

FRANCIS POULENC • DAVID SHIFRIN

WITH
POLONSKY-SHIFRIN-WILEY TRIO

ROBERT BLOCKER

ROMIE DE GUISE-LANGLOIS

GRAEME STEELE JOHNSON

GIOVANNI BERTONI

FRANK MORELLI

ANNA POLONSKY

PETER WILEY



PERPETUAL MOTION 

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WORKS BY FRANCIS POULENC, PERFORMED BY DAVID SHIFRIN AND FRIENDS

Modern ears are history's most eclectic; each present moment collects an ever richer history of what came before, and the digital age brings our musical past to our fingertips. Perhaps this is why Francis Poulenc's music still sounds so fresh today, half a century after his death. His commingling of classical and popular styles seems to anticipate the pluralistic palates of modern listeners, imbuing his music with a cosmopolitan chic that never goes out of style. This idea of timelessness is central to the spirit of this disc. David Shifrin's arrangements and adaptations refract Poulenc's music through a contemporary lens, while the swan song *Clarinet Sonata* and *Mouvements perpétuels* from his adolescence frame the album just as they bookend Poulenc's life. In seeking the contemporary resonances of music from throughout the composer's oeuvre, the disc affirms the promise of its final track: dodging fleeting fads and ideological isms, Poulenc's music springs with *Perpetual Motion* from his pen to the hearts and minds of future listeners.

Written just months before his death, Poulenc's *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* (1962) shares with Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* and Bartók's *Contrasts* a debt to Benny Goodman, who engineered many of the twentieth century's most important clarinet commissions. The King of Swing was slated to premiere the *Sonata* at Carnegie Hall in 1963 with Poulenc at the piano, but after a heart attack claimed the composer's life earlier that year, Leonard Bernstein joined Goodman for the memorializing performance instead.

The piece represents a memorial of its own; Poulenc christened it "to the memory of Arthur Honegger," his colleague in the Montparnasse composer collective *Les Six*. *Les Six* aimed to inflect modern music away from "high art" and toward the quotidian styles of folk and popular song, jazz, music-hall and children's songs. The aroma of popular music does indeed permeate Poulenc's *Clarinet Sonata*, with its percussive piano writing, its crooning monotones, and its rambunctious wit. Finally, Poulenc declared, "the music hall was invading Art with a capital A."

Poulenc's earliest chamber music provides a foretaste of his lifelong penchant for wind instruments, evidence of Stravinsky's influence. Poulenc considered Stravinsky a musical father figure, and it was he who secured Poulenc's first publisher, Chester in London. Chester in turn issued Poulenc's first chamber work, the *Sonata for Two Clarinets* (1918). The piece was first heard at *Salle Huyghens*, a Left Bank art-studio-turned-exhibition-hall that was a favorite haunt of *Les Six*, as well as painters Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso and poets Jean Cocteau and Blaise Cendrars.

The quirky work seems to reflect the bohemian atmosphere it was born into: Poulenc wedges the distance of key, timbre and, at times, competing time signatures between the pair of clarinets. This fine sonic separation between two almost-identical voices translates into a rather psychedelic effect, something like staring at a double image that won't quite come into focus.

The **Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon** (1922) resumed Poulenc's earlier project of micro-forms—more like sonata extract than the more expansive, late-Romantic sense of the word. This pithy duo Sonata sets out three terse movements: an Allegro with attitude, a melancholic lullaby, and a winking finale that mocks the tenderness of the middle movement.

Written concurrently with the Sonata for Clarinet and Bassoon, Poulenc's **Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone** (1922) is drawn into closer relation still in the present adaptation for clarinet derivatives. The opening movement seems at first a mock-serious pastiche of eighteenth-century divertissement styles. An apologetic midsection sows seeds of the Andante, which finds a smokier hue in the softer, more homogenous blend of the clarinet family. The rude interruption of the boisterous Rondeau reminds us of Poulenc's penetrating wit, but the composer insisted that French music's trademark humor did not constitute a lack of substance. "Our composers, too, write profound music," he said in 1950. "But when they do, it is leavened with that lightness of spirit without which life would be unendurable."

