

The Poulenc Trio

James Austin Smith, Oboe Bryan Young, Bassoon Irina Kaplan Lande, Piano

Program, Toronto

Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) (arr. M. Krutik)

Suite in the Old Style

Pastorale

Balletto

Minuetto

Fuga

Pantomime

Viet Cuong (b.1990)

Trains of Thought (2012) (written for the Poulenc Trio)

Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) (arr. Anatoly Trofimov)

Romance, op.97a

A Spin Through Moscow

Intermission

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)

Trio Pathétique in D minor

Allegro moderato

Scherzo

Largo

Allegro con spirito

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano (1926)

Presto

Andante

Rondo

André Previn (b.1929)

Trio for Oboe, Bassoon, and Piano

iii. Jaunty

The Poulenc Trio appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkopf Artists, www.chambermuse.com

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

About the Trio

The Poulenc Trio is the most active touring piano-wind chamber music ensemble in the world. Since its founding in 2003, the 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 and premiered two new works with violinist Hilary Hahn.

In a recent review, the New York Times 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” — was rebroadcast on American Public Media’s nationally syndicated radio program, Performance Today. 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 one 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 trio has greatly expanded the repertoire available for the oboe, bassoon and piano, with no fewer than 22 new works written for and premiered by the group, including three triple concertos for the trio and full orchestra.

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 in Washington DC, the Walters Art Museum, the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Hermitage State Museum in Russia.

The trio is deeply engaged in musical and educational outreach programs, including "Pizza and Poulenc," an informal performance and residency series for younger audiences. The trio regularly conducts masterclasses, most recently the University of Ohio, San Francisco State University, Florida State University and the University of Colima in Mexico.

Individual Members

Praised for his “virtuosic,” “dazzling” and “brilliant” performances (The New York Times) and his “bold, keen sound” (The New Yorker), oboist **James Austin Smith** performs new and old music across the US and around the world. Mr. Smith is an artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE), and the Talea Ensemble, as well as co-Artistic Director of Decoda, the Affiliate Ensemble of Carnegie Hall. Mr. Smith’s festival appearances include Marlboro, Lucerne, Chamber Music Northwest, Schleswig-Holstein, Stellenbosch, Bay Chamber Concerts, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Spoleto US. Mr. Smith received his Master of Music degree in 2008 from the Yale School of Music.

Bryan Young, a Washington, DC native, has been praised for his "voluptuous sound" by the Double Reed Journal. A prizewinner of the 2002 Gillet International Bassoon Competition, he has appeared as soloist with the National Symphony and Baltimore Symphony Orchestras, as well as in recitals across the United States and around the world. The Washington Post wrote, "Young's music dances with a lightness and grace uncommon for his instrument." Bryan is principal bassoonist of the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra and performs regularly with the IRIS Chamber Orchestra in Memphis. He trained at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore and at Yale University.

Pianist **Irina Kaplan Lande** is a graduate of the St. Petersburg Conservatory in Russia. Winner of the Baltimore Chamber Music Award and the Montpelier Recital Competition, Irina has appeared in series including the Yale Gordon Concert Series, the Bachanalia Recital Series and the New York Times Young Performers Series. Concerts abroad in Russia, Italy, England, Germany and the Caribbean have led to critical praise of her "beauty and brilliance of sound, astonishing flexibility and penetrating interpretation." Fanfare Magazine hails her as "a strong pianist who doesn't settle for an accompanying role." Irina is on the piano faculty at the Peabody Institute.

PROGRAM NOTES:

SCHNITTKE:

Perhaps the most important Russian composer since Shostakovich, Alfred Schnittke began his musical education in Vienna where his father, a journalist and translator, had been posted. In 1948 the family moved to Moscow, where Schnittke studied piano and received a diploma in choral conducting.

In 1985, Schnittke suffered the first of a series of serious strokes. Despite his physical frailty, however, Schnittke experienced no loss of creative imagination or productivity. Beginning in 1990, Schnittke resided in Hamburg, maintaining dual German-Russian citizenship. He died after suffering another stroke in 1998 in Hamburg.

Schnittke's early music showed the strong influence of Shostakovich; later he was noted above all for his hallmark "polystylistic" idiom. Schnittke wrote in a wide range of genres and styles. He was a prolific composer of scores for the Soviet film industry, and thematic material from three of these scores forms the basis for *Suite in the Old Style*, a perfect example of his neo-classical style. Schnittke originally composed the suite for violin and piano, and later made a version for chamber orchestra which has been widely performed.

