



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
JUNIOR RECITAL

Kevin Le, clarinet
John Cozza, piano

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

- I. Allegro tristamente
- II. Romanza
- III. Allegro con fuoco

Sonata No. 1 in F Minor for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120 No. 1

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

- I. Allegro appassionato
- II. Andante un poco Adagio
- III. Allegretto grazioso
- IV. Vivace

INTERMISSION

Peace

Jessie Montgomery (b. 1981)

Black

Marc Mellits (b. 1966)

with Rachel Lewis, baritone saxophone

*This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Music in Clarinet.
Kevin Le is a student of Sandra McPherson.*



FRIDAY, 7:00 P.M.
SEPTEMBER 22, 2023
CAPISTRANO HALL 151

PROGRAM NOTES

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, FP 184 by Francis Poulenc

Described as “half bad boy, half monk”, Francis Poulenc was a French composer and pianist of the twentieth century. He became a member of Les Six, a prominent group of young French composers, despite not yet having any formal training in composing. A large part of his career as a pianist included performing with the eminent baritone, Pierre Bernac.

While this sonata was dedicated to Arthur Honegger—another member of Les Six—it was speculated that its dedication was switched with his Oboe Sonata’s, which was dedicated to Sergei Prokofiev. This is plausible because the Clarinet Sonata has themes referencing Prokofiev’s music.

It was intended to be premiered by Poulenc and the clarinetist Benny Goodman, who had commissioned the piece. However, Goodman gave the first performance with Leonard Bernstein at Carnegie Hall because Poulenc did not live to see the day it was published.

There are many sudden mood changes throughout this piece, which fit the two sides of Poulenc’s personality. The first movement contains the most of these changes. The second movement is an emotionally unstable and heart-wrenching lament. The third movement is fast and sporadic, with melodies interrupting ones before it.

Sonata No. 1 in F minor for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 120 No. 1 by Johannes Brahms

German composer and pianist of the Romantic era Johannes Brahms had retired from composing in 1890. Shortly after, he was inspired to compose again after hearing the renowned clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld perform. This resulted in the completion of several chamber works for the clarinet, all for Mühlfeld, which included this Clarinet Sonata. A part of what impressed Brahms about Mühlfeld’s playing was his ability to move between the registers of the clarinet with ease. Brahms’s Sonata featured melodies with dramatic leaps to showcase this skill.

Beginning a progression from dark to light is the somber first movement, filled with moments of anguish. The second movement has a sweet, yet melancholic quality. The pastoral third movement with its strong down beats and steady bass line is reminiscent of a *ländler*, a German dance in triple time. Ending the piece in a bright F major, the fourth and final movement is an energetic rondo.

Peace by Jessie Montgomery

Jessie Montgomery is an African-American composer and violinist who writes music relevant to today’s social problems. In addition to teaching violin and composition at The Mannes School of Music in New York, she is the Mead Composer-in-Residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. She is also a part of the Sphinx Organization, a group founded to increase diversity in classical music and to support Black and Latino students in music.

Craving peace amidst the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic, Montgomery aimed to create something to calm the listener. While she gave it the working title of *Melancholy*, she settled on *Peace* for a more positive outlook as, through the music, she comes to terms with sadness being “a necessary dynamic to the human experience”. This work was originally written for the violin and piano. Moved to tears after hearing a recording of it, clarinetist Anthony McGill requested Montgomery to write an arrangement for the clarinet.

Black by Marc Mellits

Inspired by musical and non-musical sounds alike, Marc Mellits is an American composer known for his minimalistic style and works for chamber ensembles. He is currently a professor of composition and theory at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He also is the leader and keyboard player of his ensemble, The Mellits Consort.

Black was composed for Jonathan Russell and Jeff Anderle, who make up the bass clarinet duo Sqwonk. It has been arranged by Mellits for over 20 different chamber ensemble instrumentations and is the most performed duet for low instruments. The piece features two layers of ostinati that complete each other when put together, creating a strong and funky groove.