While Poulenc's earliest chamber works foreground the bohemian buzz of postwar Paris, the **Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano** (1926) seems preoccupied with composers past. Heard here on the cello, the first movement's old-world opening offers a whiff of Debussy's Cello Sonata, trading Baroque-style French overture figures and freer cello solos. A Mozartian piano solo inaugurates the Andante, and the Rondo finale parrots a host of jaunty styles: first a Baroque gigue, sometimes flirting with tarantella, and finally a kind of toy soldier march.

Poulenc was only nineteen when he wrote his short **Mouvements perpétuels** (1918), but even as a seasoned composer he misjudged posterity's opinion of what he considered a trivial work. "If people are still listening to my music in 50 years' time it will be for my *Stabat Mater* rather than the *Mouvements perpétuels*," Poulenc predicted in his maturity. As it turns out, Poulenc is celebrated today for both sides of his musical persona—"half monk and half naughty boy," as one critic described him—and the present work, lighthearted as it may be, remains one of his most popular.

Graeme Steele Johnson
January 2021

DAVID SHIFRIN CLARINET

Winner of the Avery Fisher Career Grant (1987) and the Avery Fisher Prize (2000), David Shifrin has appeared as soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, Houston Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, as well as with orchestras in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan. He has received critical acclaim as a recitalist, appearing at such venues as Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall and the 92nd Street Y in New York City, and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

An artist of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS) since 1989, Mr. Shifrin served as its Artistic Director from 1992 to 2004. He toured extensively throughout the United States with CMS and hosted and performed in several national television broadcasts on PBS's *Live from Lincoln Center*. He also served as the Artistic Director of Portland's Chamber Music Northwest from 1981 through 2020, and is currently the Artistic Director of the Phoenix Chamber Music Festival.

In addition, Mr. Shifrin served as principal clarinetist with the Cleveland Orchestra, American Symphony Orchestra (under the direction of Leopold Stokowski), Honolulu Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, New York Chamber Symphony and the New Haven Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Shifrin joined the faculty at the Yale School of Music in 1987 and is the Artistic Director of the Chamber Music Society at Yale. He also served on the faculties of The Juilliard School, University of Southern California, University of Michigan, Cleveland Institute of Music and University of Hawaii.

With three Grammy® nominations to date, Mr. Shifrin's recordings have garnered praise and awards throughout his career. His recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra was named Record of the Year by *Stereo Review*. His most recent recordings include a recording for Delos of works by Carl Nielsen, and new recordings of clarinet quintets by Peter Schickele, Richard Danielpour, Aaron Jay Kernis, Valerie Coleman, Chris Rogerson and Duke Ellington (arranged by David Schiff).



Mr. Shifrin has championed works of 20th and 21st century American composers, including John Adams, Joan Tower, Stephen Albert, Bruce Adolphe, Ezra Laderman, Lalo Schifrin, David Schiff, John Corigliano, Bright Sheng, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Alvin Singleton, Hannah Lash, Martin Bresnick, Aaron Jay Kernis, Valerie Coleman, Richard Danielpour and Peter Schickele.

He is a recipient of a Solo Recitalists' Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, the 2016 Concert Artists Guild Virtuoso Award, Honorary Membership from the International Clarinet Association and top prizes in the Munich and the Geneva International Competitions. In recent years, he has received Distinguished Alumni Awards from the Interlochen Center for the Arts and the Music Academy of the West, a Cultural Leadership Citation from Yale University, the 2018 Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award from Chamber Music America, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Award for Extraordinary Service to Chamber Music.

Mr. Shifrin performs on clarinets made by Morrie Backun and Légère synthetic reeds. He is represented by CM Artists New York.



ROBERT BLOCKER PIANO

An internationally acclaimed concert pianist, Robert Blocker began his study of the instrument at age five, presenting his first public recital two years later. Today, he performs throughout the world. His engagements have included concerts in the United States, Europe, Mexico, China, South Korea, Thailand, and elsewhere. Recent orchestral engagements have included appearances with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra, Shanghai Symphony, Houston Symphony, Monterey Philharmonic, Prague Chamber Orchestra, Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, and Daejeon (South Korea) Symphony Orchestra. His 2007 performance at the Great Mountains Music Festival with the Sejong Soloists was broadcast twice, throughout South Korea, on KBS.



