berlin that emigrated to the United States in 1939 to escape the Nazis. He became a U.S. citizen in 1943 and grew up in Los Angeles. An Oscar winner, Previn toured and recorded as a jazz pianist and was conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1985 to 1989. In the United Kingdom, where he was knighted in 1996, Previn is particularly remembered for his performance on the *Morecambe and Wise Show* in 1971, which involved his conducting a spoof performance of the Grieg Piano Concerto. At a concert in Britain afterwards, Previn had to interrupt the concerto to allow the audience time to stop giggling as they remembered the sketch. It is still considered one of the funniest comedy moments of all time.

Previn composed his Trio for Piano, Oboe, and Bassoon in 1994, as a commission for the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust. Music for this combination of instruments is unusual but by no means unique.

French composers in particular loved the sound of woodwinds, and in some ways Previn's Trio shows virtues that might be thought typically French: clarity, careful attention to the character of the individual instruments, and a sense of play and fun. Yet, if the impulse behind this music can be thought of as French, it also has an American accent—full of energy, jazz rhythms, and the open harmonies that have, since the time of Copland and Harris, distinguished American music.

The piece has three movements. The opening, marked Lively, moves from a spiky beginning through a flowing second theme group introduced by the bassoon and marked "espressivo." The basic metric markings in this movement are 2/4 and 4/4, but Previn frequently interrupts this even pulse with individual measures in such subdivisions as 7/8, 5/8, 3/4, 7/16, and others. It is indeed a "lively" movement, precisely for the vitality of its rhythms, and a brief coda drives to an emphatic close on a unison B-flat.

In the second movement, Slow, a piano prelude leads to the entrance of the solo oboe; this entrance is marked "lonely," a marking that might apply to the entire movement, where long chromatic woodwind lines wind their way above chordal accompaniment. The music rises to a climax, then falls away to conclude on its opening material, now varied.

The last movement, Jaunty, changes meter almost by the measure. Previn treats the two wind instruments as a group and sets them in contrast to the piano, which has extended solo passages. The leaping, opening idea reappears in many forms, including inversion, and near the end, the tempo speeds ahead as Previn specifies that the music should be played with "jazz phrasing." These riffs alternate with brief piano interludes marked "simply." Gradually the movement's opening theme reasserts itself, and the Trio rushes to its blistering close, once again on a unison B-flat.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger

Upcoming Events of the Seventy-Seventh Season of The William Nelson Cromwell and F. Lammot Belin Concerts

Unless otherwise noted, concerts are held in the West Building, West Garden Court.

The Danish Clarinet Trio

In collaboration with the Embassy of Denmark, and celebrating the European Month of Culture
May 8, 12:10

The Canales Project

*Hear Her Voice, Part II:
A Mother's Day Celebration*
Featuring lullabies from around the world
May 12, 3:30

Joshua Cerdania, composer and pianist Enrico Lagasca, bass-baritone

In honor of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month
May 14, 12:00
East Building Auditorium

Hanna Bachmann, piano

Isabel Pfefferkorn, mezzo-soprano
In collaboration with the Embassy of Austria and the Austrian Cultural Forum Washington, and celebrating the European Month of Culture
May 15, 12:10

General Information

Admission to the National Gallery of Art and all of its programs is free of charge, except as noted.

The use of cameras or recording equipment during the performance is not allowed.

Please be sure that all portable electronic devices are turned off.

Concerts are made possible in part through the generosity of donors to the National Gallery of Art through The Circle. Reserved seating is available in recognition of their support. Please contact the development office at (202) 842-6450 or circle@nga.gov for more information.

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cover William Trost Richards, *Path in the Woods* (detail), 1861, Private collection.
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