"Pastorale" and "Balletto" are from a comedy film about a dentist's amorous adventures. "Pantomima" and "Minuetto" are from scores for animated children's films. "Fuga" comes from a documentary about a sportsman's double life ("Sport, Sport, Sport"). The entire score reflects the varied sound world and fertile creative imagination of Alfred Schnittke.

CUONG:

Described as "show-stealing" (Baltimore City Paper) and a "dazzler" (Broad Street Review), Viet Cuong's works have been performed in venues across the USA, Canada, South Africa, Singapore, and Japan. He has been a Naumburg and Roger Sessions Fellow in Princeton University's doctoral program, and holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Peabody Conservatory, where he received the Presser Undergraduate Scholarship, the Peabody Alumni Award, and the Gustav Klemm Award for excellence in composition.. He is

among the youngest composers to receive residencies from the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Ucross Foundation, and Yaddo.

Cuong's music has been performed at the Aspen Music Festival, International Double Reed Society Conference, Bowdoin Music Festival, the US Navy Band International Saxophone Symposium, Midwest Clinic, CBDNA conferences, and the GAMMA-UT Conference. Viet was a winner of the ASCAP Morton Gould Composers Award, Walter Beeler Memorial Prize from Ithaca College, Dolce Suono Ensemble Young Composers Competition, Atlantic Coast Conference Band Directors Association Grant, National Band Association Young Composer Mentor Project, and the Prix d'Été Composition Competition.

The composer writes about *Trains of Thought*: "As I was writing the piece, it began to take on quite a similar atmosphere to my older piece named 'Pulse Train' . . . so much, that I chose to continue this theme of trains that aren't actually locomotives, yet still evoke the feeling of a moving train. I hope that this will be an intriguing yet engaging piece for audiences. The piece basically has a consistent tempo for the entire duration, but the colors, registers, and even harmonies vary widely. My goal was to unify these different elements through a consistent, intense rhythmic drive. In addition, I thought (even more than I usually do) about a listener's expectations and how to successfully set up these expectations and manipulate them. Both of these ideas touch on the 'train of thought' concept. Ideas often meander aimlessly in one's mind, and one's stream of consciousness can end up somewhere very unexpected. However, different thoughts are usually connected through some sort of common thread. I hope this makes some sense!

The only 'extended techniques' I used were some pretty heavy use of bisbigliando (timbral trills), which I notated as quarter-tones, and very spare dampening of the strings in the piano with the fingers."

SHOSTAKOVICH:

In a musical career spanning half a century, Shostakovich engrossed himself with a staggeringly diverse range of genres and styles. Beyond the fifteen symphonies and fifteen string quartets, the lesser-known works of Shostakovich offer intrigue and interest likewise. With the reappraisal of Shostakovich in recent times, his light music is beginning to enjoy unprecedented popularity in concert halls and record catalogues.

"Romance" was the most famous movement of "The Gadfly Suite," probably Shostakovich's best-known film score. The film, which was based on the novel of the same name by Ethel Lilian Voynich, was set in 1840s Italy under the dominance of Austria, a time of tumultuous revolt and uprisings. The story centers on the illegitimate son of a cardinal who joins the fight to unite Italy. When caught, he faces the firing squad as a willingly martyr. It is a story of faith, disillusionment, revolution, romance, and heroism. A best seller, it exerted a huge cultural influence, and was compulsory reading in the Soviet Union; indeed by the time of Voynich's death, "The Gadfly" is estimated to have sold 2,500,000 copies in the Soviet Union alone. "Romance" was used in the BBC/PBS TV series, "Reilly, Ace of Spies."

"A Spin Through Moscow" is the first of the four dance-like movements of the orchestral suite from the comic operetta, "Moscow, Cheryomushki," written in a bewildering variation of styles, from the Romantic idiom to vulgar popular song. The satirical plot deals with one of the most pressing concerns of urban Russians of the day, the chronic housing shortage and the

difficulties of securing livable conditions. "Cheryomushki" translates to "bird-cherry trees," the name of a real housing estate in southwest Moscow.

GLINKA:

Hailed as the "Father of Russian Music" by his younger compatriot Balakirev, Glinka pioneered a style of music derived from the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic idiosyncracies of the folk musics of Russia. In doing so, he pushed beyond the boundaries of musical convention that the most advanced European composers of his day were just beginning to expand, and created a personal style marked by daring harmonies, dynamic and flexible rhythm, and bright, pure orchestral colours.