Mr. Blocker has been described by the *Los Angeles Times* as an artist of “great skill and accomplishment” who performs with “a measurable virtuoso bent and considerable musical sensitivity.” *The Korea Times* has lauded the “great vigor” of his performances, and *The Straits Times* (Singapore) has recognized the “beauty and sincerity” of his playing. According to the Mexican newspaper *La Provincia*, “He is a pianist of purified technique — one could say perfect . . . he has an enormous sensitivity, the ability to recognize the emotional message of the work and pour it out in the performance.”

Mr. Blocker earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1968 from Furman University and his Master of Music degree and Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1970 and 1972, respectively, at the University of North Texas, under the tutelage of the eminent American pianist Richard Cass. Mr. Blocker also studied with renowned concert artist Jorge Bolet. At Yale University, where he is the Henry and Lucy Moses Dean of Music, Mr. Blocker teaches and performs alongside students, alumni, and faculty colleagues.



ROMIE DE GUISE-LANGLAIS CLARINET

Praised as “extraordinary” and “a formidable clarinetist” by *The New York Times*, Romie de Guise-Langlois has appeared as soloist and chamber musician on major concert stages throughout the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Asia. She has performed as soloist with the Houston Symphony, the Guanajuato Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble ACJW, and at Festival Mozaic, Sarasota Music Festival, and The Banff Centre for the Arts. Ms. de Guise-Langlois is a winner of the Astral Artists’ National Auditions and a recipient of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation award. She was also awarded First Prize in the Ima Hogg Competition, the Woolsey Hall Competition at Yale University, the McGill University Classical Concerto Competition and the Canadian Music Competition. An avid chamber musician, she has toured with Musicians from Marlboro and has appeared at numerous chamber music series, including the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Philadelphia and Boston Chamber Music Societies, 92nd Street Y, The Kennedy Center, and Chamber Music Northwest. She has performed as principal clarinetist for the Orpheus and Saint Paul Chamber Orchestras, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s, the New Haven and Stamford Symphony Orchestras, NOVUS NY and The Knights Chamber Orchestra. A native of Montreal, Ms. de Guise-Langlois earned degrees from McGill University and the Yale School of Music, where she studied under David Shifrin. She is an alumnus of Ensemble Connect and The Bowers Program. Now Assistant Professor of Clarinet at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, she previously served on the faculty of Montclair State University.



GRAEME STEELE JOHNSON BASSET HORN

Winner of the Hellam Young Artists’ Competition and the Yamaha Young Performing Artists Competition, Graeme Steele Johnson has established a multifaceted career as a clarinetist, writer and arranger. He has appeared recently as a TEDx speaker, in recital at The Kennedy Center and Chicago’s Dame Myra Hess series, and as a chamber musician at Carnegie Hall’s Weill Recital Hall, the Ravinia Festival, Phoenix Chamber Music Festival, and Chamber Music Northwest. As a concerto soloist, he has performed with the Vienna International Orchestra, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, CME Chamber Orchestra, and the Caroga Lake and Vermont Mozart Festival Orchestras.

Mr. Johnson’s diverse artistic endeavors range from his 2019 TEDx talk comparing



Mozart and *Seinfeld*, to his 2018 music- and poetry-weaving project, IMPRESSION, based on his octet arrangement of *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. He has performed his original arrangements — of repertoire from Mozart and Debussy to Gershwin and Messiaen — around the country and on recording for a 2021 release on MSR Classics. He has also recorded commercially for Hyperion Records, with a forthcoming recording on Cantaloupe Music. Mr. Johnson joined the artist roster of the Center for Musical Excellence in 2019 as its only clarinetist, and in 2021 was awarded the organization's inaugural Lee Memorial Scholarship to underwrite a new album of clarinet chamber music.

Mr. Johnson holds graduate degrees from the Yale School of Music, where he was twice awarded the school's Alumni Association Prize. His major teachers include David Shifrin, Ricardo Morales and Nathan Williams, and he is now a doctoral fellow at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York under the mentorship of Charles Neidich.

GIOVANNI BERTONI BASS CLARINET

Giovanni Bertoni is the principal clarinetist of the Jacksonville Symphony. Prior to his 2019 appointment in Jacksonville, he was a member of the New World Symphony, directed by Michael Tilson Thomas. During the summers of 2018 and 2019 he was a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, where he worked with conductors such as Andris Nelsons, Thomas Adès, and John Williams. Mr. Bertoni has performed in venues such as Weill Recital Hall and Stern Auditorium at Carnegie Hall, the Adrienne Arsht Center in Miami, and The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. He participated in the Yale School of Music's Norfolk Contemporary Ensemble Workshop, which culminated in a tour of Oviedo, Spain. Mr. Bertoni received first prize at the 2017 Backun International Clarinet Competition held in Nashville, Tennessee.



