

"My thanks to Felix Skowronek for his suggestions and to all the members of THE SONI VENTORUM FOUNDERS' TRIO for more than three decades of collaboration."

Music was an avocation rather than a serious pursuit for POULENC in his early years, and he was largely self-taught. The great masters who had led the revolt against 19th century romanticism dominated the musical scene at that time and impressed and influenced him, but not for long: the young men and women with whom he associated himself preferred a cooler, drier, more astringent music. He was a member of the group *Les Six*, but from the beginning, one idiosyncrasy distinguished him among his avant-garde associates: he strove to please. He took his audience into account, he avoided eccentricity, and while he was willing, even anxious to surprise, he had no wish to mystify, and the novelty of his style was matched by its accessibility. The *SEXTET* for piano and winds was begun in 1932 and completed in 1939. During this period Poulenc conceived and brought forth a large number of works, and it seems reasonable to conclude from this that the *Sextet* had for him a special importance and was the subject of special efforts. It is cast in three movements—an extended *Allegro vivace* (whose brisk worldliness is relieved by a lyrical intermezzo), a *Divertissement* of poetic cast, and a *Finale, prestissimo*, or great vivacity and humor, yet distinguished at all times by extreme subtlety of line and texture. The façade of the *Sextet* may be unpretentious, but in its elegance of proportion and refinement of details it is quite clearly the creation of a masterly hand.

EMILE BERNARD, French organist and composer, studied at the Paris Conservatoire, initially as a pianist, and was organist of the Paris church of Notre-Dame des Champs from 1887 to 1895. In 1877, his *Fantasy and Fugue for Organ* won a prize offered by the Société des Compositeurs de Paris. His *Violin Concerto* was performed by its dedicatee Pablo Sarasate at the Conservatoire concert of February 25, 1895, and Bernard's *Suite for Violin and Piano* was part of Sarasate's repertoire. Other works include a *Suite for Orchestra*, and *Conzertstück for Piano and Orchestra*, and a number of chamber works including two that received particular attention: The *Sonata for Cello and Piano*, Op. 48 and the *Piano Quartet*, Op. 50. His *DIVERTISSEMENT*, Op. 36 for winds was written at the behest of Paul Taffanel for his abovementioned "Société". Despite the title of *Divertissement*, a throwback to the generic "harmonie" or wind-octet ensemble, the work is more appropriately considered a small symphony. It opens with a solemn introduction, leading to a jaunty first movement replete with melodic statement and lively counterpoint. The second movement is a lively scherzo with hints of Mendelssohn. A haunting bassoon solo opens the second movement that then moves into deeply melodic and sonorous material reminiscent of French opera of the period, preceding without pause into the *fête champêtre* character of the *Finale*. The obligatory French nod to cyclic form brings back a quote from the initial introduction by way of temporary repose before the final plunge into the vigorous conclusion.



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University of Washington
THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Presents a Faculty Recital:

SONI VENTORUM

Felix Skowronek, *flute*
Rebecca Henderson, *oboe*
William McColl, *clarinet*
David Kappy, *horn*
Arthur Grossman, *bassoon*

With Faculty Guest Artist
Craig Sheppard, *piano*

And Student Guest Artists
Dane Andersen, *flute*
Susan Worden, *oboe & English horn*
Ben Fowler, *clarinet*
Erika Bramwell, *horn*

Bryson Conley (Bird) & Dustin Seay (Bernard), *bassoons*

May 14, 2001

7:30 PM

Meany Theater

CD-13,930

PROGRAM

1 SERENADE FOR WIND INSTRUMENTS, Op. 40 (1898) (24:13)
(two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets,
two horns, two bassoons)ARTHUR BIRD
Allegro moderato (1856-1923)
Adagio
Scherzo: Allegro assai
Allegro energico

2 COMMENTS, Arthur Grossman

3 "TRIAS" FOR FLUTE, CLARINET, AND
BASSOON (2001)..... WILLIAM O. SMITH
Introduction (15:48) (b. 1926)
Cadenzas: sempre rubato
Session

INTERMISSION

1] *SEXTET FOR FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET,
HORN, AND PIANO* (1932-39) (18:19) FRANCIS POULENC
(1899-1963)
Allegro vivace: Très Vite et emporté
Divertissement: Andantino
Finale: Prestissimo

