

Musical Club of Hartford
Program for December 8, 2022

Année passée, Book 3: Soirs d'hiver (Winter evenings) Jules Massenet (1842-1912)
I. Noël
II. En songeant (Thinking)
III. On valsait (Waltzing)

Année passée consists of 12 pieces in 4 books for piano 4 hands, first published in 1897

Michelle Duffy, piano
Linda MacGougan, piano

Sérénade, Op. 29 Cécile Chaminade (1857 -1944)
Pierrette. Air de ballet, Op. 41.

Cécile (Louise Stéphanie) Chaminade was a French composer and pianist. She wrote over 400 compositions, including nearly 200 piano miniatures - many with such catchy melodies that they are called "songs without words." Chaminade was very popular in the United States as well as Europe; there were over 100 Chaminade Clubs, mostly in the USA and England. However, in the 1920's, her poor health prevented her from composing and concertizing extensively, and this, coupled with a shift in musical taste - her music's feminine qualities were considered superficial - caused her to fall out of favor and to be forgotten.

Michelle Duffy, piano

Trio in G Major, K. 496 W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)
1. Allegro

Fran Bard, cello
Lisa Kugelman, violin
Linda MacGougan, piano

Mozart wrote 6 trios for piano, violin, and cello, all from 1786 to 1788. This trio was written for his dear friends, the Jacquin family; when it was published, along with two other trios, Mozart specified that they be performed in "friendly, musical social circles". The movement begins with a piano solo, as he does in some piano concertos, but in the latter case, this occurs in the second movement. Significant for the "piano trio" genre, the cello begins to have more independence from the piano bass line; this is evident in the second half of the movement, where the cello displays runs and flourishes.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

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

Rob Breen, clarinet
Annette Shapiro, piano

With the completion of his “Sonata for Clarinet and Piano” in the summer of 1962 Francis Poulenc joined the likes of Mozart and Brahms who composed enduring pieces of the modern clarinet repertoire close to the ends of their lives.

Described by a contemporary critic as “half monk half naughty boy”, Poulenc was born in Paris in 1899. He grew up in a household that was both musical and devoutly Catholic, but never received a formal conservatory education. Instead, he studied piano and composition privately. His early works were of a quality that brought him to the attention of Erik Satie, Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky.

The piece begins with the clarinet announcing itself as a “naughty boy”, but quickly retreats to a thoughtful, arcing lyrical line that in the opinion of today’s performer echoes the opening theme of Mozart’s 40th Symphony. The midsection of the first movement is a meditative passage at a much slower tempo which returns to the original theme and tempo. The second movement is a bit of a quiet monk’s prayer punctuated with brief cries of anguish at the beginning and at the end. The last movement is a mad dash to the finish line that is both a technical challenge and a joy to play.

Barcarolle no. 2 in G major, opus 41

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Andrew King, piano

While not necessarily the first French composer to come to mind for most audiences, Gabriel Fauré is often described as quintessentially French, and his influence on Debussy and Ravel is profound. Fauré composed his thirteen barcarolles for solo piano over a period of nearly forty years. They trace his compositional development, and the second is emblematic of his youthful, extroverted, supple, and rich sound world.

Bios

Once upon a life, **Rob Breen** was a night-time Yellow Cab driver in Hartford. Then he played clarinet and saxophone in U.S. Army Bands for so long that Uncle Sam had to start paying him to stay home. Along the way this 1972 graduate of Hartford Public High School earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Boston University where he studied clarinet with Pasquale Cardillo of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. His other teachers include Nick Lesbines, Ken Lagace and Curt Blood of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra and Tom Labadorf of the U.S. Coast Guard Band. He also worked a long career as a computer programmer at one of those big insurance companies in downtown Hartford.

These days, he works as a band instrument repair technician at Beller's Music in Manchester and holds the Principal Clarinet chair of the West Hartford Symphony Orchestra. Rob and his wife Sue have three grown children who continue to amaze and amuse with their hijinks and mischief.

Pianist **Andrew King** is a soloist, chamber musician, and collaborative artist based in Connecticut. Andrew holds a BA in Music from Bowdoin College, and an MM in Piano Performance from Hartt. Recent performances include a duo piano concert on the Music Matters series at the La Grua Center in Stonington CT, and a chamber music concert of music by Fauré on the St. John's Summer Music Concert Series in Williamstown, Massachusetts.

In addition to performing, Andrew is an Associate Instructor of the Taubman Approach, the body of knowledge of coordinate motion applied to the piano, involving mostly invisible motions, that supports a virtuoso technique. He lives in Bloomfield with his fiancée Genevieve, their dog Heidi, and cat, Murzik.