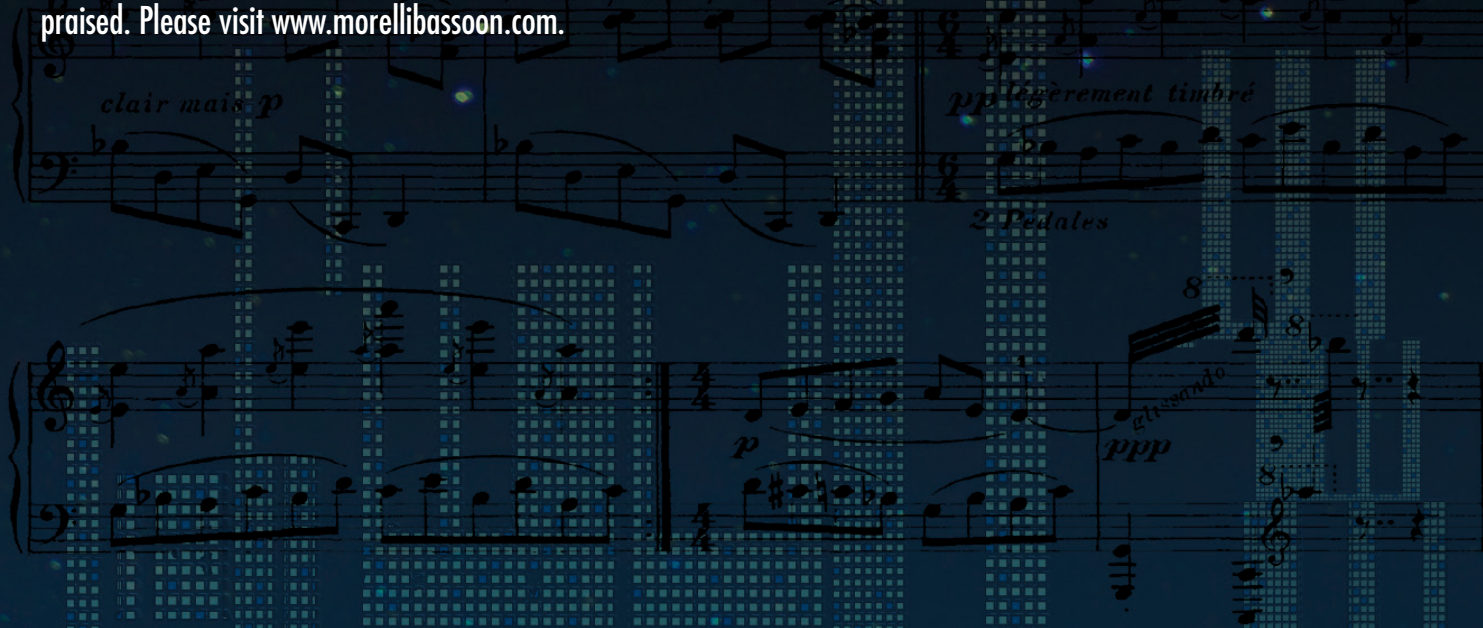
Originally from Sassuolo, Italy, Mr. Bertoni holds degrees from the Yale School of Music and Oberlin Conservatory. His teachers include David Shifrin, Richard Hawkins, Ricardo Morales and Corrado Giuffredi.

FRANK MORELLI BASSOON

Frank Morelli, the first bassoonist to receive a doctorate from The Juilliard School, has been a soloist at Carnegie Hall on nine occasions, and performed at the White House for the final state dinner of the Clinton Presidency. Co-principal bassoonist of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and principal of American Composers Orchestra, he was principal bassoon of the NYC Opera for 27 years. He teaches at Juilliard, Yale School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, SUNY Stony Brook and the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College, CUNY. His more than 175 recordings include solo CDs "From the Heart," "Romance and Caprice," "Bassoon Brasileiro" and "Baroque Fireworks." The magazine *Gramophone* proclaimed, "Morelli's playing is a joy to behold." The *American Record Guide* stated, "the bassoon playing on this recording is as good as it gets." The Orpheus CD "Shadow Dances," which features Mr. Morelli, won a 2001 Grammy® Award. He is also heard in the accompaniment on two Wayne Shorter CDs that also received Grammys: "Allegria" and "Emanon."



