

WIGMORE HALL

Tuesday 15 November 2022
7.30pm

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet piano
Orsino Ensemble
Adam Walker flute
Nicholas Daniel oboe
Matthew Hunt clarinet
Amy Harman bassoon

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Syrinx (1913)

Première rhapsodie (1909-10)

Pierre Sancan (1916-2008)

Sonatine for flute and piano (1946)

Moderato - Andante espressivo - Animé

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano (1924-6)

I. Presto • II. Andante • III. Rondo

Interval

Albéric Magnard (1865-1914)

Quintet for piano and winds Op. 8 (1894)

I. Sombre • II. Tendre • III. Léger • IV. Joyeux

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Debussy composed *Syrinx* in 1913 as incidental music for Gabriel Mourey's *Psyché*. The sinuous, haunting music for a shepherd's flute was written to accompany a dialogue between two nymphs and it was played at the first performance by the great flautist Louis Fleury, to whom it was also dedicated. A few years earlier, in 1909, Debussy joined the council of the Paris Conservatoire at Fauré's request, and he was asked to write the test piece for the 1910 clarinet *concours*. He finished the original clarinet and piano version of the *Première rhapsodie* in January 1910 and it was printed in the spring, in good time for competitors to learn it. Debussy was present at the clarinet *concours*, held on 14 July 1910, and wrote to Jacques Durand that 'the clarinet competition went extremely well and, to judge by the expressions on the faces of my colleagues, the rhapsody was a success. One of the candidates, Vandercruyssen, played it by heart and very musically. The rest were straightforward and nondescript.' As for the piece itself, Debussy was uncharacteristically effusive about it, describing it as 'one of the most charming I have written'. The slow, dreamy opening contains the musical material for everything that follows, including the playful and energetic second section which brings the work to a joyous close.

Born in Mazamet in the Tarn department of southern France, **Pierre Sancan** studied at the Paris Conservatoire where he was taught by Jean Gallon (composition), Charles Munch and Roger Désormière (conducting) and Yves Nat (piano). Sancan won the coveted Prix de Rome in 1943 and later succeeded Nat as a piano professor at the Conservatoire. His pupils included Jean-Philippe Collard, Michel Béroff and tonight's pianist, Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Sancan's Sonatine for flute and piano was composed in 1946 as a test piece for the flute *concours* and it was dedicated to Gaston Crunelle, professor of flute (and teacher of both Jean-Pierre Rampal and James Galway). The *Moderato* opening is dominated by a flowing Debussy-like idea and another repeated-note theme. A piano cadenza leads to the central *Andante espressivo* a kind of tender, slightly desolate aria for flute. An unaccompanied flute cadenza, with reminiscences of earlier ideas, leads to the finale. Marked *Animé*, this has the character of a *moto perpetuo*, with a brief recollection of the work's opening before an ebullient conclusion.

Poulenc wrote his Trio for oboe, bassoon and piano in 1926, advised by one friend (Igor Stravinsky) and dedicated to another (Manuel de Falla). While it is certainly not the most daring of his works from the 1920s, it is the chamber piece that most completely demonstrates the range of Poulenc's musical language at the time – from the astringent harmonies of the opening (a recollection of the French overture,

lightly spiced à la Stravinsky), to the song-like elegance of the slow movement, and the high spirits of the finale. Poulenc spent several years worrying over this Trio (his earliest plans go back to 1921), and in November 1924 he told his friend Paul Collaer that 'it's in a style new to me yet at the same time it's very Poulenc.' The Trio is one of the first pieces to reveal the stylistic characteristics that later earned Poulenc the description of being both 'monk and vagabond': seriousness, tenderness and raw good humour found side by side. Poulenc gave the first performance at the Salle des Agriculteurs in Paris on 2 May 1926, with Roger Lamorlette (oboe) and Gustave Dhérin (bassoon). In 1928 the same artists made the work's first recording for French Columbia – one of Poulenc's earliest records.

Albéric Magnard first studied law (graduating in 1887) before deciding on a career in music. At the Paris Conservatoire he was taught by Théodore Dubois and attended Massenet's classes, where he met Vincent d'Indy, with whom he studied for four years (during which time Magnard completed his first two symphonies). In 1890, d'Indy introduced Magnard to Octave Maus, a passionate enthusiast for César Franck, and an energetic promoter of new music in Brussels through the *Cercle des XX* and the *Libre Esthétique*. Maus and Magnard struck up an immediate friendship and in July 1894 Magnard wrote about the work he planned to dedicate to Maus: 'I am working on the finale of my quintet, or rather your quintet', and in January 1895 he asked if it would be possible to give the quintet in Brussels. Maus's positive reply led Magnard to sending the parts, adding how happy he was 'to dedicate to you one of my *petites-ordures* (little piles of junk) and I hope it doesn't disappoint.' The première was given in Brussels at the *Libre Esthétique* on 5 April 1895. The first movement plunges straight into chromatic turmoil, the principal motifs emerging from a swirl of complex harmonies until the arrival of a more lyrical second theme. Magnard's development ranges from a brief fugue (led off by the bassoon) to passages of impassioned lyricism, slipping effortlessly through a range of keys before eventually coming to rest in D major. The second movement, *Tendre*, opens with a broad clarinet solo before a more improvisatory passage for piano alone. Only then does the whole ensemble play together, bringing the movement to a serene close. The quicksilver scherzo, titled *Léger*, has an angular oboe solo at its centre, while the expansive finale, marked *Joyeux*, is interrupted by an extended passage for bassoon and piano, before a reprise of the initial ideas.

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