2] *DIVERTISSEMENT IN F MAJOR,
FOR TEN WINDS; Op. 36* (1884) (23:04) EMILE BERNARD
(1843-1902)
Andante sostenuto
Allegro vivace
Andante - Allegro non troppo

PROGRAM NOTES:

The wind quintet, comprised of one each of the principal wind instruments plus French horn, became the "standardized" wind ensemble as a counterpart to the string quartet in the field of chamber music. The first works published for it date from ca. 1800 in Paris. Within the next 30 years the bulk of its early repertoire was written by the composers Giuseppe Cambini, Franz Danzi, and Anton Reicha who contributed three, nine, and twenty-four quintets respectively. An earlier manifestation was the wind octet, made up of paired oboes, clarinets, horns, and bassoons. This wind band, or "harmonie" as it was generally known, was the staple musical group of many a European court, large and small, providing entertainment and concerts indoors and out. Hundreds of works were written for it by composers of varied stripe: understandably, the octets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven rank as the classics of this genre. The wind octet's popularity began to wane at just about the time the wind quintet was introduced, but eventually both ensembles languished until the end of the 19th century when a revival was sparked by the French flutist and conductor Paul Taffanel. His "Société des instruments à vent" commissioned works by several composers including Gounod, Reinecke, Enesco and others, including one of tonight's representatives, Emile Bernard. Flutes were added to the original wind octet, resulting in a combination of beautiful sonorities and lively activity.

ARTHUR BIRD, born in Belmont, Massachusetts, was one of a handful of American composers to make a name for himself in Europe in the latter part of the 19th century. Following high school graduation, Bird spent a number of years in Berlin studying organ and composition, and of his numerous works in diverse forms, his magnum opus was an orchestral score to a full-length ballet *Ruebezahl*, the first large-scale ballet written by an American composer. His *Serenade for Winds*, Op. 40, undoubtedly inspired by the works written for the "Société des instruments à vent", was written in 1898 and won the Paderewski Prize in 1901 for the best chamber work written by an American composer. It was premiered in Boston in 1902 and performed in New York by members of

the Philharmonic Orchestra later the same year. The first European performances took place in Berlin in 1904, with one reviewer writing that the work was a fine example of "Bird's unique melodic freshness, piquant harmonies, pert rhythms and artistic, thoroughly rounded form". Another reported that Bird's music is "distinguished for spontaneity of its invention, and for the clear, compact disposition of its parts. Its carefully worked details and effectiveness produced an impression of high quality."

WILLIAM O. SMITH needs little introduction to Northwest audiences. He was Professor of Composition for over 30 years at the University of Washington School of Music, and he was co-founder of the school's Contemporary Group upon his arrival in Seattle in 1966. Prior to that, he was an active performer in both the classical and jazz worlds, a onetime and ongoing collaborator with jazz great Dave Brubeck, and continues today as arguably the world's foremost avant-garde clarinetist. A native of Sacramento, CA, Bill started a jazz band in high school and later continued studies at Mills College, the University of California, the Juilliard School, and the Paris Conservatory. Among his teachers were Roger Sessions and Darius Milhaud, and his awards include the Prix de Paris, Prix de Rome, and two Guggenheim Fellowships. One of Smith's many compositional interests lies in "theater music"; essentially, pieces involving the performers (and sometimes the audience) in such extra-musical activities as speaking, mime, dancing, outright acting, etc.—not to mention the shadowy world of "extended techniques" from instrumental performers.

His most recent work, "Trias", was commissioned by the Friday Harbor Laboratories for the Soni Ventorum Founders' Trio, and received its World Premiere at the San Juan Community Theater in Friday Harbor on April 14 of this year. Of it, the composer writes:

"Each of the three movements of Trias requires a different position for the players. For the opening movement they should be near the rear of the stage. For the second, the flutist should be standing at the front of the stage with the other two players in the audience, one on the right with the other on the left. The final movement has the players in normal position at the front of the stage.

"The music stands should be provided with stand lights which are turned on just before each player begins. At the end of the piece they should be turned off immediately after each player finishes his solo.

"The first movement explores non-traditional timbres. The clicks and pops should be clearly audible, similar to wood blocks. The second movement presents cadenzas in space. Each player can pace his part as he wishes as long as the 20-second indications are observed. The final movement should be played in jazz style.

"The audience should be prepared to hum a long drone starting when the bassoon reaches the low D-flat at the end of the first movement. They should cut off after the trill at the end of the cadenzas. They may hum again on the C under the Blueslike section at the end of the third movement.