A prolific chamber musician, he has appeared at the most prestigious national and international festivals. He is a member of the woodwind quintet Windscape, ensemble in residence at MSM, and Festival Chamber Music. He compiled the popular excerpt book *Stravinsky: Difficult Passages for Bassoon* for Boosey & Hawkes and has numerous transcriptions in print. His landmark revision of the widely-used *Weissenborn Bassoon Method and Studies*, published by Carl Fischer, has been highly praised. Please visit www.morellibassoon.com.



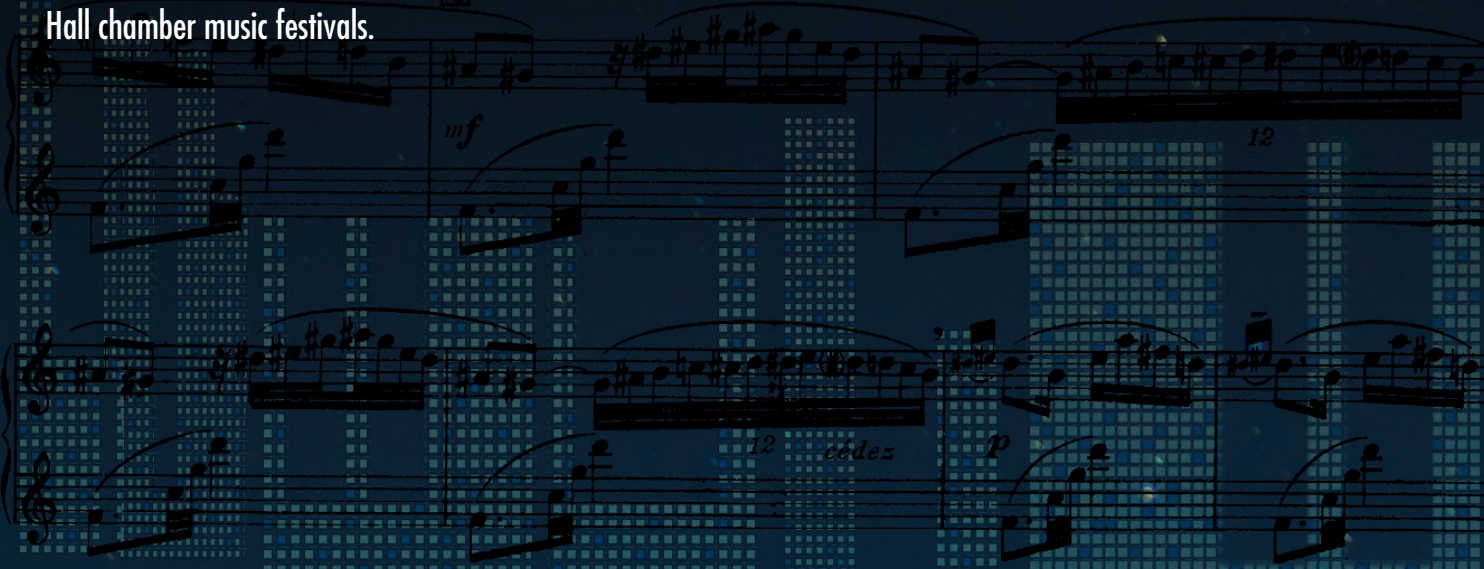
ANNA POLONSKY PIANO

Anna Polonsky is widely in demand as a soloist and chamber musician. She has appeared with the Moscow Virtuosi, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, the Memphis Symphony, the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, and many others. Ms. Polonsky has collaborated with the Guarneri, Orion, Daedalus, and Shanghai Quartets, and with such musicians as Mitsuko Uchida, Yo-Yo Ma, David Shifrin, Richard Goode, Emanuel Ax, Arnold Steinhardt, Peter Wiley, and Jaime Laredo.