In his late twenties, Glinka spent three years in Italy, partly to keep up his musical studies, but also to obtain the health benefits of the latest fashions in medical treatment. If the latter were more than a little doubtful in their efficacy (not to say counterproductive), his musical experiences were an important factor in a decisive change in his outlook as a composer. Glinka wrote in his memoirs "All the pieces written by me to please the inhabitants of Milan, and very nicely published by Giovanni Ricordi, only served to convince me that I was not following my own path, and that I could not sincerely be an Italian. A longing for my own country led me gradually to the idea of writing in a Russian manner".

The "Trio Pathétique" dates from this pre-Russian-manner period in Italy. In its lyricism, its absorption of elements of the Italian operatic cantilena, it bears evidence of how congenial to his Romantic nature the young Glinka must have found the Italian operatic style. Originally scored for clarinet, bassoon and piano, a later adaptation for piano trio has probably ensured the work's survival. Glinka wrote on the score "I have known love only by the pain it brings", a fairly ironic inscription considering his unfailing popularity with members of the opposite sex, but the probable reason for the published score of this essentially genial and lyrical work bearing the somewhat misleading title "Pathétique."

POULENC:

"Above all, a composer should not aim to be fashionable. If you are not fashionable today, you may not be unfashionable tomorrow." —Francis Poulenc

Poulenc was born in Paris on January 7, 1899 and attained both a distinct musical voice and success at an early age. During the 1920s, he was one of the leading spirits of the group of young French composers known as "Les Six." Their music was often light, witty, satirical and urbane. They were in sympathy with and influenced by Stravinsky and "Neo-Classicism," and in opposition to the cerebral music of Schoenberg and of what they considered to be the religio-musical excesses of their countryman Olivier Messiaen. Poulenc, in particular, often juxtaposes passages of wit and irony with lush, sentimental outpourings.

Poulenc composed orchestral, chamber music, ballets, concertos, film scores, and opera, as well as powerful choral and sacred music. He is an acknowledged master in the field of French art songs, with over 130 to his credit. Indeed, melody was the most important element to him. Norbert DuFourcq writes: ". . . he found his way to a vast treasury of undiscovered tunes within an area that had, according to the most up-to-date musical maps, been surveyed, worked and exhausted." Of his own work, he wrote, "I know perfectly well that I'm not one of those composers who have made harmonic innovations like Igor (Stravinsky), Ravel, or

Debussy, but I think there's room for 'New' music which doesn't mind using other people's chords. Wasn't that the case with Mozart-Schubert?"

The Trio is one of Poulenc's most popular chamber works. It is in the spirit of an eighteenth century divertissement, light and witty, yet spiced with dissonances. It is eminently logical, combining and contrasting the two members of the double reed family with the percussive quality of the piano. Poulenc took the advice of Ravel (with whom he had been studying) and based the opening Presto on a Haydn Allegro, and the closing Rondo's refrain begins as a near perfect quote of a well-known Beethoven melody until it makes a surprising turn into the fresh vocabulary of Poulenc's own distinctive language. Poulenc hinted that he patterned this movement after a piano concerto by Saint-Saëns. The Andante is gracefully Mozartean, though any suggestion of parody is dispelled by alluring shifts of tonality and chromaticism. The work is dedicated to Manuel de Falla, whom Poulenc had met at the home of his teacher, Ricardo Vines, in 1918. David Ewen writes, "One is sometimes reminded of a chase, sometimes a dialogue . . . the main musical discourse is entrusted to the piano, while the bassoon is relegated to the role of a discreet commentator and the oboe is allowed to intensify the more lyrical flights. The very heart of Poulenc is in this adroit little work."

PREVIN:

André Previn was born to a Jewish family in Berlin and emigrated with them to the United States in 1939 to escape the Nazis. He became a naturalized citizen of the United States 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 1985-89. In the UK, where he was knighted in 1996, Previn is particularly remembered for his performance on the Morecambe and Wise comedy 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.

Andre Previn composed his Trio for Piano, Oboe and Bassoon in 1994 on a joint commission from the Orchestra of St. Luke's, the National Endowment for the Art 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 might be thought French, here it has an American accent: Previn's Trio is full of energy, jazz rhythms, and the open harmonies that have, since the time of Copland and Harris, distinguished American music.

The third movement, Jaunty, changes meter almost by 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. —Eric Bromberger