Gabrielle Hsu, bassoon
Emma Song, piano
Alexis Mitchell, oboe

Student Recital Series
Recital Hall | February 24th, 2017 | 5:00 pm

Program

Sonate pour basson et piano op. 168 (1921)
I. Allegro moderato
II. Allegro scherzando
III. Molto adagio – Allegro moderato

Suite pour basson et piano (1960)
I. Introduction et Allegro
II. Sarabande
III. Scherzo

Intermission

Sposa son disprezata from the opera Bajazet (1734)

Trio pour hautbois, basson et piano (1994)
I. Adagio – Allegro moderato
II. Scherzo
III. Andante
IV. Finale

Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)

Alexandre Tansman
(1897-1986)

Antonio Vivaldi
(1678-1741)
trans. Albie Micklich

Jean Frangaix
(1912-1997)
Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921)
Saint-Saëns wrote the Sonate op. 168 just before his death in 1921 as part of a project that he undertook to write sonatas for all of the principal orchestral woodwind instruments. He died before he could complete this project, so we are very lucky to have this work. It is now one of the most frequently performed in the entire bassoon repertoire.

Throughout all three movements, the bassoon and piano parts are skillfully intertwined to showcase the strengths of both instruments. The piece opens with a beautiful, evocative Allegro moderato, followed by a lively and energetic Allegro scherzando. The final movement begins with a Molto adagio that builds slowly over a sparse accompaniment to a dramatic cadenza, which is finally interrupted by a playful Allegro that seems almost out of place.

Alexandre Tansman (1897-1986)
Tansman was born in Poland and began his musical education at the Łódź Conservatory. However, he spent much of his life in Paris, where he was mentored by several famous composers including Igor Stravinsky and Maurice Ravel. During World War II, he was forced to flee Europe to Los Angeles because of his Jewish background, and composed several Hollywood film scores during his time there. As a result, his music is a fascinating mixture of influences, drawing on both French and Polish styles as well as elements of traditional Jewish music and 1920s jazz.

This Suite for Bassoon and Piano and Saint-Saëns' Sonate were both written in France during the 20th century and used in the Paris Conservatoire concours (an annual competition in which students could only graduate from their course of study by earning First Prize), but they could not be more different. The aggressive, driving rhythms that characterize the outer movements of the Suite and betray Stravinsky's influence are in stark contrast to the lush, flowing romanticism of Saint-Saëns' Sonate.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)
The aria Sposa son disprezzata was originally written by Italian composer Geminiano Giacomelli but is most often attributed to Vivaldi, who borrowed it for his opera Bajazet (a pasticcio comprised partly of Vivaldi's original arias and several existing ones from other composers).

Here it has been "stolen" again to be performed on the bassoon in this beautiful transcription by Albie Micklich, utilizing the bassoon's singing tenor register to convey a voice-like character. Sung in Bajazet by a villain named Irene, this aria's title translates to "I am a scorned wife" and is a tortured lament of her husband's infidelity.

Sposa son disprezzata,  I am a scorned wife,
Fida son oltraggiata, faithful, yet insulted.
cieli che feci mai?  Heavens, what did I do?
E pur egl'è il mio cor And yet he is my heart,
il mio sposo, il mio amor, my husband, my love,
la mia speranza.  my hope.

Jean Françaix (1912-1997)
Françaix was both a composer and a skilled pianist and studied with Nadia Boulanger, who considered him one of her best students. His Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano was commissioned by the International Double Reed Society in 1994 only three years before his death. His witty, engaging writing brilliantly displays the contrasting tone colors and unique abilities of these three very different instruments. It is thoroughly lighthearted in character, with the exception of the melancholy, dreamlike Andante.

Sadly, this work is often neglected in favor of Poulenc's trio for the same instrumentation, composed almost 70 years earlier, so I am thrilled to have this opportunity to share it with you today.