She has performed chamber music at festivals such as Marlboro, Chamber Music Northwest, Seattle, Music@Menlo, Cartagena, Bard, and Caramoor, as well as at Bargemusic in New York City. Ms. Polonsky has given concerts in the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, the Vienna Konzerthaus, the Alice Tully Hall, and Carnegie Hall's Stern, Weill, and Zankel Halls, and has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. A frequent guest at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, she was a member of the Chamber Music Society Two during 2002-2004. She is a recipient of a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Fellowship and the Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award.



Ms. Polonsky received her Bachelor of Music diploma from The Curtis Institute of Music under the tutelage of the renowned pianist Peter Serkin, and continued her studies with Jerome Lowenthal, earning her master's degree from The Juilliard School. In addition to performing, she serves on the piano faculty of Vassar College, and in the summer at the Marlboro and Kneisel Hall chamber music festivals.



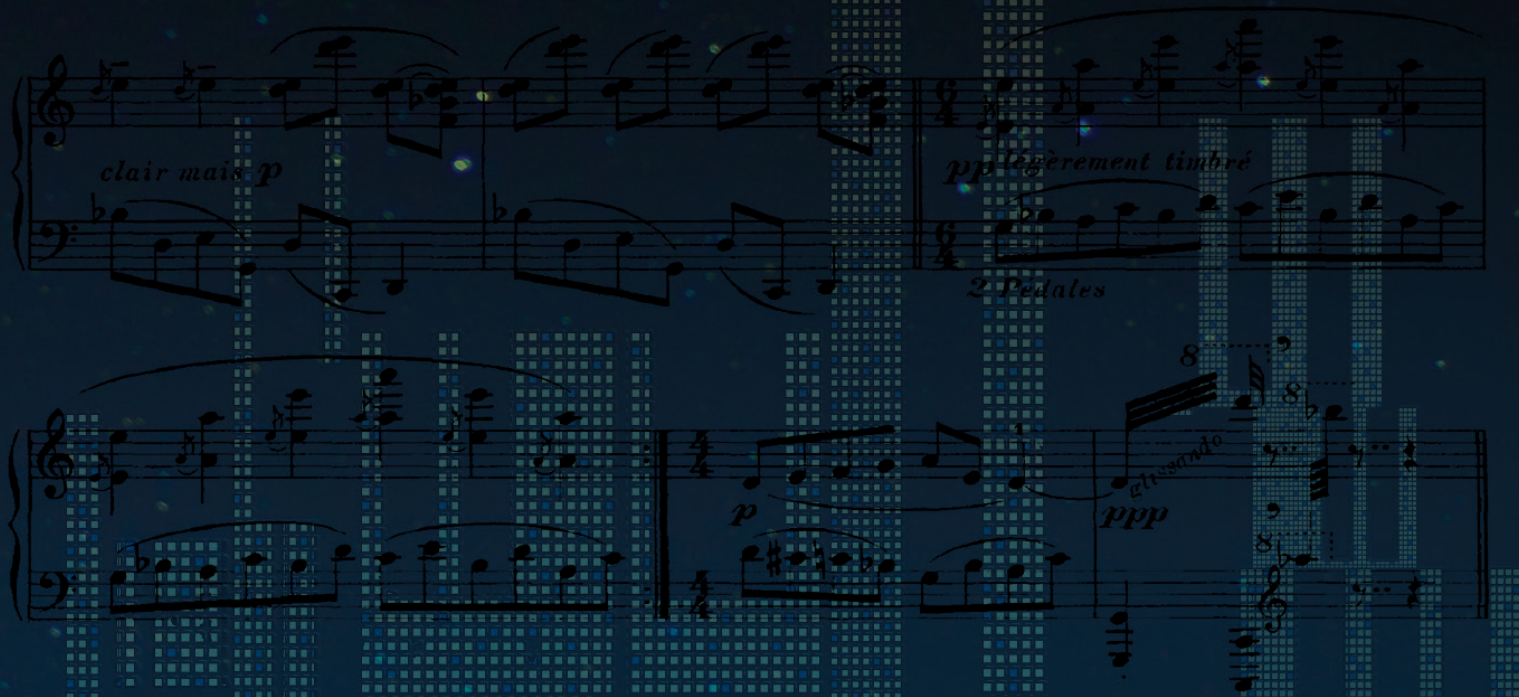
PETER WILEY CELLO

Cellist Peter Wiley enjoys a prolific career as a performer and teacher. He is a member of the piano quartet Opus One, a group he co-founded in 1998 with pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, violinist Ida Kavafian, and violist Steven Tenenbom. Mr. Wiley attended the Curtis Institute of Music as a student of David Soyer. He joined the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra in 1974. The following year he was appointed principal cellist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, a position he held for eight years.



From 1987 through 1998, Mr. Wiley was cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio. In 2001 he succeeded his mentor, David Soyer, as cellist of the Guarneri Quartet. The Quartet retired from the concert stage in 2009. He was awarded an Avery Fischer Career Grant, and was nominated for a Grammy® Award in 1998 with the Beaux Arts Trio and in 2009 with the Guarneri Quartet.

Mr. Wiley participates in leading festivals, including Music from Angel Fire, Chamber Music Northwest, OK Mozart, Santa Fe, Bravo! and Bridgehampton. He continues his long association with the Marlboro Music Festival, dating back to 1971. Mr. Wiley teaches at the Curtis Institute of Music and the Bard College Conservatory of Music.



POLONSKY-SHIFRIN-WILEY TRIO

ANNA POLONSKY DAVID SHIFRIN PETER WILEY

Upon receiving Chamber Music America's Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award in 2018, an award recognizing an individual who has provided historic service to the chamber music field, David Shifrin announced the formation of a new trio with the distinguished cellist Peter Wiley, and the rising star pianist Anna Polonsky. The **POLONSKY-SHIFRIN-WILEY TRIO** made its debut at Dumbarton Oaks in February 2019 and followed up with performances for the Candlelight Concerts in Connecticut and the Classic Chamber Concerts in Florida. The 2019-2020 season included performances for the Chamber Music Societies in Detroit, Philadelphia, and Phoenix, the Fontana Chamber Music Society, at Yale and Clemson Universities, and for the Market Square Concerts in Harrisburg.







ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dean Robert Blocker and the Yale School of Music where all of the music on this album was performed and recorded in its magnificent Sprague Hall. There are so many amazing musicians on this album! I am honored to perform with Dean Blocker, Romie de Guise-Langlois, Frank Morelli, Peter Wiley, Anna Polonsky, Graeme Steele Johnson and Giovanni Bertoni. I am grateful to Matthew LeFevre, our extraordinary “ton-meister” and engineer for capturing these performances and editing these recordings over a period of more than three years. I am extremely thankful and excited to collaborate with Seunghee Lee, one of the most distinguished graduates of the Yale School of Music and a great clarinet soloist, for producing this new album and including it on her record label, Musica Solis. Big thanks to Morrie Backun and Backun Musical for making the beautiful instruments I play on and Légere synthetic reeds for making my life significantly easier.

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Recording Engineer: Benjamin Schwartz

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FRANCIS POULENC • DAVID SHIFRIN

PERPETUAL MOTION

SONATA FOR CLARINET AND PIANO, FP 184

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET, ROBERT BLOCKER, PIANO

1. ALLEGRO TRISTAMENTE 2. ROMANZA 3. ALLEGRO CON FUOCO

SONATA FOR TWO CLARINETS, FP 7

DAVID SHIFRIN, ROMIE DE GUISE-LANGLOIS, CLARINETS

4. PRESTO 5. ANDANTE 6. VIF

SONATA FOR CLARINET AND BASSOON, FP 32A

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET, FRANK MORELLI, BASSOON

7. ALLEGRO 8. ROMANCE 9. FINAL

SONATA FOR CLARINET, BASSET HORN AND BASS CLARINET, FP 33A*

(ORIG. HORN, TRUMPET AND TROMBONE)

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET, GRAEME STEELE JOHNSON, BASSET HORN, GIOVANNI BERTONI, BASS CLARINET

10. ALLEGRO MODERATO 11. ANDANTE 12. RONDEAU

TRIO FOR CLARINET, CELLO AND PIANO, FP 43*

(ORIG. OBOE, BASSOON AND PIANO)

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET, PETER WILEY, CELLO, ANNA POLONSKY, PIANO

13. PRESTO 14. ANDANTE 15. RONDO

MOUVEMENTS PERPÉTUELS, FP 14A*

(ORIG. PIANO) (ARR. SHIFRIN/BLOCKER)

DAVID SHIFRIN, CLARINET, ROBERT BLOCKER, PIANO

16. ASSEZ MODÉRÉ 17. TRÈS MODÉRÉ 18. ALERTE

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